

A SERVICE OF THE WORD IN THE CASE OF A SUDDEN OR UNEXPECTED DEATH

Guidelines

1. The material in this service is provided as a resource for those who are responding to a sudden and unexpected death in their parish, school or other setting.
2. The service may be used as a stand-alone act of worship or material from it may be used at other suitable places in other services provided in the Book of Common Prayer.
3. The inclusion of creative ways for those who are grieving to express their sense of shock and loss is encouraged. For example, the writing of thoughts or prayers on pieces of paper to be placed on a 'tree' or at the foot of a cross during the Prayers may be appropriate. There may also be the need to allow family and/or friends share their memories of the person who has died in a series of a few short sentences interspersed with a response by all present.
4. Additional prayers for use at public worship or private prayer are included at the end of this booklet.
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Preparation

GREETING

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Thanks be to God.

or

Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.
The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

SENTENCES OF SCRIPTURE

God is our refuge and strength;
a very present help in trouble. *Psalms 46: 1*

I lift up my eyes to the hills –
from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth. *Psalms 121: 1-2*

This I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:
the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning. *Lamentations 3: 21-23*

The Lord is good, a strong refuge when trouble comes.
God is close to those who trust in him. *Nahum 1: 7*

BIDDING

We gather here today to mourn the loss of *N*, to express our sense of sorrow that *he/she* has died; to acknowledge as individuals and together that sense of loss, to support each other and *his/her* family, *N, N ... and N* and to be reassured that although *N* has died *his/her* influence and uniqueness are with us still. As people of the Church we express our trust in the God who cares for each one of us as we entrust *N* to him.

Silence is kept.

Expressing our sense of loss is difficult, and sharing our grief is hard, but this helps us as we move forward.

We will all miss *N* but those closest to *him/her* will miss *him/her* the most: *his/her family/class group/friends ...* and *his/her* death will always be part of who they are.

Today we also take comfort that even though we are very sad that *N* is no longer with us, *his/her* influence and uniqueness are here and part of who we are.

And so we pray:

Lord our God,
you are always faithful and true.
N. was suddenly (or violently, or tragically) taken from us.
Draw near to all who mourn *his/her* loss.
Comfort *his/her* family and friends
with the power and protection of the cross
and the assurance of eternal life,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

HYMN/OTHER MUSIC PENITENCE

When we cry out to the Lord in our trouble,
he will deliver us from our distress.

God will bring us out of darkness
into his marvellous light.

Lord Jesus, you have shown us the way to the Father:
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, your word is a light to our path:
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you are the good shepherd,
leading us into everlasting life:
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Other short penitential sentences may be inserted between the petitions of the Kyries. The Beatitudes (BCP pages 223-224) may also be used

If a priest is officiating he/she pronounces this absolution:

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent,
Have mercy on you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in eternal life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

If no priest is present the following prayer is said:

May the Father forgive us
and strengthen us to trust in his promises
all our days. Amen.

Ministry of the Word

At least one of the readings below must be used.

If only one reading is used it must be from the New Testament.

FIRST READING

Job 19: 23-27, Isaiah 61: 1-3, Romans 8,31-39 or 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18

PSALM

Psalms 23, 91, 121 or 139: 1-11

SECOND READING

Matthew 11: 28-30, Luke 12: 22-31, John 14: 1-6, 27

THE SERMON

Responding

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Let us confess the faith of the Church.
We believe in God the Father,
who made the world.
We believe in Jesus Christ, his Son,
who redeemed humankind.
We believe in the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God.

Or

Let us declare our faith in God:
**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

The Apostles' Creed or Nicene Creed may also be used.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

These intercessions may be adapted or added to as necessary.

Let us pray with confidence to God our Father,
who raised Christ his Son from the dead for the salvation of all.

Grant, Lord, that your servant *N* may know the fullness of life
which you have promised to those who love you.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Be close to those who mourn
and increase their faith in your undying love.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

We hold before you our memories of *N*...

*Short memorials may be read out
or presented at this point interspersed with the response:*

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

May we be strengthened in our faith,
live the rest of our lives in following your Son,
and be ready when you shall call us to eternal life.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Lord, we entrust all those who have died to your unfailing love,
that in them your perfect will may be fulfilled.

and we pray that we may share with them in your eternal kingdom,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

As our Saviour Christ has taught us, so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

or

As our Saviour Christ has taught us, we are bold to say:

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 thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Going Out As God's People

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Lord, bless us with your enabling love.
Heal our brokenness, that we may be true signs of that love.
As you send us out from this place,
be our constant companion.
Guide us in our efforts to better serve our neighbours
and those who struggle with this life,
along with all who love and support them.
Help us to share the life-giving power of your love
that those in need may experience your steadfast compassion.
Bless, guide and heal us, now and always
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

BLESSING

God grant to the living, grace,
to the departed, rest,
to the Church and the world, peace and concord;
and the blessing ...

or

May God give to you and to all those whom you love
his comfort and his peace, his light and his joy,
in this world and the next;
and the blessing ...

DISMISSAL

The Lord bless us and protect us,
to share in abundance of life in his Name. Amen.