

# Draft funeral ceremony

*The following draft is designed to be altered by the family and those leading the ceremony. You are welcome to borrow from this as you wish. I would prefer any written version include appropriate acknowledgements.*

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*The ceremony should usually begin by saying why we are gathered. We settle people by stating the obvious: that so-and-so has died, and then something of the circumstances, and their age, and that they were important in various roles.*

As you know X died ....

X was important to each of you in different and very special ways  
as a wife  
as a mother or grandmother  
as a sister  
as some other family connection  
or as a friend or workmate.

And today you have come here with your love,  
and your care,  
and your respect.

*We then usually say what we are going to do in this ceremony, what it is for, and what people can expect.*

We will say a kind of goodbye, today  
But there is a sense also in which we say hello  
Because while we say goodbye to the kind of connection we have had with X  
we will also try to strengthen our memories today  
And say hello again to the X who lives on within us in our hearts and minds.

This is a time for expressing our sorrow at her death  
and for trying to comfort those who were closest to her  
But mostly, this is a time for celebrating her life.

There will be an opportunity later in the service for anyone who wishes to come forward to say a few words, perhaps to share a memory or a sense of what X meant to you.

We expect to leave here about an hour from now.

We will talk of her life  
and then we will commit her body to be cremated  
and end the service by each of us putting a flower on the casket as we leave.

You will have seen a memorial book as you came in. If you haven't had a chance to sign it, then try to before you leave, so that the family have a record of who has been able to be with them on this day.

After the service you are all invited for refreshments [*at such and such a place*]. It would be good if everyone were able to come, and perhaps continue to share memories at that time.

*Of course the arrangements vary, and it is important to settle people's anxieties. Is there going to be an opportunity to speak? Are we going to carry the casket out to the hearse at the end of the ceremony? Is there to be a cremation or a burial? Is there going to be a trip to the cemetery or the crematorium? Is everyone invited or just the family?*

*It is then often good to name the important people who are left behind.*

We think, today, of those who were closest to X.  
so our thoughts today are particularly with Y  
X's husband.

We're thinking today of the rest of X's family

Her children ....

We think of their families. The grandchildren....

We think of those who were closest to X.

We think also of all the other people  
who have over the years been important in X's life  
or for whom X has been important

The people she grew up with  
the people she worked with  
the people whose company she enjoyed.

*It is important somewhere early in the ceremony to acknowledge the sadness that is being experienced in the face of bereavement, because without acknowledging the sadness it is **worse**, and it can be difficult to get on with appreciating and celebrating the life that has ended. The following is only one of the possible ways of talking of sadness. The important thing is not to **avoid** sadness, but to express it somehow.*

There is inevitably sadness right now.  
This sadness is a hurt  
But it is a hurt that could only have been avoided  
if X had never been a part of your life.

It is worth remembering that sadness comes out of caring - out of love  
And that all human love ends in sadness.  
Sadness then is a mark of love and therefore in its way a kind of privilege.

It also marks a new stage  
X will not be here in the same way for her family and friends any more  
and her love is changed  
But her love lives on  
in the things she has given in her life  
and which remain in the hearts and memories  
of those who knew her through her life.

Along with our sadness at X's death  
we also find something to be glad about at this time.  
We are glad she is not suffering  
and that she is at peace.  
We are glad for the joys that X had  
and for the fullness of her life.  
We are glad for having known her  
and for the things she gave  
and the things she taught us.

*And then we get on to talking about the person who has died and their life—their story, their work, their character, their contribution. This will be through some combination of:*

- *pre-arranged friends and family members speaking*
- *the reading of messages and emails*
- *an open microphone where anyone is free to speak*
- *a prepared account by the celebrant.*

*The celebrant might conclude talk about the person with a brief summary, perhaps a list of salient characteristics and a “thank you”.*

Thank you X  
Thank you for the good times  
Thank you for your hard work  
Thank you for your love  
Thank you for your laughter  
Thank you most of all, X, for being you.  
You have filled your niche and accomplished your tasks.  
You leave this world a richer place than you found it.

*If a small religious element is to be included this might be an appropriate place for a funeral prayer and the Lord's Prayer, or material from some other faith, before the committal. A non-religious committal might be in a form such as the following:*

So now we must take another step in this kind of goodbye  
Shall we stand?

Today is a closing and an opening—  
a saying goodbye and a saying hello again.  
So while we say *farewell* to the X that we knew  
we *greet* the X who has become a part of us  
the X who lives on with us  
in the thoughts and memories that we cherish.

*Full name*

Your life we honour  
your departure we accept  
your memory we cherish.

In grief at your death  
but in gratitude for your life  
and for the privilege of sharing it with you  
we commit your body to be cremated

Earth to earth  
ashes to ashes  
dust to dust.

Rest now at the end of your days  
your work is done.  
Rest in the hearts and the minds of all you love

If you who knew her can learn from her experience  
if you can profit from her example  
if you can live a little better for having known her  
then this will give continuing purpose to her life  
and be a living memorial to her.

May you find comfort  
and richness and example in your memories.  
May you find support  
in your love for one another.  
And may you find strength in your heart.

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