

~ Remembering with Love ~

Memorial Services

with Susan Fraser of Independent Ceremonies

There are many reasons to have a Memorial Service for a loved one, sometimes it is hard to get everyone together in time for a funeral, sometimes the family want something more private immediately after a loved one's passing, but these days it is most common to have a memorial after a direct cremation takes place.

Why Have a Service at All?

The loss of a loved one, whether they are family or friend, is one of the most significant events that can happen in anyone's life. To begin to grieve properly, to begin to heal and grow around your grief, it is important to acknowledge the loss and to share in that with others who share the same loss.

The process of organising and planning a service is an important part too. It gives space to focus on your loved one by thinking of the life they had, everything that you shared and what they really meant to you. Thinking about the words that you would use to talk about them, about the music they loved and the stories you want to share, all help you remember them clearly.

So even if you or your loved one themselves, has chosen direct cremation and there has been no service then, it is still so important to do something as a family or community of friends to remember and say goodbye to your loved one.



Ways to Say Goodbye

There are many ways you might choose to have a farewell service or gathering:

Traditional Service

If you would like a traditional funeral service, in the church or elsewhere, then there is nothing to stop you doing that if that feels right to you.

Family Gathering

Your celebration could be as simple as a family get together for a party, a picnic, a barbeque, or a visit to their favourite beach, by going together on their favourite walk. Whatever feels right for your person. When you get together you can share stories and memories, play some favourite music, maybe pass round photographs, perhaps have it on their birthday or other significant date.

This sort of gathering be organised with formal elements to it, maybe a tribute or eulogy, people reading poems, maybe an "open mike" time for people to give their favourite memories. Even at an informal gathering this can be led by a celebrant or simply by family member. Or maybe you just prefer everyone to have a good old knees up, it's all about what is right for you and your loved one.

Scattering of Ashes

If you have ashes returned, you could have a small service when ashes are scattered or interred. As before, this can be informal, or celebrant led, depending on your preference. It could take the format of a full celebration of life, or something more simple.

Full Memorial Service

A memorial is a real celebration of your loved one's life, and as it is more flexible than a funeral service there are many options ways to do that.

Just going through the usual process of choosing music and words, sharing memories, and taking time out to really think about your loved one, to bring back to those special memories, can be so helpful as part of dealing with grief.

Online Memorial

In circumstances where family and friends are far apart, a celebrant led memorial can either be conducted remotely or recorded to be shared with family and friends to join together online.



Remembering Alone

Sometimes there aren't many family or friends, you may be on your own, but you can still take special time out by yourself to remember your loved one. Having that notable moment of saying goodbye, talking to your loved one out loud, or even writing them a letter, can be a helpful part of the grieving process.



What to Include?

Whichever form of remembrance you choose, these are some suggestions about what you might want to include and think about for your service or event.

Memory Table

You can set up a space, as a focal point for your service or remembrance. It could be a table, sideboard or mantelpiece, even a spot in the garden, and put together significant items, things that remind you that person. You could include whatever reminds you of your loved one such as:

- Photographs, or even an album to look through.
- A favourite scarf or bunnet.
- Their usual newspaper.
- Jewellery that you remember them wearing, wedding rings too.
- A postcard from their favourite holiday destination.
- Something you know they loved such as a book, knitting needles, the daily paper, a bookies slip or a bingo card.
- You could pick some flowers from your garden or gather them while walking.
- Fragrance brings back strong memories so have a spray of their perfume or aftershave.



Music

Music can be the most evocative part of any service, bringing back precious memories that are hard to put into words. Even simply thinking about and choosing what music they loved, can be a special part of bringing back those times you spent together.

At more informal gatherings, you can have a whole playlist of favourite songs they would have liked. Family members can get involved by each choosing a song they associate with their loved one.

Tribute

The heart of most services is the tribute or eulogy to your loved one. This is where everyone remembers the person they knew and the life they have led.



This can be quite structured with a full life story, talking about everything that they did in life; from childhood, through work and family. Alternatively, each person can prepare a favourite memory or story to share.

Younger children, might find it easier to draw a picture to show how they feel.

A good tribute remembers the true character of the person and finds what was special in each person. This is just as important as facts and dates and in that way remembers the real person you knew.

Candles

The lighting of candles has long been symbolic of remembering those who have passed, and can be a beautiful poignant moment. They can be lit by the person leading the service, or by one or more people. This can happen at the start of service or during a moment of reflection.

Food and Drink

Sharing of food and drink together is the heart of many families and an important part of group bonding. You could have a toast of their favourite whisky, or serve their favourite type of tea in china cups. You could give everyone their favourite biscuit or all sit down to fish and chips, whatever reminds you of that person, whatever they would have loved, will be the right thing to do.

Poems, Words and Prayers

Including a poem can often say something in ways that a simple tribute cannot. Choosing or reading a poem can also be a good way for people to contribute to the service. If you or your loved one was of a faith, you may wish to include prayers, a bible reading or other religious ritual or words according to their belief.

Orders of Service

Even at informal gatherings, you can still have an Order of Service, something with pictures, poems, a few thoughts, a list of music, some thank yous, that can be shared and kept as a keepsake for everyone.

Ashes

Following a direct cremation, you will have your loved one's ashes returned.

These can be the focal point of whatever service or event you are having, treated with reverence, exactly as if it was a full service, or just quietly present, keeping the memory of your loved one alive.

How Can I Help?

Whatever you decide to do, this is your opportunity to make this a real celebration of a life, a chance to remember, a time to say goodbye and that is all so important.

Whatever you do, make it the right thing for you, your family and friends and your loved one.

If you do feel that you need help to plan and carry that out, if you would like a celebrant to be involved in conducting your service or event, then please get in touch to talk about how I could help.

For transparency and as a guide, for celebration of life services in central Scotland my standard cost is £250, but a chat over the phone about what you might like to do or to ask any questions, is always free!

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