

FAREWELLING YOUR PET

**A guide to designing your own
pet funeral service**



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Introduction

For any person who has experienced losing a pet, I understand that this loss can be overwhelming. We give our hearts to our pets and when they depart, it's like losing a family member.

“

"Grief, I've learned, is really just love. It's all the love you want to give but cannot. All that unspent love gathers up in the corners of your eyes, the lump in your throat, and in that hollow part of your chest. Grief is just love with no place to go."

- Jamie Anderson

”

Losing a pet can sometimes also be a lonely experience with little or no empathy from family and friends that don't understand the bond that you had with your animal.

A funeral service allows you to begin the process of healing and acceptance. It can also reinforce the reality that the death has happened, and it allows you a safe space to show and share your feelings with others. A funeral service when conducted well, helps with the grief process.

The process of planning and creating a funeral service can be cathartic for those grieving. It can also be helpful for children to come to terms with the death of a pet so you may want to consider involving the entire family if appropriate.



The perfect pet funeral needs to be meaningful for those who are grieving. The service could be as simple as saying a few words or much more elaborate with readings and rituals included. It should be what works for you and your loved ones.

There are some common elements that you might like to include when designing a service. This booklet will give you the information and tools to design a service and help you remember your cherished pet in a way that best suits you.

Understanding Grief

Whether you're grieving for a dog, cat, rabbit, horse or bird (or any other animal close to you), the pain is real. After your pet has passed away, pet parents can face some very challenging times. Losing a pet can be similar to losing a family member.



If you're going through a tough time, please know that this grief is expected and understandable. Your pet was with you every day. Once they depart, they can leave a huge void in your life, and this pain can feel overwhelming at times.

There can often be a fear that people will judge or mock if we show our grief publicly. This causes an expectation that you 'put on a brave face' and 'just get over it'. This can result in people suppressing their feelings, which in the long term can cause depression and make the healing process much longer.

It's important that you find someone who understands your grief and you can share your feelings in a supportive and empathetic way with them. Grief can be like a rollercoaster, some days you'll feel ok and feel like you are getting over the death. Then other days you may feel triggered by something you see or hear and you'll feel overwhelmed with the feelings of sadness.



Please know that this is normal and part of the grieving process. On days when your feelings are overwhelming, be gentle on yourself; sleep, rest, talk to a friend that understands, do something that brings you joy.

Just know the sad feelings will pass. Eventually the pain will subside, and you'll have more good days than challenging days. There is no set timeline for this to happen.

General information on pet burial and cremations

The decision of cremation or burial of your beloved pet comes down to personal circumstances and your personal choice.

Burial

Some factors to consider include the space and availability of a backyard and the likelihood if you are going to move to a new house in the future. Burying your pet in your garden means they can remain close, and you can see their final resting place however that might not be a viable option if you live in an apartment or do not have the space. Pet cemeteries do exist in some countries and could be a consideration if you don't have the space but would like to bury them.



Cremation

Cremation is becoming a common option for many pet owners as it can be a practical alternative to burying them. There are many companies that will organise a pet cremation. Please contact myself or your local vet if you would like recommendations.

There are several options with the ashes. You can keep them close to you or display them in a beautiful urn or keepsake box. Or you could scatter them in a place that was special to your pet or you.

Other options for ashes include incorporating some of the ashes into a piece of jewelry that can be worn, keeping them close to you. Another popular choice is having some of the ashes sewn into a soft toy that can be displayed in your home. A number of pet cremation services often provide memorial packages alongside the cremation, these can include paw prints or locks of fur in a keepsake box or frame.



Ceremony Considerations

Who to invite

Your service might be intimate, just for yourself and/or close family members or a wider guest list. Consider who was significant in your pet's life or who you would want to be there to support you and ask them to attend.

Location

To help you choose the right location, think about your pets' favorite places. Was it your garden, a local park, or the beach? Hold the service in that place.

Creating the environment

Depending on the location, you want to make sure it is fairly private and that everyone attending can hear you. You may also want to set up a table with special memorabilia such as toys, bedding, photos and leashes.

Ceremony Rituals

Lighting a Candle



During a funeral service, lighting a candle is a beautiful tribute to a pet that has passed away. The lighting of the candle promotes reflection and can signify remembrance that their memory still burns bright and lives on. One way of incorporating lighting a candle is for guests to share a memory of your pet while lighting the candle. You don't need to use special candles for the service however you can get personalised pet memory candles easily online.

Another alternative is to recite a prayer or poem as you are lighting the candle.

Photo/Video Tribute

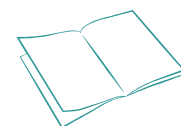
Share some of your favorite photos and videos of your pet by showing footage on a laptop or a screen during the service. Putting the photos into PowerPoint with one photo per slide is an easy way to create a loving photo tribute. If you have the technology skills, you could also embed a song into the slide show or you can play some music as you're showing the tribute.





Sharing of Memories

The telling of stories about your pet is a lovely way to bring the pet's memory alive. Depending on the story, it's a good way to introduce some humor and lightness to the ceremony, while also giving you a chance to share your feelings. You might want to consider asking some or all your guests to share their most special story about your pet.



Poems, Readings and Prayers

Poems and readings that honor your pet are a nice inclusion as part of a funeral ceremony. I have included some sample poems and readings as an appendix to this document. If you're of a particular faith you may want to include a prayer that holds special meaning to you. The Lord's Prayer can be a fitting end to a ceremony.



Music

Songs have a powerful way of evoking emotion and can be good to include in the ceremony. You could open and/or close the funeral ceremony with a fitting song signifying that the ceremony has commenced and concluded. The music you choose may be a particular song that your pet liked or used to have a reaction to. Or it could be a song that talks about how you feel now your pet has passed. I have included a list of songs at the end of this document. Your own playlist could inspire you with other choices.



How to incorporate children into the service

Children experience grief the same way as adults do but their understanding will depend on their age and emotional development. Some children may struggle to express their feelings and thoughts verbally and could 'act out' their grief in other ways. All children are different. Attending a pet funeral and being part of the ceremony can be a positive experience and help them with the healing process. When talking about the death of a loved pet, it's important to explain what has happened in ways they can understand. You can also give them a choice in being part of the ceremony.

Some ways to incorporate children (age dependent) in the funeral service is by blowing bubbles, placing of a flower, reading a poem, singing a song, lighting a candle, or scattering flower petals.

Another way is to create a memory or scrapbook. A book filled with photos, pictures and stories is a great way to work together, to create a lasting memorial and can help the healing process for a child. This book can then be displayed in a prominent position or somewhere important to you all.

Closing the Ceremony

A song, prayer, poem or reading are all fitting ways to end a service. Other ways could include scattering flower petals or planting a flower or small tree in your pet's memory — a living tribute that continues to grow. These can be done by you or as a group. Or you might simply ask all your guests to say a final farewell to your pet before closing the service.





Order of Service Templates

Entrance Music

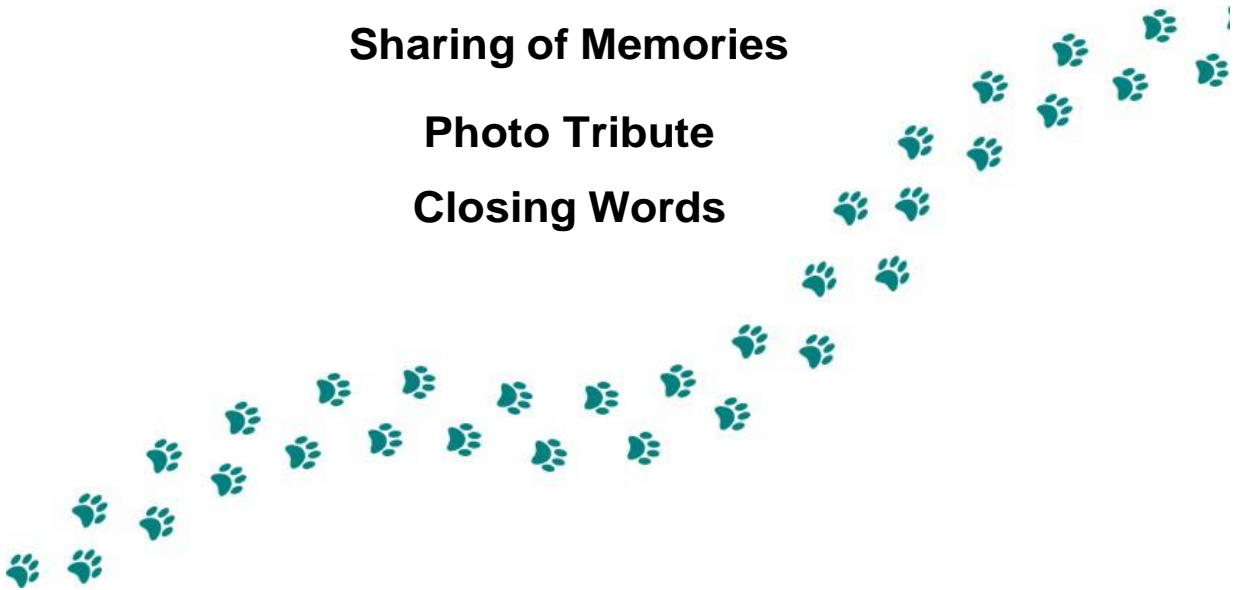
Eulogy/Tribute

Reading

Sharing of Memories

Photo Tribute

Closing Words



Entrance Music

Eulogy/Tribute

Reading

Candle Ritual

Sharing of Memories

Closing words of comfort

End of Service Music

Appendix 1 – Dogs Readings

The Power of The Dog – Rudyard Kipling

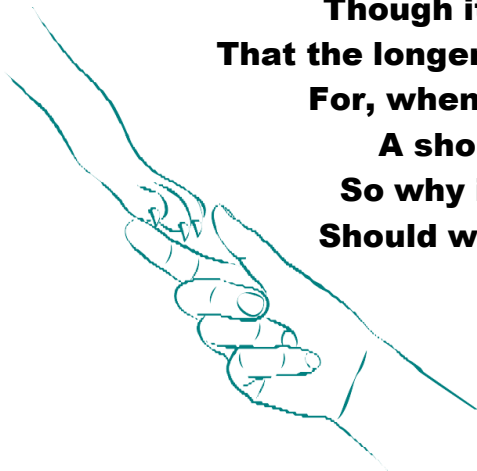
**There is sorrow enough in the natural way
From men and women to fill our day;
And when we are certain of sorrow in store,
Why do we always arrange for more?
Brothers and Sisters, I bid you beware
Of giving your heart to a dog to tear.**

**Buy a pup and your money will buy
Love unflinching that cannot lie
Perfect passion and worship fed
By a kick in the ribs or a pat on the head.
Nevertheless it is hardly fair
To risk your heart for a dog to tear.**

**When the fourteen years which nature permits
Are closing in asthma, or tumor, or fits,
And the vet's unspoken prescription runs
To lethal chambers or loaded guns,
Then you will find—it's your own affair—
But ... you've given your heart to a dog to tear.**

**When the body that lived at your single will,
With its whimper of welcome, is stilled (how still!).
When the spirit that answered your every mood
Is gone—wherever it goes—for good,
You will discover how much you care,
And will give your heart to a dog to tear.**

**We've sorrow enough in the natural way,
When it comes to burying Christian clay.
Our loves are not given, but only lent,
At compound interest of cent per cent.
Though it is not always the case, I believe,
That the longer we've kept 'em, the more do we grieve:
For, when debts are payable, right or wrong,
A short-time loan is as bad as a long
So why in—Heaven (before we are there)
Should we give our hearts to a dog to tear?**



Dogs Go To Heaven – Megan Osburn

**You're the best friend I could ever ask for,
The one I can talk to.
You listen to everything I have to say;
I'm really going to miss you.**

**You're growing old
And can't walk as fast,
But don't you worry,
I won't forget about our past.**

**I love the comfort you offer,
Except when you chewed up my shoe.
But it's okay, we all make mistakes.
I'm really going to miss you.**

**We loved to play ball,
Chasing it down the hill.
You're the hairiest of them all,
But you still get the chills.**

**It's almost time to go.
Don't worry about me.
Just do it slow,
And forget about all the fleas.**

**I love you with all my heart,
The best friend I'll ever have.
I'm really going to miss you.
I love you, and that will never change.**



They Will Not Go Quietly – Unknown

**They will not go quietly,
the pets who've shared our lives.
In subtle ways they let us know their spirit still survives.**

**Old habits still can make us think,
we hear them at the door.
Or step back when we drop a tasty morsel on the floor.**

**Our feet still go around the place
the food dish used to be.
And, sometimes, coming home at night, we miss them terribly.**

**And although time may bring new friends
and a new food dish to fill.
That one place in our hearts belongs to them...
And always will.**



Golden Eyes – Carol Walker

**When golden eyes no longer glow,
And we both know it's time to go,**

**Don't look at me with eyes so sad,
But think of better times we had,**

**When sunlight did upon us shine,
And happy days were yours and mine,**

**And through the grass we both did run,
And on our backs we felt the sun,**

**Think not of this dark final hour,
Think not of when our lives turned sour,**

**Think not of hopelessness and pain,
But think of joy and laugh again,**

**For in that final act of love,
You released me to heaven above,**

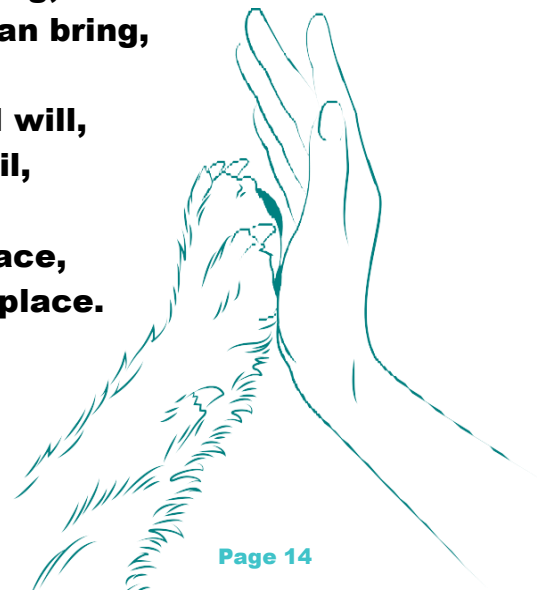
**Where finally from pain I'm free,
Where one day you will join with me,**

**Where together again we will rejoice,
And you and I as with one voice,**

**Will in perfect harmony sing,
Of the joy and pain that love can bring,**

**And remember me just as I will,
Always think of you until,**

**At last, again I see your face,
Grieve not, I am in a better place.**



Rainbow Bridge –Unknown

Just this side of heaven is a place called Rainbow Bridge.

**When an animal dies who has been especially close to someone here,
that pet goes to Rainbow Bridge. There are meadows and hills for all of our
special friends so they can run and play together.**

**There is plenty of food, water and
sunshine, and our friends are warm and comfortable.**

**All the animals who had been ill and old are restored to health and vigor;
those who were hurt or maimed are made whole and strong again,
just as we remember them in our dreams of days and times gone by.
The animals are happy and content, except for one small thing; they each
miss someone very special to them, who had to be left behind.**

**They all run and play together,
but the day comes when one suddenly stops and looks into the distance.
His bright eyes are intent; his eager body quivers.
Suddenly he begins to run from the group, flying over the green grass, his
legs carrying him faster and faster.**

**You have been spotted, and when you and your special friend finally meet,
you cling together in joyous reunion, never to be parted again.
The happy kisses rain upon your face; your hands again caress the beloved
head, and you look once more into the trusting eyes of your pet,
so long gone from your life but never absent from your heart.
Then you cross Rainbow Bridge together....**

I Walk With You – Unknown

I stood by your bed last night, I came to have a peep.

I could see that you were crying,

You found it hard to sleep.

I whined to you softly as you brushed away a tear,

“It’s me, I haven’t left you, I’m well, I’m fine, I’m here.”

I was close to you at breakfast, I watched you pour the tea,

You were thinking of the many times, your hands reached down to me.

I was with you at the shops today,

Your arms were getting sore.

I longed to take your parcels; I wish I could do more.

I was with you at my grave today, you tend it with such care.

I want to reassure you, that I’m not lying there.

I walked with you towards the house, as you fumbled for your key.

I gently put my paw on you, I smiled and said, “it’s me.”

You looked so very tired and sank into a chair.

I tried so hard to let you know that I was standing there.

It’s possible for me, to be so near you every day.

To say to you with certainty, “I never went away.”

You sat there very quietly, then smiled,

I think you knew ... in the stillness of that evening,

I was very close to you.

The day is over and I smile and watch you yawning

and say “goodnight, God bless, I’ll see you in the morning.”

And when the time is right for you to cross the brief divide,

I’ll rush across to greet you and we’ll stand, side by side.

I have so many things to show you, there is so much for you to see.

Be patient, live your journey out, then come home to be with me.

Lend Me a Pup – Unknown

**I will lend to you for a while a puppy, God said,
For you to love him while he lives and to mourn for him when he is gone.
Maybe for twelve or fourteen years, or maybe for two or three.
But will you, till I call him back take care of him for me?**

**He'll bring his charms to gladden you and (should his stay be brief)
you'll always have his memories as solace for your grief.**

**I cannot promise that he will stay, since all from earth return,
But there are lessons taught below I want this pup to learn.**

**I've looked the whole world over in search of teachers true And from the folk that
crowd life's land I have chosen you.**

Now will you give him all your love

Nor think the labor vain

Nor hate me when I come to take my pup back again.

I fancied that I heard them say

“Dear Lord Thy Will Be Done”

**For all the joys this pup will bring,
the risk of grief you'll run.**

Will you shelter him with tenderness

Will you love him while you may

And for the happiness you'll know forever grateful stay.

But should I call him back much sooner than you've planned

Please brave the bitter grief that comes and try to understand.

**If, by your love, you've managed my wishes to achieve, In memory of him that you've
loved,**

Cherish every moment with your faithful bundle, and know we loved you too.



Treasured Friend –Unknown

**I lost a treasured friend today
The little dog who used to lay
Her gentle head upon my knee
And shared her silent thoughts with me.**

**She'll come no longer to my call
Retrieve no more her favorite ball
A voice far greater than my own
Has called her to his golden throne.**

**Although my eyes are filled with tears
I thank him for the happy years
He let her spend down here with me
And for her love and loyalty.**

**When it is time for me to go
And join her there, this much I know
I shall not fear the transient dark
For she will greet me with a bark.**



Appendix 2 – Cat Readings

Four Feet in Heaven - Alice E. Chase

Your favorite chair is vacant now...

No eager purrs to greet me.

No softly padded paws to run

Ecstatically to meet me.

No coaxing rubs, no plaintive cry

Will say it's time for feeding.

I've put away your bowl,

and all the things you won't be needing;

But I will miss you little friend,

For I could never measure

The happiness you brought me,

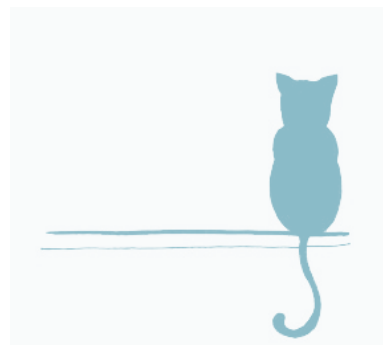
The comfort and the pleasure.

And since God put you here to share

In earthly joy and sorrow;

I'm sure there'll be a place for you

In Heaven's bright tomorrow...



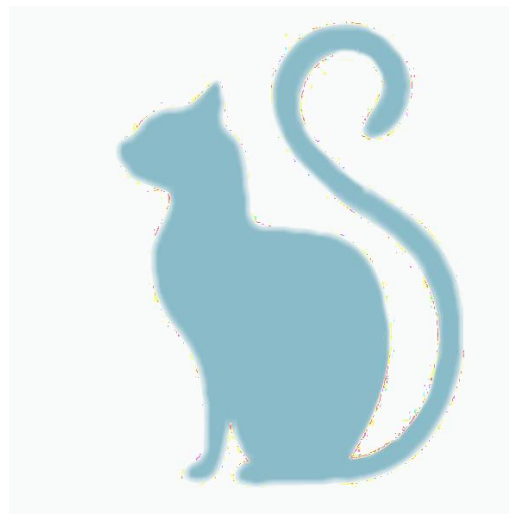
To Love Again – Unknown

**Oh, what unhappy twist of fate
Has brought you homeless to my gate,
The gate where once another stood
To beg for shelter, warmth and food?**

**For from that day, I ceased to be
The master of my destiny,
While she, with purr and velvet paw
Became within my house the law.**

**She scratched the furniture and shed
And claimed the middle of my bed,
She ruled in arrogance and pride
And broke my heart the day she died.**

**So, if you really think,
oh cat I'd willingly relive all that,
Because you come forlorn and thin
Well don't just stand there – come on in!**



Heavenly Nap - Ron Tranmer

You lived your nine lives here with me my loyal, loving friend,

Then God took you up to Paradise to live life number ten.

I'll bet you're peacefully lying upon an angel's lap.

Purring there, without a care having a heavenly nap.

I'll miss you for a little while,

but our friendship will not end.

Time will pass,

and then at last you'll be on my lap again.



Appendix 3 – General Pet Readings

Best Friend - Justina M. Hoerner

Remember all the good times,

Remember all the bad.

You stuck with me through everything,

The best friend I have had.

Through trying times you stayed with me.

You've sure improved my life.

You cheered me up when I was down,

Stuck with me through my strife.

Think about the good stuff, too,

Remember when we met?

I knew that I could trust you,

The best friend anyone could get.

Why is it that good things

Never seem to last?

You try to think about them,

But time erases past.

Sometimes I feel your presence,

I seem to hear your voice.

Memories flood back to me,

And I sit and rejoice.

Just know that I miss you.

I never will forget

The times I spent together

With you, beloved pet.

I'm Still Here - Chelsea Hanson

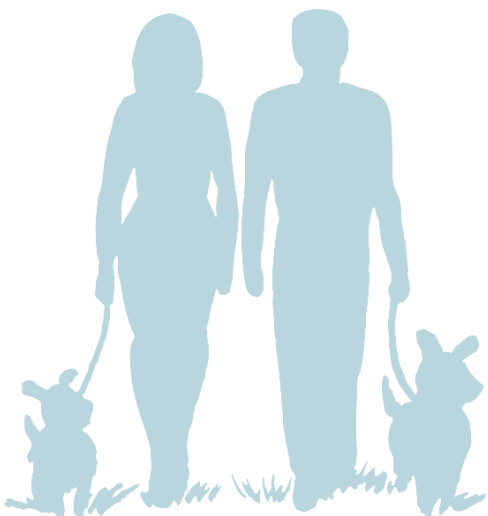
**Friend, please don't mourn for me
I'm still here, though you don't see.
I'm right by your side each night and day...
And within your heart I long to stay.
My body is gone but I'm always near.
I'm everything you feel, see or hear.
My spirit is free, but I'll never depart
As long as you keep me alive in your heart.**

**I'll never wander out of your sight
I'm the brightest star on a summer night.
I'll never be beyond your reach
I'm the warm moist sand when you're at the beach.
I'm the colourful leaves when Autumn's around
And the pure white snow that blankets the ground.
I'm the beautiful flowers of which you're so fond,
The clear cool water in a quiet pond.
I'm the first bright blossom you'll see in the spring,
The first warm raindrop that April will bring.
I'm the first ray of light when the sun starts to shine,
And you'll see that the face in the moon is mine.**

**When you start thinking there's no one to love you,
You can talk to me through the Lord above you.
I'll whisper my answer through the leaves on the trees,
And you'll feel my presence in the soft summer breeze.
I'm the hot salty tears that flow when you weep
And the beautiful dreams that come while you sleep.
I'm the smile you see on a baby's face.
Just look for me, friend, I'm every place!**

Pawprints Left by You – Terri Harrison

**“You no longer greet me as I walk through the door,
you're not there to make me smile,
to make me laugh any more,
life seems quiet without you,
you were far more than a pet,
you were family member, a friend,
a loving soul I will never forget,
it will take time to heal,
for the silence to go away,
I still listen for you,
and miss you every day,
you were such a great companion, constant, loyal, and true,
my heart will always wear,
the paw prints left by you.”**



Appendix 4 – Prayer Suggestions

Prayer for Animals

**God Our Heavenly Father,
You created the world to serve humanity's needs
And to lead them to You.
By our own fault,
We have lost the beautiful relationship
Which we once had with all your creation.
Help us to see that by restoring our relationship with You
We will also restore it with all Your creation.
Give us the grace to see all animals as gifts from You
And to treat them with respect for they are Your creation.
We pray for all animals who are suffering as a result of our neglect.
May the order You originally established
Be once again restored to the whole world
Through the intercession of the Glorious Virgin Mary,
The prayers of St. Francis,
And the merits of Your Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ
Who lives and reigns
With You now and forever.
Amen.**

~ St. Francis of Assisi



Appendix 5 – Music Suggestions

Dogs

The more boys I meet, the more I love my dog – Carrie Underwood

Old King – Neil Young

My dog and me – John Hiatt

Cracker Jack – Dolly Parton

Rover 22 – Jethro Tull

(How much is that) Doggie in the window – Patti Page

I love my dog – Yusuf/Cat Stevens

Who let the dogs out – Baha Men

Cats

I love my Kitty cat – Parry Gripp

Everybody wants to be a cat – Dimie Cat

Soft, Kitty, warm kitty – Chris and Pui

The cat food song – Robin Radus

Dancing with my cat – Koo Koo Kanga Roo

Scaredy – Cat – Three cats and a girl (soundtrack)

Smelly cat – Phoebe Buffay

Memory – from Cats (Andrew Lloyd Webber)

Cool Cat – Queen

The Lovecats – The Cure

General Songs

I will always be with you – Sheena Easton & Jesse Corti

I will remember you – Sarah McLachlan

Goodbye my friend – Linda Ronstadt

The day you went away – Wendy Matthews

Supermarket Flowers – Ed Sheeran

See You Again – Wiz Khalifa ft. Charlie Puth

Angels – Robbie Williams

Forever Young – Rod Stewart

You Raise Me Up – Josh Groban

Somewhere Over the Rainbow – Israel Kamakawiwo'ole

How Long Will I Love You – Ellie Goulding

You've Got a Friend – James Taylor



About Me



Hi, my name is Sherry.

I am an End of Life Specialist, serving people at their most tender times. I work as a Funeral Director, Funeral Celebrant, and End of Life Doula, walking alongside individuals and families from the earliest conversations through to final farewell.

My connection to this work runs deep. My great grandfather set up a funeral home, which passed to my grandfather — a family business spanning over a hundred years. It is work I am genuinely passionate about, and I feel privileged to be present for people when they need it most.

I have always been surrounded by animals. Growing up, our family had dogs, cats, a horse, rabbits, guinea pigs, and fish. Today I share my home with Grace, a beagle, and Muffin, a ragdoll cat — so I understand firsthand the joy and the heartache that comes with loving a pet.

When I was young and a family pet died, there was no ceremony — dad quietly took care of things and we moved on. I now know how much a small act of farewell can mean, and it's that understanding that inspired this guide.

If you have questions, or would like help creating or conducting a pet funeral service, I'd love to hear from you at info@sherrymidgley.com.au

