

Planning your baby's funeral

Starting points and things to consider



We recognise that planning a baby funeral can be an emotionally challenging task. These suggestions are designed to be a starting point to consider what you would like to include as part of the service for your little one. You will find lots of material online if you want to look for more suggestions.

Some of the material below comes from a religious, and particularly Christian, perspective. This reflects the chaplaincy team. There is no requirement to have any religious content in your service whatsoever. We will also be happy to make space in the service for content from a different religion, and if you would like someone else to take the service for you then please just let us know.

At the end of this document (page 12) there are some **Frequently Asked Questions** which we hope you will find helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact us on 01908 996061 or via email chaplaincy@mkuh.nhs.uk if you are not sure about something.

The outline of a funeral – a service of farewell

Funerals tend to work best if they follow a pattern which mirrors our psychological need. So, the outline looks something like this –

1. Introduction –

Acknowledging why we are here – what has happened (page 4)

2. Ways of expressing feelings –

Poems – letter to the baby(ies) etc. (page 7)

3. Seeking comfort –

In a religious context this might be prayer or a reading from a holy book, but it could be asking for support and help, or listening to a piece of music which is meaningful for you.

4. Saying goodbye –

Formally this is called the committal – in a religious context it is into ‘God’s hands’

However, you might rather say something like – ‘ . . . to be at peace for ever’ (page 11)

5. Moving on –

back to the obligations and responsibilities we have
– maybe seeking new hope for the future

A variety of suggestions for sections 1,2 and 4 are shown below for you to choose from. If you have particular requests for sections 3 and 5 just let us know.

Introductions

1. We gather here on what is a very sad occasion for us all. We were looking forward to a time of joy and happiness, and instead there are tears of grief. We had great hopes but now we're left with a feeling of emptiness.

All that has happened seems futile and pointless. There are many questions but no answers. There is much we do not understand. We are left feeling lost and angry.

Yet there are truths to which we can turn. The God who made us all loves us always. Through Jesus Christ God has promised never to forsake us.

Just as others before us have found strength in these promises, so we too, even in our darkness, can turn to them for hope.

2. For everything there is a season,
and a time for every activity under heaven:

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

a time to sow, and a time to reap ;

a time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to tear 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 tear, and a time to mend;

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.

Sadly, sometimes the times come when they are least wanted or expected.

Many centuries ago the Greek playwright, Euripides, said,

“What greater pain could mortals have than this:

to see their children dead before their eyes?”

That is still true today.

3. ‘As one whom a mother comforts, I will comfort you,’
says the Lord.

We come here to thank God for your baby

To thank God for their conception

To thank God for the months they were carried in X's womb

and in Y's heart

But we gather too to share our grief, disappointment and anger,
that a life promised has gone.

We are here as parents, siblings and friends

to lay our questions, our sadness, and our hope

at the feet of Jesus Christ

who opened his arms to receive all

who were wounded and distressed.

We have come to acknowledge our feelings

of guilt, failure, and insecurity,
and to look for reassurance that death is not the end
but a new beginning.

Many centuries ago the Greek philosopher Euripides said,
“What greater pain could mortals have than this:
to see their children dead before their eyes?”

That is still true today.

Yet like thousands before us we hear too the words of Jesus Christ:
Jesus Christ says

‘It is not your heavenly father’s will
that one of these little ones be lost’.

Jesus also says,

Those who come to me, I will not cast out’.

So let us turn to God for help.

4. We gather here on what is a very sad occasion for us all.
We were looking forward to a time of joy and happiness,
and instead there are tears of grief.

We had great hopes,

but now we are left with a feeling of emptiness.

All that has happened seems futile and pointless.

There are many questions but no answers.

There is much we do not understand.

We are left feeling lost, confused and angry.

As we come to say ‘goodbye’

we come also to seek hope and peace for the days ahead.

5. A month ago your lives were full of hope and excitement.

Then you were struck by a blow so hard

your lives were changed for ever.

And so it is we gather here today

to say ‘goodbye’ to N,

to acknowledge that their earthly life has ended

before it fully began,

but to sense their soul, set free,

and to seek to encourage and support one another

for the days ahead.

6.

Many centuries ago the Greek playwright, Euripides, said,

“What greater pain could mortals have than this: to see their children dead
before their eyes?”

Sadly that is still true today.

And so we are gathered to say ‘goodbye’ to N.

7.

It is sometimes said that the pain of loss is the price of loving.
You are here today to say goodbye to N, whom you love;
to acknowledge the pain and grief that his/her/their death has given you,
and to support each other in looking to the future.

8. For everything there is a season,
and a time for every activity under heaven:
a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to sow, and a time to reap ;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to tear 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 tear, and a time to mend;
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.
Sadly, sometimes the times come when they are least wanted or expected.

9. We are here to remember the value of life,
to commit back to God the life he has given,
which has now been taken away.
We come to pay respect to this little one
who has not known the joy or the pain of this world
but who is known by a loving God
and remembered in the hearts of those who love them.

Ways of expressing feelings

Here are some poems people have found helpful, you may prefer to choose your own. You may prefer to write something yourself, a poem or a letter to your baby.

Depending on length one or two (occasionally three) things can be used here.

*Don't let them say I wasn't born,
That something stopped my heart,
I felt each tender squeeze you gave,
I've loved you from the start.*

Although my body you can't hold,
It doesn't mean I'm gone,
This world was worthy, not, of me,
God chose that I move on.

I know the pain that drowns your soul,
What you are forced to face,
You have my word, I'll fill your arms,
Someday we will embrace.

You'll hear that it was "meant to be,
God doesn't make mistakes"
But that won't soften your worst blow,
Or make your heart not ache.

I'm watching over all you do,
Another child you'll bear,
Believe me when I say to you,
That I am always there.

There'll come a time, I promise you,
When you will hold my hand,
Stroke my face and kiss my lips,
And then you'll understand.

Although I've never breathed your air,
Or gazed into your eyes,
That doesn't mean I never "was" –
An Angel never dies

Life Within

To have known life within
Is to have known joy
And the freshness of beginnings;
To have life snatched away
Leaves me with hands outstretched
My arms open wide,
Feeling emptiness and space
Rather than the weight of my child,
With newborn warmth & silken hair.

My body,
So full of kicks and squirms one day,
Is barren and lifeless the next -
Stripped of its child,
That I never knew,
Yet I did know,
And loved

To our baby

To have carried you
But not held you
To have talked to you
But not heard you
To have felt you
But not touched you
To have loved you
But never to have (seen or) known you

We/I had hopes
But have been left with dreams
Be happy, be good,
We love you.

We never got to hold you

Or see your precious smile
For God thought you too special
And took you back meanwhile.
Although we cannot see you
Or feel your gentle touch,
You know that we still think of you
And love you just as much.

And so, until we meet you,

Please remember all we say,
Your parents love will never die
And never fade away

The world may never notice
If a Snowdrop doesn't bloom,
Or even pause to wonder
If the petals fall too soon.
But every life that ever forms,
Or ever comes to be,
Touches the world in some small way
For all eternity.
The little one we longed for
Was swiftly here and gone.
But the love that was then planted
Is a light that still shines on.
And though our arms are empty,
Our hearts know what to do.
Every beating of our hearts
Says that we love you.

They say there is a reason,
They say that time will heal,
But neither time nor reason,
Will change the way we feel,
For no-one knows the heartache,
That lies behind our smiles,
No-one knows how many times,
We have broken down and cried.

We want to tell you something,
So there won't be any doubt,
You're so wonderful to think of,
But so hard to be without.

If we could visit heaven
even for a day
Maybe for a moment
our pain would go away
we'd put our arms around you
and whisper words so true
That living life without you
Is so so hard to do.

No matter how we spend our days
no matter what we do
No morning dawns or evening falls
when we don't think of you.

To us you were so special
Much more than words can say
we still love you little baby
And we remember you every day.

Feelings we will treasure,
Sometimes they'll make us sad,
Because, our little Baby
We are your Mum and Dad.

Dad's Poem

We never had the chance to play, to laugh, to rock, to wiggle
We long to hold you, touch you now, and listen to your giggle.
She'll always be your mother, and I'll always be your Dad,
You will always be our child – the child we never had.

But now you're gone ... but yet you're here.
We sense you everywhere, You are our sorrow and our joy.
There's love in every tear.
Just know our love goes deep and strong, that we'll forget you never,
The child we had, but never had – and yet will have forever.

Saying goodbye

A formal committal is something like this:

As N was cradled in the womb,
so we have commended N
to pass from our loving presence
(into the hands of almighty God,)
to be cradled in peace forever –

We now commit N's body to be *cremated/buried*,
earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust,
having our whole trust and confidence
in the mercy of God.

A semi-formal committal is something like:

We come now to say our final goodbye;
as we commit the body of
N to be *cremated/buried*,
so we seek for ourselves
the reassurance that she will be at peace for ever.

This poem can be used instead of a more formal committal:

Into the freedom of wind and sunshine
We let you go
Into the dance of the stars and the planets
We let you go
Into the wind's breath and the hands of the star maker
We let you go
We love you, we miss you, we want you to be happy
Go safely, go dancing, go running home

Frequently Asked Questions

How much will my baby's funeral cost?

The hospital will pay the burial or cremation fee for a baby born at anytime before the 24th week of pregnancy, after this you can claim the cost back from the government. (The funeral directors will support you to do this.)

If I have a burial can I have a headstone?

Yes, you can have a headstone if your child is buried in one of the council's cemeteries. You will need to 'purchase' the grave, which costs approximately £80 and then you will need to arrange and pay for the headstone itself.

Who can come to my baby's funeral?

You are free to invite whoever you would like to the service. We will provide approximately 10 copies of the words you have chosen for the service. If you would like more than this please do let us know.

What music can I choose for my baby's service?

For a cremation you are free to choose any music which is commercially available. You can check on <https://wesleymedia.co.uk/music-search> to see what the options are. This will need to be sent to the chaplaincy team at least 2 working days before the service so that the music can be requested. For a burial you can bring a handheld device to play any music you would like.

Do I have to close the curtains at the end of a cremation service?

No, this is a personal choice. Some people find it easier to leave the chapel at the end of the service with the curtains closed.

Can I bring flowers or other items to stay with my baby?

Yes, you can bring toys, blankets, flowers etc which can be cremated or buried with your baby. If you would like photos or small toys to be included in the casket you will need to arrange this with the team and drop them at the hospital at least 3 working days before the service.

Can I carry my child's coffin into the cremation service or to the graveside?

Yes, we will ask you on the day of the service if you would like to do this. There is no pressure, we, or the funeral directors will do this for you if you would prefer.

How much ash will there be if my child is cremated?

This depends on what stage of pregnancy you were at. The minimum amount would be a handful and the maximum amount would be more like a bowl full. If you have chosen to keep your child's ashes then your child's cremation will be done individually, and all the ash you receive will be from your child only

Ashes are available to collect approximately 2 working days after the service by phoning Crownhill Crematorium on 01908 568112.