

A time of prayer and reflection for those who are unable to attend a funeral

April 2020

When someone we know and love dies, it is important to say 'farewell', to remember them and to honour a life that has meant a lot to us. The current circumstances mean that some people who would have wished to attend the funeral may be prevented from doing so. This short guide will help you to say your formal goodbyes at home.

As you read through this short act of worship and remembrance, mention the name of the person who has died where you see N. You may like to light a candle, to place it near a photograph of the person you are thinking of and perhaps play a piece of music that meant a lot to them. Take a few moments to sit quietly. Think about those who are attending the funeral and hold them before God in the stillness of the moment.

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Lighting the candle

You may say these words as you light a candle:

Jesus is the Light of the World.

May his light, rising in glory, banish all darkness from our hearts and minds.

Some words of comfort from the Bible:

The eternal God is your refuge: and underneath are the everlasting arms.

Deuteronomy 33. 27

Jesus said, 'Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid'.

John 14. 27

Opening Prayer

Loving Jesus,
you promised your disciples that you would be with them for ever.
Help us to know that you are with us now in our sadness and our grief.
When you faced the cross
you told your disciples not to be anxious or afraid,
because you were going before them.
Trusting that N. is safe in your love,
help us to have faith and peace of mind.
Be with us in these moments of reflection
and surround us with your love and your peace,
now and always. Amen.

Read

either

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil; for you are with me;
your rod and your staff - they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence
of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the
house of the Lord my whole life long.

or

Psalm 139. 1-11, 13

O Lord,
you have searched me out and known me:
you know my sitting down and my rising up,
you discern my thoughts from afar.
You mark out my journeys and my resting
place:
and are acquainted with all my ways.
For there is not a word on my tongue: but you,
O Lord, know it altogether.
You encompass me behind and before:
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me:
so high that I cannot attain it.
Where can I go then from your spirit:
or where can I flee from your presence?

If I climb up to heaven, you are there:
if I make the grave my bed, you are there also.
If I take the wings of the morning:
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
Even there your hand shall lead me:
your right hand hold me fast.
If I say, "Surely the darkness will cover me:
and the light around me turn to night",
Even darkness is no darkness with you,
the night is as clear as the day:
darkness and light to you are both alike.
I thank you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully
made: marvellous are your works,
my soul knows well.

You might also like to read one of the following Bible passages:

Matthew 5. 1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

John 11. 21-27

Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.'

Romans 8. 28-39

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Time to reflect

Now spend a few moments thinking about the readings and any words that particularly speak to you. Take a few moments to think about the person who has died. If you are with other people you may like to share your memories together. Think about what made that person special to you, the things you did with and for them – things they did for you. Think about what you might like to say to them if they were here now. There will be things that you will want to thank God for and things you might regret or feel sorry about. There is also the sadness of not being able to attend the funeral. You can offer all these thoughts to God.

After some moments of stillness continue with these prayers:

God our Father, we thank you that you have made each of us in your own image and given us gifts and talents with which to serve you. We thank you for *N.*, the years we shared with *him/her*, the good we saw in *him/her*, the love we received from *him/her*.

Now give us strength and courage to leave *him/her* in your care, confident in your promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In this prayer at "A. and B." mention the names of those you know who may be attending the funeral.

O God,
you brought us to birth, and in your arms we die.
In your gentle compassion,
look with tenderness on *A.* and *B.* as they gather today to mourn *N.*,
to give thanks for *his/her* life and entrust *him/her* to you.
In our shared grief and shock contain and comfort us;
embrace us with your love,
give us hope in our confusion and grace to let go into new life;
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.

for thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

The following prayer is used at the end of the funeral service to commend the person who has died to God's love and care for ever. We conclude this short time of reflection with this special prayer:

God our creator and redeemer,
by your power Christ conquered death and entered into glory.
Confident of his victory and claiming his promises,
we entrust *N.* to your mercy in the name of Jesus our Lord,
who died and is alive and reigns with you, now and for ever. Amen.

Closing Prayers

Support us, O Lord,
all the day long of this troublous life,
until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes,
the busy world is hushed,
the fever of life is over,
and our work is done.
Then, Lord, in your mercy grant us a safe lodging,
a holy rest, and peace at the last;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

May God's love and help remain with us always
and may *N.* and all the faithful departed
rest for ever in peace. Amen.