

A Guide to your ceremony

We all respond differently when we experience the death of a loved one and we all have different needs to help us deal with our initial shock and perhaps feelings of anger and denial running alongside feelings of love and respect.

The very capable Funeral Arrangers I am sure will have given you valuable help, advice and support in dealing with the many details that need to be discussed and organised.

I believe that the ceremony is the most important part of the overall funeral process. It is about creating a place that is safe and comforting where all concerned can spend time together to remember and honour your loved one's life and allow sorrow and sadness to surface and be expressed in words, in tears, in reflection, perhaps even laughter.

Civil ceremonies have almost no rules and can be written in a way that reflects the life and beliefs of the deceased and celebrates the life rather than focusing on the death. You have total freedom in what you want your ceremony to contain and there may be family members or friends who want to contribute ideas. Perhaps there may be family traditions to respect or the deceased may have asked for some things to be included.

A lot of people wonder if there is such a thing as a good funeral, I am certain that there is, and I know the difference it makes. A ceremony rich with meaning and love is a constant consolation.

Ideas For Structuring The Ceremony

There are many elements that may comprise a funeral ceremony,

The opening words:

The traditional way to open a funeral ceremony is for the celebrant to formally welcome the guests.

Why are we gathered?

This may be an obvious question but it is reassuring to remind mourners that we gather to support one another as well as to honour the deceased.

What name to use?

What name do you want me to address the deceased, perhaps the full given name or perhaps a shortened version of their full name or a nickname.

How do you want me to address the guests?

Perhaps "family and friends", or "ladies and gentlemen" or something else.

Thoughts on life and death:

Do you or did the deceased hold any particular beliefs about life and death.

Naming the cause of death:

Whether the cause of death is spoken about in the ceremony is sometimes a difficult decision and will need to be made by you and your family.

Readings:

Is there a reading that you would like to have?

The Eulogy:

This is often the centerpiece of the ceremony and affirms the significance of the persons life. It may take the form of a life history, a tribute, shared memories by several chosen speakers and I can help with this.

Speakers:

Hearing stories and recollections from people who knew the deceased is heart warming and makes the ceremony very personal.

Photographic presentation:

This can be a compilation of photographs presented as a slide show and set to your choice of music. The arrangers would be happy to do this for you.

Reflection:

Silence can set a beautiful atmosphere and can be a time for reflection accompanied by gentle background music. During this time you may wish to approach the coffin to quietly say your own personal words and lay a tribute, perhaps a flower.

Music:

Music is a very powerful medium and a carefully chosen piece of music can evoke tears, laughter and a sense of inner reflection, hope and inspiration. Perhaps choose music that is appropriate not only for the deceased but also be mindful of the guests. Music can be played at the opening of the ceremony, during a photographic presentation, at reflection and at the close of the ceremony.

There may be a friend or family member who wishes to perform a suitable piece of music or a song.

The closing:

The closing can determine how people feel when they depart from the gathering. Leaving family and friends with a sense of connection, support and hope for the future that can assist the process of healing and moving forward.

Symbols:

The use of symbols can easily be incorporated into your ceremony. Common symbols are the national flag draped on the coffin of a returned serviceman and poppies placed by comrades on the coffin, playing of the last Post, Reveille and the reading of the Ode. Maybe flowers and decorations of various kinds, a football scarf, badges of office, uniforms, photographs and recognised awards.

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