



# *A Life of Simple Luxury*

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## *Funerals*

Planning the Funeral Ceremony

Poetry

Planning a funeral often happens during a time of great stress, such as a health crisis or the sudden passing of a loved one. This stress makes it difficult to remember all the things you might want to include. Below is a list of possibilities, please browse and refer back to it as needed.

There is a checklist available using the information provided here, please download the “Funeral Checklist” document from A Life of Simple Luxury.

### *Expressed wishes*

If a person has expressed their wishes for how they wish their funeral to be conducted – perhaps in a will, an Enduring Power of Attorney, or another document – then those wishes should be followed if possible. Where it is not possible to follow out the wishes, you are not legally obliged to follow them.

### *Time and date*

Choosing a time to hold the funeral or memorial service is a personal choice. When a person’s body is prepared for burial or cremation, the service does not need to happen immediately unless the person held cultural or faith beliefs regarding the timing.

If you would like more time to grieve before the service or need time to prepare plans for the service, you can consider having the burial or cremation occur immediately, followed by a memorial service at a later date.

When choosing a date and a time of day for the funeral or memorial service, be sure to allow time to consider the following things:

- Timing of other events such as direct family members’ birthdays or anniversaries
  - Preparing a eulogy if one is not already written
  - Relatives who need to travel to attend the service
    - Preparing an order of service
- Gathering photographs and music for an audio-visual slideshow presentation
  - Preparing any memory displays of photographs and personal items

### *Method of interment*

Ask yourself a few simple questions:

- Will your loved one be donating any of their organs to those who need a transplant, or donating their body to scientific medical studies?
  - Will your loved one's body be buried or cremated?

#### BURIAL

- If their body is to be buried, will it be embalmed?
- What will your loved one be wearing when they are buried? Did they have a favourite outfit?
- Coffins, also known as caskets, come in many different sizes, shapes, and colours. Will you or your family choose a casket, or assign a price range and let the funeral home choose one for you?

#### CREMATION

- If their body is to be cremated, will their ashes be buried, kept by the family, or scattered?

### *Type of service*

What happens in a funeral or memorial service will largely depend on the tone you would like to set for the service. For example, your service could feel like:

- A celebration of a life well-lived
- An expression of sorrow and compassion for a life that ended early
  - A peaceful contemplation of the life to come

You can also decide whether or not you would like the service to be attended by people other than immediate family members. Whether you choose a small ceremony for family only or a large ceremony with everyone they loved, both are valid options to celebrate their life and grieve their loss.

### *Order of service*

Next, what things would you like to happen during the service? Some common traditions that people often use in services include:

1. **Eulogy:** People who were especially close to the deceased person during their life read a brief speech about the person and their life. Speeches can focus on life achievements or on the person's values. More than one eulogy may be given, such as a representative from the family and a representative from an association the person was involved in.
2. **Slideshow:** An audio-visual slideshow presentation of photos from the person's life, usually accompanied by a recording of their favourite song.
3. **Songs or hymns:** Those gathered may sing one of the person's favourite songs or hymns together. Music can be played by musicians or from a recording.
4. **Readings:** Poems or other readings may be read out to those gathered, perhaps from the person's favourite book or scriptures.
5. **Message of faith:** Depending on what faith the deceased person held, it might be appropriate to ask the person conducting the service to give a brief message about that person's faith or about their beliefs regarding life after death.
6. **Ethnic customs:** Many ethnicities of the world have different customs and traditions that are performed to say goodbye to a loved one.
7. **Military service:** If the deceased person was a veteran, you should notify their branch of the army, navy, or air force. The military can then arrange a guard of honour at the graveside, performance of a military song such as 'The Last Post', recitation of 'The Ode to the Fallen', and an Australian flag to be placed over the coffin. The National RSL of Australia has a helpful guide you can follow [on their website](#).
8. **Viewing:** Many traditional funeral services include a closed or open casket viewing, where the mourners line up to say one last goodbye to the deceased person.
9. **Prayer, vigil, candle:** Many different faiths have a tradition of ending the service with a prayer for the deceased person's legacy and their family, or a vigil (a time of silent meditation) or lighting a candle in the memory of the deceased person.
10. **Transportation to the resting place:** If the service is held somewhere other than the graveside or crematorium, then the casket is usually carried out of the service by pallbearers. The casket is then transported by the funeral home to the graveside, and the family and mourners travel there separately for a short burial ceremony.
11. **Burial:** Many faiths have a tradition of ending a graveside or crematorium service by having the family begin the burial themselves, to help them grieve. At the graveside, this is done by throwing a handful or a shovelful of dirt onto the coffin after it has been lowered. At the crematorium, this can be done by interment (burying the ashes) or scattering the ashes, either at the crematorium or in a place that the deceased person loved to spend their time.

12. **Reception or wake:** This is usually a short, casual time held at the home of the deceased person's family or another venue. Food may be prepared by those outside the family, or it may be catered professionally.

Services can usually be recorded on video and taken home afterwards as a keepsake on DVD or USB. You will need to arrange this with your funeral home if you wish it to happen.

#### *Items for decoration*

You do not need to include any or all of the following decorations in the service, but these are decorative items commonly included in a service:

- Order of service booklet, so that those gathered know what will happen during the service.
  - Photograph of the deceased person.
- Flowers to be placed in the foyer and other doorways, and on either side of the coffin or other centrepiece.
  - Music to be played in the background as people are arriving.
- Personal effects that represent the person's passions in life, e.g. footy team flag, artist's paintbrushes and canvas, etc.
  - Guest book for mourners to sign.

*Poetry for Funeral Services*

Do Not Stand a my Grave and Weep

*"Do not stand at my grave and weep,  
I am not there, I do not sleep.  
I am a thousand winds that blow.  
I am the diamond glint on snow."*

This uplifting bereavement poem was written by Mary Elizabeth Frye in the 1930s. It declares that the people you love are not gone, they are all around you.

She is Gone

*"You can shed tears that she is gone  
Or you can smile because she has lived."*

This short verse is a popular funeral poem, based on a prose poem by David Harkins. It's about being grateful for time spent with a loved one.

Farewell My Friends

*"Farewell, my friends.  
It was beautiful  
As long as it lasted,  
The journey of my life."*

Writer and musician Rabindranath Tagore penned this beautiful funeral verse giving thanks for a life well-lived. It would make a touching tribute to a special person who embraced life.

Afterglow

*"I'd like the memory of me to be a happy one.  
I'd like to leave an afterglow of smiles when life is done."*

This short remembrance poem by Helen Lowrie Marshall is about how you'd like to be remembered after you are gone. It's an ideal eulogy poem for someone who has given you happy memories, love and joy.

### Let Me Go

*"When I come to the end of the road  
And the sun has set for me  
I want no rites in a gloom filled room  
Why cry for a soul set free?"*

Famous 19th Century poet Christina Rossetti wrote many different poems about death and grief, but perhaps none more beautiful than this short memorial verse. With a message of hope, this funeral poem would be ideal for a celebration of life.

### My Journey's Just Begun

*"Don't think of me as gone away,  
My journey's just begun.  
Life holds so many facets,  
This earth is but one."*

This short funeral poem by Ellen Brenneman is an uplifting verse about life after death. Although not explicitly Christian, it does convey a sense of peace in another place after death, making it appropriate for someone who was spiritual, but not necessarily of a particular faith.

### To Those Whom I Love and Those Who Love Me

*"When I am gone, release me, let me go.  
I have so many things to see and do,  
You mustn't tie yourself to me with too many tears,  
But be thankful we had so many good years."*

This funeral poem acknowledges the need to say goodbye to a loved one, letting them go and learning to live without them – but it also offers the comfort that love lives on in your heart.

### Remember Me – I Will Live Forever

*"Give my sight to the man who has never seen a sunrise, a baby's face or love in the eyes of a woman.  
Give my heart to a person whose own heart has caused nothing but endless days of pain."*

Robert Test penned this modern remembrance poem as a eulogy for someone whose organs or tissue has been donated after their death. It's about passing on the gift of life to someone else and being grateful for your time on earth.

### All is Well

*"Death is nothing at all,  
I have only slipped into the next room  
I am I and you are you  
Whatever we were to each other, that we are still."*

This memorial verse would make an ideal poem for funeral. Written by Henry Scott Holland, this comforting poem is about love living on after the death of a loved one.

### A Song of Living

*"Because I have loved life,  
I shall have no sorrow to die.  
I have sent up my gladness on wings,  
To be lost in the blue of the sky."*

This short funeral verse was penned by Amelia Josephine Burr. It's about making the most of life and having no regrets when your life comes to the end.

### *Death Is Nothing At All*

Death is nothing at all.  
It does not count.  
I have only slipped away into the next room.  
Nothing has happened.

Everything remains exactly as it was.  
I am I, and you are you,  
and the old life that we lived so fondly together is untouched, unchanged.  
Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.

Call me by the old familiar name.  
Speak of me in the easy way which you always used.  
Put no difference into your tone.  
Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.

Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes that we enjoyed together.  
Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.  
Let my name be ever the household word that it always was.  
Let it be spoken without an effort, without the ghost of a shadow upon it.

Life means all that it ever meant.  
It is the same as it ever was.  
There is absolute and unbroken continuity.  
What is this death but a negligible accident?

Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight?  
I am but waiting for you, for an interval,

somewhere very near,  
just round the corner.

All is well.  
Nothing is hurt; nothing is lost.  
One brief moment and all will be as it was before.  
How we shall laugh at the trouble of parting when we meet again!

By Henry Scott-Holland

*Remember Me*

Speak of me as you have always done.  
Remember the good times, laughter, and fun.

Share the happy memories we've made.  
Do not let them wither or fade.

I'll be with you in the summer's sun  
And when the winter's chill has come.

I'll be the voice that whispers in the breeze.  
I'm peaceful now, put your mind at ease.

I've rested my eyes and gone to sleep,  
But memories we've shared are yours to keep.

Sometimes our final days may be a test,  
But remember me when I was at my best.

Although things may not be the same,  
Don't be afraid to use my name.

Let your sorrow last for just a while.  
Comfort each other and try to smile.

I've lived a life filled with joy and fun.  
Live on now, make me proud of what you'll become.

By Anthony Dowson