### DIOCESAN LITURGICAL COMMISSION

**FUNERAL MINISTRY RESOURCES**

***SAMPLE FUNERAL PRAYER SERVICE***

This service is designed for the funerals of Christians whose families are unchurched and whose unfamiliarity with standard funeral liturgy make the use of simple language, and a brief and clear structure desirable. Emphasis is given here to scriptural readings, prefaced by a brief explanatory comment, which encourages reflection on life and death and the nature of God.

Although primarily designed for use at a crematorium chapel where the entire service takes place without the move from church to the place of burial or cremation, Appendix A and Appendix B contain a form of committal which can be used where the service begins in church or at a cemetery chapel.

**WELCOME**

*The minister greets the coffin and the mourners at the door and they process in silence.*

**GREETING**

*Celebrant:* The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ

and the love of God and the fellowship

of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

*The congregation are invited to sit.*

**INTRODUCTION**

*Celebrant:* We are here to mourn the death of *N.*,

and to give thanks for her / his life.

This is a sad occasion, and it is natural and right

that we grieve for *N.*, because in our sorrow,

we express our love for her / him.

We also grieve for ourselves,

knowing that life without *N*. will never be the same.

While death causes us great sorrow,

however, we need not despair.

The bonds of love which united us to *N.* in this life

have not been broken by death.

*N.* lives on not only in our hearts,

but in the love of God who created us all

and holds both the living and the dead precious and dear.

This short service will help you to think about life and death,

to remember and thank God for *N.*

and say your final farewell to her / him in this life.

**OPENING PRAYER**

*Celebrant:* Let us begin with a prayer:God our Father,

we are sure that neither death, nor life, nor anything in all creationcan separate us from your love in Jesus, our Lord.We ask you, in your love for us,to comfort us in our sadness,to give us faith in our uncertainty,and to draw us closer to each other and to yourself.

*All:* Amen.

**SCRIPTURE VERSE (S)**

*A reading from the Old Testament or a Psalm follows, preceded by a brief explanation of its context and meaning.*

*Celebrant:* In this reading from the Old Testament Book of Ecclesiastes,

we hear that there is a time for everything we encounter

in human life, and God is to be discovered in every experience.

*Reading: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8*

*Reader:* For everything there is a season,

and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born, and a time to die;

a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

a time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build up;

a time to weep, and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;

a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

a time to seek, and a time to lose;

a time to keep, and a time to throw away;

a time to tear, and a time to sew;

a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

a time to love, and a time to hate;

a time for war, and a time for peace.

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**Psalm 22(3) Said or sung as “The Lord’s my Shepherd”.**

*Celebrant:* In this well-known psalm that we shall now sing / say,

we are assured that God is not only with us in every difficulty,

but provides for our deepest needs.

The Lord’s my shepherd, I’ll not want,He makes me down to lie;In pastures green, he leadeth me,the quiet waters by.

My soul he doth restore againand me to walk doth make;within the paths of righteousnesse’en for his own name’s sake.

Yea though I walk in death’s dark vale,yet shall I fear none ill;for thou art with me, and thy rodand staff, me comfort still.

My table thou hast furnished,in presence of my foes;My head thou dost with oil anointand my cup overflows.

Goodness and mercy all my lifeshall surely follow me,and in God’s house for evermoremy dwelling place shall be.

**Gospel: *John 14:1-6***

*Celebrant:* In this reading from St John’s gospel,

Jesus tells his worried and frightened disciples not to fear,

but to trust in him, for he holds the key to truth and to life.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

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**HOMILY**

*A brief homily may be followed by a few words about the deceased.*

**EULOGY**

*The Celebrant or one of the mourners should share a few memories of the deceased, perhaps finishing with a poem, non-scriptural reading, or a piece of music which enables the mourners to call the deceased to mind. A eulogy could conclude with the following or similar words:*

I had / did not have the privilege of knowing *N.,* but you will have your own memories of her / him - what he / she was like, your own relationship with her / him and times which only you and she / he shared - some of them ordinary, some special, and some difficult, for none of us are perfect.

You will remember *N.* as a mother / father or grandmother / grandfather (as appropriate) whom you have known all your life. Others of you will have known *N.* for years (as you married into the family, or as a friend or a neighbour).

*N.* has now died. Cherish all those memories you have of her / him and comfort one another.

We do not fully understand what happens to us at death, but what we can be sure of is that love never comes to nothing. The love of God which created *N.* and follows us throughout life, does not give up in death.

Your relationship with *N.* and the memories you have of her / him will not come to nothing.

Death is natural, but it is terrible and the grief it causes is painful. Death, though is not the end. *N.* has died, but she / he lives on, not only in God, but in you. As you remember *N.*, thank God for her / him and use those memories to enrich your lives and the lives of those around you. Amen.

**PRAYERS**

*Celebrant:* Let us pray with confidence in the mercy of our heavenly Father,

who forgives our failings and remembers the good that we do.

Let us pray for *N.*

Heavenly Father,your Son humbled Himself to suffer deathso that we might share in His risen life.

Look with kindness on *N.* who has died.May she / he find in youpardon for her / his sins,deliverance from all anxietyand everlasting joy.We make this prayer through our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

*All:* Amen.

*Celebrant:* Let us pray for *N.*’s family.

Gracious Lord,you are the comfort of all who mourn;hear our prayers for *N.’s* (names of close relatives)whose lives have been filled with sorrow by the death of *N.*

May they find comfort in your presenceand in their care for each other,and may they always place their trust in you.We ask this Christ our Lord.

*All:* Amen.

*Celebrant:* Let us pray for ourselves.Loving God,you are always ready to forgive us when we have sinned,and you want us all to know and love you.Help us to remember that life is shortand that we can never know when death will come to us,so that we may seek your unending love and mercyand always be ready to forgive others.We ask this in Jesus’ name.

*All:* Amen.

**THE LORD'S PRAYER**

*Celebrant:* Let us pray together now in the words which

Jesus taught his disciples, a prayer used by countless

Christians living and departed:

*All:* 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 the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,

now and forever. Amen.

*If the first part of the service has taken place in church, prior to cremation, turn now to Appendix A.*

*If the first part of the service has taken place in church or at a cemetery chapel, prior to burial, turn now to Appendix B.*

*Where the entire service takes place in the crematorium chapel, the service continues as follows:*

**COMMENDATION AND COMMITTAL**

*Celebrant:* We now bid farewell to *N.* and commend her / him to God.

Although our sorrow at her / his death is great,

great, too, is the hope we have in Jesus, who has triumphed

over death and showed us the depth of God’s love.

*Please stand.*

In a moment of silence,let us call to mind all that *N.* has meant to usand place him / her into God’s hands.

*Silence.*

*Then the following is said as the coffin is removed from view.*

*Celebrant:* Heavenly Father,

you created *N.* in love,

and your love has followed *N.* throughout her / his life;

now that *N.* has died,

we ask you to gather her / him to yourself

and keep her / him safe for ever.

We commit *N.’s* body to be cremated / buried:

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

Give to *N.* eternal rest, O Lord,

and let everlasting light shine upon her / him.

May she / he rest in peace.

**PRAYER OVER THE PEOPLE**

*Celebrant:* And now we pray for ourselves.God of all mercies,

we do not ask you to take away our pain, but to help us bear it.

We do not ask to forget, but for help to remember without despair.

We do not ask for answers to all our questions,

but for faith in your wisdom and love.

Give us courage to face each new day;give us patience with ourselves and with others;

give us peace which exceeds our understanding.

We ask this in Jesus’ name.

*All:* Amen.

*The Celebrant’s hands are raised in blessing over those present.*

*Celebrant:* May the Lord bless you

and take care of you.

May the Lord be kind

and gracious to you.

May the Lord look on you

with favour and give you peace.

*All:* Amen.

***APPENDIX A: COMMENDATION BEFORE MOVING TO CREMATORIUM AND COMMITTAL AT CREMATORIUM****.*

**COMMENDATION**

*Celebrant:* We now commend *N.* to God,

before we go to take her / his body to be cremated.

 We now bid farewell to *N.* and commend her / him to God.

Although our sorrow at her / his death is great,

great, too, is the hope we have in Jesus, who has triumphed

over death and showed us the depth of God’s love.

*Please stand.*

In a moment of silence,

let us call to mind all that *N.* has meant to us

and place *N.* into God’s hands.

*Silence.*

*Then the following is said:*

Loving God,

you created *N.* in love,

and your love has followed *N.* throughout her / his life;

now that *N.* has died,

we ask you to gather her / him to yourself

and keep her / him safe for ever.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

*All:* Amen.

*If only a small minority of those in the church will follow to the crematorium, a blessing of the people may be added here. If not, the service at the church is concluded with the following words.*

*Celebrant:* We have commended *N.* to God,

let us go to where her / his body will be cremated.

*The service at the crematorium proceeds as follows.*

**INTRODUCTION**

*Celebrant:*God will show us the path of life,

give us unbounded joy in his presence,

and at his right hand, everlasting pleasure. *(Psalm (15) 16:11)*

We have commended *N.* to God’s merciful care,

and we shall now commit his / her body to the flames.

*The coffin is removed from view during or after the following committal.*

**COMMITTAL**

*Please stand.*

*Celebrant:* Lord, you treat us as tenderly as a mother loves her children;

you know that we are only dust:

We last no longer than grass,

we flourish and fade like the flowers of the field,

but your merciful goodness towards us lasts for ever.

Trusting in your goodness, we have commended *N.* to you,and we now commit her / his body to be cremated:

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

Give to *N.* eternal rest, O Lord,

and let everlasting light shine upon her / him.

May she / he rest in peace.

*Silence may be kept.*

**PRAYER OVER THE PEOPLE**

*Celebrant:* And now we pray for ourselves.

God of all mercies,

we do not ask you to take away our pain, but to help us bear it.

We do not ask to forget, but for help to remember without despair.

We do not ask for answers to all our questions,

but for faith in your wisdom and love.

Give us courage to face each new day;

give us patience with ourselves and with others;

give us peace which exceeds our understanding.

We ask this in Jesus’ name.

*All:* Amen.

*A hymn may be sung.*

*The hands of the Celebrant are raised in blessing over those present.*

*Celebrant:* May the Lord bless you

and take care of you.

May the Lord be kind

and gracious to you.

May the Lord look on you with favour

and give you peace.

*All:*  Amen.***APPENDIX B: COMMENDATION BEFORE MOVING TO GRAVESIDE AND COMMITTAL AT GRAVESIDE***

*Celebrant:* We now commend *N.* to God,

before we go to take her / his body to the grave.

We bid farewell to *N.* and commend her / him to God.

Although our sorrow at her / his death is great,

great, too, is the hope we have in Jesus, who has triumphed

over death and showed us the depth of God’s love.

*Please stand.*

In a moment of silence,

let us call to mind all that *N.* has meant to us

and place *N.* into God’s hands.

*Silence.*

*Then the following is said.*

Loving God,

you created *N.* in love,

and your love has followed *N.* throughout her / his life;

now that *N.* has died,we ask you to gather her / him to yourself

and keep her / him safe forever.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

*All:* Amen.

*If only a small minority of those in the church will follow to the grave, a blessing of the people may be added here. If not, the service at the church is concluded with the following words.*

*Celebrant:* Let us go in peace to where *N.’s* body will be laid to rest.

*The service at the graveside proceeds as follows.*

**INTRODUCTION**

*Celebrant:* God will show us the path of life,

give us unbounded joy in his presence,

and at his right hand, everlasting pleasure. *(Psalm (15)16:11)*

We have commended *N.* to God’s merciful care,

and we shall now bless this grave

and commit *N.’s* body to the earth.

**BLESSING THE GRAVE**

*Celebrant:* Jesus said, ‘Come to me all who labour and are over-burdened,

and I will give you rest.’

Let us pray now that this grave,

where *N.’s* body will be placed,

may be a holy and peaceful resting place.

Lord Jesus,

you have promised in your mercy to grant rest to the weary;

bless and watch over this grave,

and grant that as *N.’s* body rests here in safety

she / he may rejoice in your heavenly kingdom,

where you live forever more.

*All:*  Amen.

**COMMITTAL**

*The coffin is lowered during or after the following words.*

*Celebrant:* Lord, you treat us as tenderly as a mother cares for her children;

you know that we are only dust:

We last no longer than grass,

we flourish and fade like the flowers of the field,

but your merciful goodness towards us lasts for ever.

Trusting in your goodness, we have commended *N.* to you,

and we now commit her / his body to the ground:

Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

Give to *N.* eternal rest, O Lord,

and let everlasting light shine upon her / him.

May she / he rest in peace.

*All:* Amen.

*Silence may be kept.*

**PRAYER OVER THE PEOPLE**

*The celebrant prays, finally, for the bereaved.*

*Celebrant:* A prayer for ourselves.

Father of all mercies,

we do not ask you to take away our pain, but to help us bear it.

We do not ask to forget, but for help to remember without despair.

We do not ask for answers to all our questions,

but for faith in your wisdom and love.

Give us courage to face each new day;

give us patience with ourselves and with others;

give us peace which exceeds our understanding.

We ask this in Jesus’ name.

*All:* Amen.

*The Celebrant’s hands are raised in blessing over those present.*

*Celebrant:* May the Lord bless you and take care of you.May the Lord be kind and gracious to you.May the Lord look on you with favourand give you peace.

*All:* Amen.