



## Guide: Meeting with me, your funeral celebrant

Discussing and planning a ceremony to say farewell to someone close can feel overwhelming and, frankly, exhausting. You might find yourself wondering:

- What kind of questions will I be asked?
- Do I need to get anything ready?
- What should I think about beforehand?

To help you feel prepared, I've put together this guide that covers the essentials of our meeting together.



Tom





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## Before we begin...

A funeral (or memorial) ceremony is a gathering of two halves:



In honour of the deceased

To celebrate their life and legacy and bid them farewell.



In support of those left behind

To offer them comfort and love.

And exactly how we balance these halves is as broad in scope as we're all unique.

After all, there are no limitations on what makes a character and makes the memories.

So, there are no limitations on how you can say farewell.

- You could fill the time with their favourite music.
- Have family and friends share memories and anecdotes.
- Keep it traditional.
- Include a little religion.
- And so much more...

The only limitations are our imaginations and the time available at the venue.



## The meeting

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Because I never had the chance to meet the person who died –



I'll get to know them through you.  
Through your photographs and  
memories – through love – which is a  
beautiful way to meet someone...

To help me get to know them and understand your wishes, we'll get together and run through the details, giving you the chance to share –

Memories over a cup of tea\*...

\*or coffee, wine, or whatever you fancy...



Being comfortable is key.



## Your options

How we meet is entirely up to you. It can be:

- **Face-to-face** – in a place that's comfortable for you.
- **Online** – via platforms such as Zoom, Teams, WhatsApp, Messenger...
- **Over the phone.**
- **By email**, although this will be much less personal.

## The date & time

My appointment hours run Monday to Saturday, 8 to 8. So, you can choose a date and time that works best for you.

## Who can join us?

Anyone you wish – whether for their support or input.

## How long will the meeting take?

Roughly 2 hours.

And I do suggest that you don't arrange anything too taxing for afterwards.

## How much do I have to share?

Only as much as you're comfortable.

Please let me know if:

- You don't want to talk about something.
- You don't want something mentioned during the ceremony.

## A point to note:

I voice-record meetings to assist with note-taking.



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## The questions

To make sure I gather all necessary information, I have a form that I work through.

While I call it a 'form', it's more a conversation that's been written down with prompts.

Most of it is not mandatory, and it doesn't need to be completed in any specific order.

Below, I run through the details covered:

### Initial details about the person who has died

Full name	Their maiden name. Any nicknames or preferred name.
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Date & place of birth	Their parents and siblings. How was their childhood.
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Relationship status	Their partner. How they met. How life was together.
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Where they lived	How long. How was living there.
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Date & place of death	How did they die. Was anyone with them when they died. Anyone to thank for their support and/or care.
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Age	
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A little about them	The type of person they were. How they'd describe themselves.
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## Next of kin & main contact

Next of kin & main contact	<b>This is often the same person, but not always.</b> Name and relationship. Contact details.
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Anyone to keep in the loop	Name and relationship. Contact details.
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## Family, friends & pets

Names & relationships	Of the people in their life not already taken. Such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Key people.</li><li>– Children.</li><li>– Grandchildren.</li><li>– Great Grandchildren.</li><li>– Other family.</li><li>– Friends.</li><li>– Pets.</li><li>– Anyone else.</li></ul>
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A little about their relationships	Such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Key memories and stand out moments.</li></ul>
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## About the ceremony

Funeral director	Company name & their contact details.
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Ceremony date, time & location	How you are arriving.
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Ceremony	How do you want it to feel.
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Entering & exiting the ceremony hall	How you would like to enter & exit the hall. How the person who has died will enter the hall.
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Moment of farewell	<p><b>Your options are vast.</b></p> <p>Depending on whether it's a burial or cremation, you might opt for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Soil to be strewn at graveside.</li><li>– Curtains to be left open or closed at the crematorium.</li></ul>
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Words of farewell	<p><b>Your options are vast.</b></p> <p>You might choose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Your own words.</li><li>– A religious variation.</li><li>– A personalised farewell written by me.</li><li>– A combination of the above.</li><li>– None at all.</li><li>– Something else.</li></ul>
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Joining another	Name and relationship. Where they are joining each other.
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Holding pictures, slideshows & visual tributes	<p>Many ceremony venues have TV screens that allow for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– A holding picture.</li><li>– Slideshow.</li><li>– Visual/video tributes.</li></ul> <p><i>See <b>Visual tributes</b> on <b>page 13</b> for more information.</i></p>
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Orders of Service	Who is printing them.
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Charity	The name of any charities being supported.
Reception	The name of the venue for any reception or gathering being held.
People attending	Rough estimate on numbers. <b>Livestream/webcast:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Name, relationship &amp; location of those joining us.</li></ul>
Personalisation	<b>Your options are vast.</b> You might choose: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– To remove the cross (if one is present).</li></ul> <i>See <b>Other ways to personalise</b> on <b>page 15</b> for more information.</i>
Readings, written tributes & the eulogy	<b>The Lord's prayer</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Yes or no.</li><li>– New or traditional version.</li></ul> <b>Readings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Title and author of any chosen readings.</li><li>– Who is reading.</li></ul> <b>Written tributes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Name, relationship &amp; contact details of the person writing.</li><li>– Who is reading.</li></ul> <b>The eulogy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Who is writing.</li><li>– Who is reading.</li></ul> <i>See <b>Readings, written tributes &amp; the eulogy</b> on <b>page 11</b> for more information.</i>



Music

Title and artist of any chosen music.

- When do you want each piece played.

See **Music & sound** on **page 12** for more information.

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Getting people involved

See **Getting people involved** on **page 14** for more information.

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## A little more about their life, character & legacy

Their life

What more can you tell me about them.

How did they live.

- Education.
  - Work.
  - Free time/Hobbies.
  - Favourite things.
  - Key events and stand-out moments.
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Their character

How would you describe them.

Their character.

Their belief & outlook.

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Their legacy

Their advice.

How they will be remembered.

Their greatest achievement.

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Plus, anything else you want to include.



## Making the ceremony yours

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It's the feeling...

From an extract of a letter they wrote, to the clay model of a horse they made that resembles a goat – bringing their character into the ceremony makes it feel like theirs.

And from the tune you heard them hum to the photograph of them dressed-up silly – filling the ceremony with good memories and laughter makes them feel present.

Whatever way you choose to celebrate their life and express your loss is an honest reflection and perfect in every way.

Below, I run through the aspects that can make the ceremony yours.

You don't need to use any of them, if you don't want.

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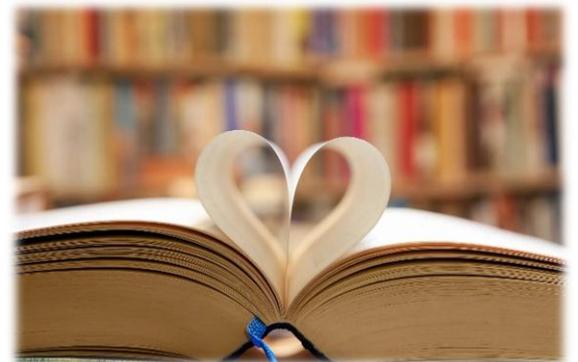
## Readings, written tributes & the eulogy

*Something that speaks...*

Words hold great power. And a well-chosen reading can convey a great deal of feeling and capture a spark of the person who has died that resonates perfectly.

A reading might be:

- A poem.
- Song lyrics.





- An extract from a book.
- A letter.
- A newspaper clipping or article.
- A recipe.
- Messages received in cards.
- Words written by the person who has died.
- And so on... no restrictions!

And it doesn't need to be about death and sorrow. It can be about life and joy. Be anything you choose...

## Written tributes

Written by family or friends, a written tribute celebrates a memory, an aspect, or their relationship with the person who has died.

Often 250 words long or 2 minutes read aloud.

The person who has written the tribute can read it on the day, or they can ask someone else. Alternatively, I can read it on their behalf.

## Eulogy

A eulogy is a long written tribute that shares and celebrates the life, character and legacy of the person who has died.

It can be written and read by family and friends.

Alternatively, I can write and read it for you.

Often 750 to 1,500 words long or 5 to 10 minutes read aloud.

In lieu of a traditional eulogy, you might choose to sprinkle the contents throughout the ceremony.

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## Music & sound

### *Something that moves...*

Music and sound can be more evocative than words. And the right piece at the right time can help settle the mind, give a chance to reflect, and bring them into the room.

The music and sounds might be:

- A favourite song or artist.
- A TV theme tune.
- A hymn.
- Live music.
- Natural sounds, such as water or birdcall.
- The sound of a steam engine.
- The ringing of bells.
- And so on... no restrictions!

And it doesn't need to be mournful. It can be joyful. Be anything you choose...



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## Visual tributes

### *Something that shows...*

Photographs and videos bring a sense of life and remembrance to the ceremony. And well-chosen pieces can convey the spirit of the person we've gathered to honour.

Visual tributes might be:

- A photograph in a frame.
- A collection of photographs set to music.
- Videos playing on the screens.
- Live performance.
- Artwork or paintings.





- Their hobbies and interests.
- And so on... no restrictions!

And they don't need to be photographs stood at attention. They can be whatever captures them right. Be whatever you choose...

## Holding picture

Many ceremony venues have TV screens – a holding picture is a static picture of your choice displayed throughout the ceremony or during a specific part.

## Slideshow

Using the TV screens at the ceremony venues, a slideshow is a collection of photographs (often 25, but there's no limit) that can loop through the ceremony or play at a certain point, accompanied by music if you fancy.

## Visual/Video tributes

A visual/video tribute can be similar to a slideshow set to music, played as a moment for reflection.

Alternatively, it can be a pre-recorded tribute from family and friends.

Or perhaps a video of the person who has died.

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## Getting people involved

*Something that includes...*

Getting involved can assist with the grieving process – idle hands and all that. And being involved can take many forms...

- Carrying the coffin.
- Writing the eulogy or a tribute.
- Reading the eulogy or a tribute.





- Reading a reading.
- Leading us in prayer.
- Giving out flowers to lay on the coffin.
- Supply post-its for mourners to write a message.
- And so on... no restrictions!

And this involvement doesn't need to be adult only. You can get children involved, too...

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## Other ways to personalise

### *Something that's yours...*

Personalising the ceremony hall and further personalising the ceremony itself can bring that special touch that makes their farewell memorable.

It might be:

- A dress-code or team tops and scarfs.
- Their favourite colour worn.
- Decorating the venue (if possible).

And you might add symbolism, religion and ritual, which are often moments that define the transformational aspect of a farewell ceremony. Such as:

- Hymns, readings, and scripture.
- Placing items on or around the coffin.
- Lighting candles.
- A dove or balloon release.
- A guard of honour or The Last Post & Reveille.
- A toast.
- And so on... no restrictions!

#### **Burial:**

- Strew earth or petals into the grave.

#### **Cremation:**

- Close the curtains or leave them open.





## Things to think about, do & bring

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### Things to think about before our meeting

If you get a chance, you might consider:

- Readings and music (if you want to include them).
- How you want the ceremony to feel.
- How you want to say farewell.

### Things to do before our meeting

There's not much to do before our meeting. But you might:

- Dig out some photographs.
- Choose a reading and some music (if you want to include them).
- Arrange for someone to join you.

### Things to bring to our meeting

In short, **you only need bring yourself** (and whoever you've chosen to join you).

You might also bring:

- A photograph or two of the person who has died.
- Any readings or anything you've found that you'd like to include in the ceremony.
- Anything else you fancy.



## In closing...

A lot has been covered in this guide.

Some of it is key information (such as their name and the date, time, and location of the ceremony), while the rest are options and ideas.

Now that you've reached the end, you should have a good idea of what our meeting will cover.

If you have any questions or would like a chat, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

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If not, I'll see you soon –



Tom



tomos  
james  
funeral celebrant

