



FUNERAL TEMPLATE

There is no right or wrong way to conduct a funeral ceremony, they do not have to be sombre Victorian affairs, and they should ideally reflect the character of the deceased, and celebrate their life, rather than conform to what is expected by 'tradition'. Below I have set out two common formats and on the following pages I have expanded on the cremation ceremony adding in some general words and phrases to link the main elements of the ceremony together.

CEREMONY 1 - CREMATION

1. ENTRY MUSIC
2. WELCOME MOURNERS
3. INTRODUCE YOURSELF AND HOW YOU KNEW THE DECEASED
4. PREAMBLE ON OUR UNITY IN MOURNING (Optional)
5. READING/POEM (Optional)
6. TRIBUTE TO DECEASED
Including contributions from friends and relatives.
7. PERIOD FOR REFLECTION
A favourite song may be played or perhaps a minutes' silence.
8. WORDS ON THE NATURE OF LIFE AND DEATH (Optional)
9. COMMITTAL
A formal "Farewell", address the coffin and bow at end.
10. THANKS AND NOTICES
Read out words of thanks from the family and say where the tea will be held.
11. READING/POEM (Optional)
12. CLOSING WORDS (Optional)
Remind everyone that the deceased will not be forgotten.
13. EXIT MUSIC
Get everyone to stand and you may wish to close curtains around coffin if this is an option.

CEREMONY 2 - CEREMONY FOLLOWED BY BURIAL PART 1

1. ENTRY MUSIC
2. WELCOME MOURNERS
3. INTRODUCE YOURSELF AND HOW YOU KNEW THE DECEASED
4. PREAMBLE ON OUR UNITY IN MOURNING (Optional)
5. READING/POEM (Optional)
6. TRIBUTE TO DECEASED
Including contributions from friends and relatives.
7. PERIOD FOR REFLECTION
A favourite song may be played or perhaps a minutes' silence.
8. THANKS AND NOTICES
Inform everyone where and when the burial will take place and invite them to attend.
Read out words of thanks from the family and say where the tea will be held.
9. READING/POEM (Optional)
11. EXIT MUSIC
Get everyone to stand for the removal of the coffin.

PART 2

1. WELCOME MOURNERS
2. WORDS ON THE NATURE OF LIFE AND DEATH (Optional)
3. DISTRIBUTION OF CORDS (Carried out by funeral director)
4. LOWERING OF COFFIN
5. COMMITTAL
A formal "Farewell", stand at foot of grave, address the coffin and bow at end.
6. SCATTERING OF EARTH/FLOWERS
Invite those who wish to come forward and cast earth or flowers into grave.
7. COVERING OF THE GRAVE (Carried out by funeral director)
8. READING/POEM (Optional)
9. CLOSING WORDS (Optional)
Remind everyone that the deceased will not be forgotten.

TEMPLATE FOR A NON-RELIGIOUS FUNERAL

Complied by David Pattullo, celebrant of the Humanist Society of Scotland,
with reference to: 'Funerals Without God' by Jane Wynne Wilson,
available from the British Humanist Association, 1 Gower Street, London, WC1E 6HD. Tel: 020 7079 3580.

ENTRANCE MUSIC

Good **morning/afternoon**.

We are gathered here today to pay tribute to the life of **X** (*insert full name of deceased*), better known to you as **X**, and bid **him/her** a final farewell.

My name is **Y** (*Insert your name*), I was a **friend/relative** of **X** and I have been asked to conduct this ceremony in accordance with **X's** attitude to life and death. Although this is not a religious service, there will be a period for reflection later on and you may wish to remember **X** in your own way.

Death is a very personal matter for those who know it in someone close to them. But we are all concerned, directly or indirectly, with the death of an individual, for we are all part of one human community and no one of us is independent and separate. Though some of the links are strong and some are tenuous, each of us is joined to all the others by links of kinship, love, friendship, by living in the same neighbourhood or town or country, or simply by our own common humanity. **No one who encountered X could fail to warm to this witty and caring man/woman or admire the optimism and determination with which he/she tackled life.**

TRIBUTE

This essentially involves telling the deceased's life story and painting a picture in words of their character. The tribute will probably be between 1000 and 1500 words in length, approx 10-15 minutes speaking time, and may include contributions from other friends or family members. For ideas on how to compose the tribute please refer to the separate sheet entitled 'Preparing a Funeral Ceremony'.

We are now going to pause and remember X in our own ways reflecting on a life lived well and with much contentment and happiness (or: 'few/no regrets', or: 'to their own satisfaction').

MUSIC

(Ideally 2 to 4 minutes but can also be a minute's silence)

No-one should be afraid of death itself; it is as natural as life itself. All that has life has a beginning and an end, and life exists in the time between birth and death. For those of us who believe that death brings the end of an individual's existence, life's significance lies in the experiences and satisfactions we achieve in that span of time; its permanence lies in the memories of those who knew us, and in any influence we have left behind. **The love and laughter that filled X's life will live in the memories of his/her family and friends much longer than the sadness caused by his/her leaving.**

It is now time for us to bid a final farewell to **X** and I would now ask you to stand.....

To everything there is a season,
And a time for every purpose on Earth,
A time to be born and a time to die.

**For X, the easy going joker who loved life,
Death came after a life filled with a love for, and of, his/her family and friends.**

In love and respect we have remembered **X's** life,
His/her character and personality we commit to our memories,
His/her loves and ideals we commit to our hearts,
His/her body we send to its natural end,
To be returned to the great cycle of nature.

Please be seated.

Our thoughts are now with **X's** family, with *(insert names of close family relations and any special friends)*

On their behalf I would like to thank you all for coming here today. There will be refreshments at **Z** directly after the ceremony and the family hope to see you all there.

The family would like to extend thanks to all who have sent cards or called your support has been much appreciated at this difficult time. There are thanks too for.....*(insert names of those to be thanked, doctors, friends, neighbours, etc.)* There will be a collection in aid of **A** charity and donations can be made at the reception or via **B**.

To finish I'd like to read a poem by an anonymous author entitled "You can Shed Tears".....

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

You can close your eyes and pray that **he'll/she'll** come back,
Or you can open your eyes and see all that **he's/she's** left.

Your heart can be empty because you can't see **him/her**,
Or you can be full of love you shared.

You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday,
Or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.

You can remember **him/her** and only that she's gone,
Or you can cherish **his/her** memory and let it live on.

You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back,
Or you can do what **he'd/she'd** want: smile, open your eyes, love and go on.

(You can insert another poem of your choice but the selection above is always popular)

The separateness, the uniqueness of each human life is the basis of our grief in bereavement. Look through the whole world and there is no one like the **X** you have lost. But **he/she** still lives on in your memories and though no longer part of your lives **X** will always remain a part of your family, of your circle or of you as an individual, through the influence **he/she** has had on you and the special part **he/she** has played in your lives.

We have been remembering with love and gratitude a life that has ended. Let us now leave resolved that we who live on will use our lives more fully and to better purpose for having known **X** and having shared in **his/her** life.

Please stand

EXIT MUSIC

CLOSE CURTAINS IF REQUIRED

NOTE. You may wish to personalise the sentences highlighted in red using adjectives and descriptions appropriate to the deceased and their life.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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