

Funeral services

Worship offered with the dying and after a death needs to be prepared and conducted with dignity, grace and sensitivity. The mourners want to do what is right to give honour to the one who has died. The Church seeks to minister to those who grieve, to proclaim that God's presence is with us in every sorrow, and that Christ is victorious over death itself.

In recent times there have been significant changes in the ways in which funerals are conducted, giving rise to a wide variety of practice. Whereas a service in church followed by a committal used to be quite normal, now these may take place the other way round. Some mourners want a simple service at the crematorium and a further act of worship as the ashes are scattered or buried. The receiving of the body into church on the night before the funeral, and prayers around the coffin, are other possibilities to

consider. Those who grieve are increasingly taking a more active part in planning the worship and in contributing to it. Practices and customs vary across different regions. Sometimes innovation is sought, and sometimes simply the comfort of tradition.

For all these reasons, a variety of resources have been provided here, all of which are available online. The first service has brought together familiar material in a new and more readily usable way. It has taken much of the best of the 1980 and 1989 books and recast them in a service which is both simple and easy to use. This service is one of powerful witness to the Resurrection. The second service has been newly written for this publication. It draws from pastoral theology a strong awareness of the experience of grief and the changes which any death brings. It does not assume what people feel, but provides a space for the expression of

what they genuinely experience. People in the congregation are encouraged to be active and to participate in the service, which draws deeply from the traditions of our faith while setting them in a modern context. The third service is simpler in format and language, and reflects the down-to-earth immediacy which is an important part of our tradition.

All the services (and the further material online) may be used

creatively and freely, as a source of material and ideas rather than prescriptive texts. Every funeral service, like every human life, is unique and brings its own special circumstances. There is always more to do than read from ‘the book’.

A selection of readings appropriate for funeral services is provided in full at the end of the funeral section.

URC Worship Additional Resources to complement this book can be found online, along with this Worship Book, as A4 downloadable versions in PDF and Word format for printing: www.urchurch.org.uk/worship-book