

*Julia Hern
Civil Celebrant*



THE FUNERAL

*How to plan a fitting
service for your loved one*

For the loved ones; family and friends.

This time between someone's passing and their funeral can feel surreal, because there is often a lot to organise, meetings to have and choices to make, all while you're dealing with a pit of grief, along with any number of other emotions.

My wish is to make things as simple as possible, so I have prepared this outline to help.

Before you and I meet up, ask yourself some of these questions. The answers will help you collate your thoughts about the person you have lost, and how you would like them to be honoured.

Warmest Wishes

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Julia', written in black ink.

OVERALL THEMES

THEIR WISHES

- Did they ever talk about how they would like their funeral to feel? Elegant, relaxed, traditional, sombre, celebratory, short & sharp or deep & meaningful?
- Would they appreciate some humourous stories, or would keeping it solemn and respectful be a better fit?
- If/when they attended funerals in the past, did they ever make comments about things they liked/disliked, or wanted at their own?

YOUR WISHES

- What will help you to feel close to the deceased?
- Which ceremonial elements will best honour their life?
- What would be most helpful to you and others in processing the loss? (And conversely, is there anything you want to avoid?)
- How involved do you want to be in the writing and delivery of elements such as the Eulogy and Tributes?
- Who else would you like to consult or involve in the planning process?
- Would you like to invite people to stay for refreshments after the service? Or direct them to a wake at another venue?

THEIR BELIEFS

- Did your loved one ever talk about what might happen after we die?
- In the past, when people they loved died, how did they talk about it?
- Did they believe that people who have passed are still watching over us? And that we can maintain a spiritual or emotional relationship with them?
- Did they believe that when we die, we might be reunited with people we've loved and lost?

CEREMONY INCLUSIONS

Please note that there are no mandatory inclusions for the service you plan. You can add or subtract any element so that it best honours your needs and the life of the deceased.

OPENING AND CLOSING

It's highly likely that you have already discussed entrance and exit options with the funeral director, but we'll also talk about how it integrates with the rest of the service.

At the beginning of the service, the coffin can either be in place, or escorted in.

At the end of the service, the coffin can remain in place, or we can escort it to a waiting vehicle.

MUSIC

- There are usually a few songs during the service
 - Opening Song
 - Montage Song (plays while the photographs are being shown)
 - Reflection Song (plays while attendees come up to place flowers on the coffin, write messages, leave gifts, or just come up and say farewell)
 - Closing Song
- Who were their favourite artists?
- What music or songs most reminds you of them?
- Is there anyone that you would like to invite to perform a song live at the service?

Be aware that when you select a song to include in the funeral, the association will remain with you, and whenever you hear that song in the future, this person will come to your mind. So, choose music where that connection feels right.

SPEAKERS

- The Eulogy
 - Would you like it to be biographical, and talk about this person's life in the order they lived it?
 - Would you like it to be a selection of stories that celebrate who they are?

- Who else could contribute information about your loved one, at various stages of their life?
- Special Tributes
 - Was the deceased part of any groups that would like to pay their respects at the funeral?
 - Are there family members who would like to speak?
 - Are there work colleagues who can share stories about that part of your loved one's life?
 - If the service is being live streamed; Are there people attending virtually who would like to submit a tribute to be read?
 - Would you like to "open the floor" for anyone in attendance to come up and speak?
- Would you like me (the celebrant) to read on your behalf, or would you like a close representative, or each individual contributor to read their own?

RELIGION

- Did the person have religious beliefs? If so, which church?
- Alternatively, would it be best if there were no prayers, and no references to God?
- Even if they weren't practicing, do you think they would have liked for a prayer to be included out of respect to their upbringing, or the loved ones left behind?

READINGS & POETRY

- Do you want to include any poetry or readings?
- What words will feel comforting?
- Did your loved one have any favourites?
- Do you want to write something yourself?

There is a selection of poetry on my website to browse.

REFLECTION TIME

- Would you like to play a song during which all attendees can come up to the front to pay their respects to the deceased?
- Would you like to provide flowers for them to place?
- Would you like to invite them to write on the coffin, or leave notes?
- Would you like this to be at the very end of the service, so that once people have visited the coffin, they file out of the chapel?

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