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A GUIDE TO A FUNERAL

*"I'd like the memory of me to be a happy one.
I'd like to leave an afterglow of smiles when life is done"*

Organising and planning a funeral is sometimes overwhelming, confusing, terrifying and daunting. It seems to involve so many decisions that all need to be made during some of the worst days of your life.

The Funeral Director will organise the logistical elements of the funeral such as all the necessary (legal mainly) paperwork, the date and time of the funeral, burial vs. cremation, the type of coffin, pallbearers, flowers, cars, clothes for the person who has died....and more.

Once the type of service has been decided and the date and time, the person who is to conduct the ceremony needs to be appointed. This is the choice of the family.

A Celebrant-led service is a real opportunity to honour someone's life and to celebrate their life and all that their life has meant to their family and friends. It can be an occasion for grieving, thanksgiving, reflection, showing love and respect plus many other things. With the support of your Celebrant, you play the major role in how the person is remembered. The choice of meaningful pieces of music, special readings and poems help to show how important the person who has died was to you.

A Celebration of Life

A Celebrant-led funeral doesn't have to follow a predetermined structure. Below is a guide of some of elements that work well together. The actual order of them is completely flexible, apart from the start and end, realistically. The length of the time booked for the funeral also needs to be taken into consideration.

Based on a ceremony for a cremation.

- *Entry Music* - This is an opportunity to have some music played as the coffin and the mourners enter the chapel.
- *Welcome and Opening Words*
- *Poems and/or Readings* - Can be either read by family/friends or by the Celebrant. Each are usually relatively short.
- *Hymn* - If wanted.
- *Eulogies/Tributes* - Can be delivered either by family/friends or by the Celebrant. An outline of the life and personality who has died. Tone and style depends on this personality.
- *Time of Reflection* - This can be in silence or with music. A few moments of private thought.
- *Hymn* - If wanted.
- *Prayers* - If wanted.
- *Committal and Farewell* - This is the point in the service when the coffin is removed from view. There is the option to keep the coffin on view.
- *Closing Words*
- *Exit Music* - This is an opportunity to have some music played as the coffin and the mourners leave the chapel.

Once the flow of the ceremony is agreed, it is often a good idea to have an 'Order of Service' produced that the Funeral Director hands out to those who attend the funeral. This is helpful as it ensures the mourners know how the time will be spent. It is also a something that can be given to those who couldn't attend the ceremony as a keepsake.

Some crematoriums have the facility to run a slide show of photos. This can be played during the Time of Reflection. Also, if available, you might wish to consider having the ceremony broadcast via the crematorium's webcam.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if there is any help or assistance I can give you.

Jane

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