

Funeral

RCNZ

Funeral

Note: This form is provided to give guidance to pastors conducting a Christian funeral.

Welcome

The minister may welcome family members, friends and brothers and sisters in Christ. After thanking those present for their support of the family, he shall continue:

We have come together before God in this service on the occasion of the death of _____ *name of deceased*, to thank God for _____ *his/her* life and witness among us, and for all God has done in and through _____ *him/her*.

We have also come together to comfort _____ *his wife/her husband* and family and friends with the words of the Scriptures, and with the hope that we share in Jesus Christ.

Opening Scripture sentences

The death of a loved one causes us to reflect on life and death. Listen to these words from the Scriptures:

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.”¹

“For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.”²

Those who have put their trust in Christ may draw comfort from these words:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”³

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”⁴

Other possible Scriptures: Psalm 103:13, 14; 116:15; 124:8;
2 Corinthians 1:3ff.

The following elements of worship may then be used; the order is merely a guide.

Sing a psalm or hymn

Prayer

Almighty and gracious God, our Father in heaven, you are our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Lead us, we pray, to put our trust entirely in you. We come to you in the name of your one and only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, who died for our sins and rose from the dead. Grant us peace and pardon, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Seeing that we have in Jesus a high priest who can sympathise with our weaknesses, we approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy, and find grace to help us in this, our time of need.

We thank you for the precious promises of your Word. We praise you for the light of the gospel. We acknowledge your sovereign will and your infinite compassion. Look on us in our sorrow. Enable us to hear your Word, so that through patience, and the comfort of the Scriptures, we may have hope. Help us to hold firm our confidence in your forgiving mercy. Give us the assurance of eternal life, through the Lord Jesus, who bore our sins in his own body on the cross, who rose from the dead, and who is exalted at your right hand.

Amen.

An Old Testament Scripture reading:

Psalm 23; Psalm 27:1–5; Psalm 73:23–26; Psalm 90; Psalm 103; Psalm 139.

Sing a psalm or hymn

A New Testament Scripture reading:

John 10:9–11, 27–30; John 14:1–3, 15–20, 25–27; Romans 5:1–11; Romans 8:1–11; Romans 8:28–39; 1 Corinthians 15:20–28, 35–38, 50–58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11; 1 Peter 1:3–9; Revelation 21:1–4, 22–27; Revelation 22:1–7.

Prayer

Almighty and most merciful God, we come to you again in prayer, acknowledging your sovereign power and your right as our Creator to give life, and to take it away, as it seems good to you. Help us to remember all your mercies, and your saving power revealed to us in Jesus Christ. We thank you for your grace given to _____ *name of deceased* in bringing _____ *him/her* to a saving faith in Christ.

We pray for those who are sad and grieving. May they accept your will. Enable them to trust in you as their God. Grant them the comfort of Christ. Uphold and strengthen them in this time of sorrow.

We pray that all of us who remain here may continue faithful to the end, following Jesus Christ, so that one day we may receive the crown of righteousness that will not fade away. May we be received into heaven, with all your elect, to adore you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.

A psalm or hymn

Text and sermon

Prayer

A psalm or hymn

Benediction

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all, now and forevermore.

Doxology or threefold amen

After the service opportunity may be given to members of the family and friends to speak about the life and faith of the deceased. Alternatively, this opportunity may be given during the service; encourage those speaking to be brief.

¹ Job 1:21.

² 1 Timothy 6:7.

³ John 3:16.

⁴ John 11:25–26.

Committal or graveside service

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:12–22

The minister may invite those gathered to recite together the words of the Apostles' Creed or Q&A 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism.

Prayer

Almighty and merciful God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, grant that we may realise the brevity and uncertainty of human life. Enable us to live before you in godly fear all our days. Help us to look for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We pray that you will comfort the sorrowing and support them in their grief. Raise us up each one from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. Grant us faith in Christ, so that when we depart from this life, we may rest in him. At the resurrection may we be found acceptable in your sight, not through our own works, but in and through the merit of our Lord Jesus, who died on the cross and rose again.

Let us now pray the words that our Lord Jesus taught us to pray, saying:

Version A

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,

Version B

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will
be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,

as we forgive those who
trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power and the glory,
forever and ever.
Amen.

as we forgive those who sin
against us.
And lead us not into
temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
forever and ever.
Amen.

Committal

As (or after) the casket is lowered the minister shall say:

Since it has pleased our good and gracious Lord to call into his glory our beloved _____*brother/sister* _____*name*, we now commit _____*his/her* body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died, was buried, and rose again for us; and at whose coming in glorious majesty the earth and the sea shall give up their dead; and the bodies of those who sleep in him shall be changed, and made like his glorious body, according to the working of his power.

To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Read: Psalm 23

The Lord's blessing¹

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;
The Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace. Amen.

As soon as the service comes to an end the minister shall invite those gathered to drop flowers or to cast sand into the grave (if the family so desires) and to speak a personal word of comfort to the bereaved. He shall lead the way by doing so himself.

¹ Numbers 6:24–26.