

THE COFFIN

When the service is in church the coffin will normally arrive ahead of the service time (unless the hearse has left from the house). Indeed it is possible for the coffin to be in church overnight. If the family wishes, the minister will be present when the coffin is brought into church and simple prayers may be said (even if the family is not present)

Families should consider arranging for family members and/or friends to carry the coffin from church after the service. This may be done by shouldering or by carrying with staves. It is good to carry one's own and not to rely upon the funeral director's men for this. The funeral director will arrange this according to your wishes.

Remember that the pain and emotional readjustment which follow a bereavement may last for a long time. The ministers have an understanding of this process. Please share your feelings with them and do not be afraid to ask the questions which have come with the experience.



Risen, reigning Christ, in you past, present and future are brought together in one great hope. Renew our faith in you, so that neither the past may hinder us, the present overwhelm us, nor the future frighten us. You have brought us thus far: continue to lead us until our hope is fulfilled and we join all God's people in never-ending praise.

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At a time of BEREAVEMENT

This leaflet is designed not only to help you prepare for a funeral but will try to explain how the Church and our Faith may help at a time of great stress.

SERIOUS ILLNESS

Please make sure that the minister knows when a member of the family is terminally ill. Christians are entitled to the support of their Faith as their earthly journey nears its end. Each of us will want to be assured of the love of God and the resurrection victory of Jesus Christ. We may want the comfort of Scripture read to us. We may want help to pray or to make confession and receive forgiveness. We may be strengthened by receiving Holy Communion. In all of this the minister is there to help quietly and sensitively and he is happy to be called at any time of day or night.

There are also members of the congregation who are ready to support in practical ways at times of serious illness – help with shopping, visiting in order to allow a carer some time of respite etc. Discuss with the minister how the congregation can be of help.

AFTER A DEATH

A number of things must be done by next of kin, such as giving notice to the Registrar. It is important as soon as possible to secure the services of a funeral director who will inform you of the steps you should take as well as beginning arrangements for the funeral itself.

THE CHRISTIAN FUNERAL

The funeral service is an act of worship offered to God. In it we remember with thanksgiving the life of the deceased. We claim the promises of God and principally the life, death and resurrection of Jesus which has secured eternal life for us. We commend the deceased into God's hands, and pray for ourselves that we shall be comforted and enabled to go back to live faithfully.

Please ensure that the minister has been consulted by the funeral director and is able to attend before the date and time of the funeral are established.

Before the funeral service itself you may wish to gather as a family. The minister will, if requested, lead a quiet time of prayer at the family home before you leave for the service.

You should consider having the funeral service itself in the parish church. Many have found it fitting and helpful to offer thanks in the place set apart for the worship of God, the community's church which witnesses to our Faith and is the setting for marking the most important events of our lives.

The committal follows the service. There are two main means of committal, cremation and burial. Most folk are happy to make up their own minds about this but the minister will discuss the choice with anyone who wants help in making it.

Most churchyards in Scotland are in the hands of the local authority. Our own churchyards and cemeteries belong to Perth & Kinross Council. Likewise Perth Crematorium is owned and operated by the Council.

One does not need to reside within the parish to purchase a lair or to request a funeral in the parish church.

Following cremation the family may wish ashes to be interred in the churchyard. The funeral being over at this point, it is not necessary to have the minister present at the interment of ashes but most times the minister is asked to be there and he is happy to lead a short service at the graveside.

HYMNS

Much thought is given by families to the choice of hymns for the service. This is understandable, since hymns form the only element of the service apart from the Lord's Prayer where the congregation can openly participate. The following guidelines may help.

The service does not have to include any hymns. Hymns are only used if they are going to assist the congregation to worship. Similarly, it may be felt that one hymn is sufficient.

It is good to include a metrical psalm. The psalms have helped Jews and Christians to express their feelings towards God for 3,000 years. Jesus himself prayed the psalms.

As to hymns, the choice is as wide as you care to make it. At appropriate times of the Christian Year certain hymns are very helpful at a funeral service (e.g. *Once in Royal David's City* around Christmas time, or a harvest hymn). We are looking for something which expresses our hope in the Gospel of the risen Christ.

Remember the hymns are sung to help the worship of the congregation present. We do not need to try to think of the deceased's favourite hymn.

You should avoid hymns which by style or association are overly sentimental. The best funeral hymns are those which affirm the Faith with some strength.

The minister will be pleased to go over a number of possible hymns with you when planning the service.

FEES

It is important to note that no Church of Scotland parish minister will charge a fee for conducting a funeral. (The only exception may be where a Presbytery offers to a crematorium the services of a chaplain where, for example, a funeral is coming from a distance and a set fee is specified by the Church).

For a service in church, the Stewartry Churches have a charge of £50.00 (members) and £75.00 (non-members) to cover expenses. This includes the organist's fee. The undertaker passes this on to the church treasurer.

Where the minister conducts a funeral for someone, not a member and not resident within the parish, the Stewartry Kirk Session charges a fee of £100.

Cheques should be made payable to
'The Stewartry of Strathearn'.

