

Funerals



The church will always be there to help you through one of life's most difficult times. A Church of England-led funeral is available to everyone, giving support before, during, and after the service, for as long as it is needed.

The Akeman Benefice - here for you

Hope

The message at all funerals in the Akeman Benefice, wherever they happen, is one of hope. Although there is sadness because someone you know and love has died, in every funeral there will also be a message of hope in life after death.



Flexibility

Each person is unique, in personality and in life experience. An Akeman Benefice funeral allows you to give thanks for the unique person you know and loved in a way that gives comfort and hope.

A Church of England funeral can be held in a place that you choose – whether a church, a crematorium, or a green burial ground. The funeral can include unique details, whether that is what people wear, the music that is played, readings that are chosen, or simply a photograph at the front. Talk to your priest about the person you want to give thanks for and work out what is possible.

The prayers at a funeral can also reflect a unique life. They could include prayers for work or a hobby that has been important, for those who have cared for a person during a final illness, and for family members by name. They can be led by the priest or by someone amongst family or friends who is at ease leading prayers in public.

First Steps in Arranging a Funeral

There is so much to think about when someone has died. There are formalities to complete, people need to be told, and a funeral to organise. Find out below some of the first things that need to happen, and discover practical things you can do to make a start.

After the initial news of the death of someone you knew and loved, there are some important things that need to be done. These are two of the more immediate things:

1. **Register the death.** There is some helpful guidance on this on the [government's births, marriages, and deaths advice page](#).
2. **Meet a funeral director.** If you're not yet sure which one to use, you can find one near to you on the [National Association of Funeral Directors' website](#), or on the [National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors \(SAIF\) website](#).

The funeral director will talk to you about what kind of funeral you would like. One of the first questions they will ask is whether you would like a burial or a cremation. You might like to discuss this with other family members if you are not sure what the preference was of the person who died. You will then be asked where you would like the service to be held. The funeral director will ask about various details, including:

- Whether the funeral should be civil, humanist, or religious. Remember you do not have to be religious or a churchgoer to have a Church of England funeral – it is open to all.
- Whether there is a particular minister or celebrant you have in mind to take the funeral.



- What sort of coffin you would like.
- How you would like the coffin to be transported to the service.
- Whether you would like flowers.
- They might ask whether you have any thoughts on music or other special ideas to reflect the life of the person you knew. The person who leads the service will talk to you more about this.

If you choose to have a Church of England funeral in the Akeman Benefice, someone from the church will visit you to listen to the story of the person you knew, and will go through all the details of the funeral service itself.

Funeral Locations

When someone dies, a Church of England funeral is available for them in their own parish, whether they were churchgoers or not. Funerals can be held in the local church or led by a church minister in a cemetery, crematorium, or green burial site.

Church Funerals

There are seven churches in the Akeman Benefice and each church serves a particular parish – a geographical area. To explore the option of having a funeral in a different parish, it is best to first contact your priest to discuss where you would like it to be.

Cremation Funerals

Families who wish to have a cremation may decide to have the whole funeral at a crematorium. The service would take place in the building and the coffin would remain there afterwards for the cremation.

Involving the church at a cremation

A church minister can lead the whole service at the crematorium, or it is possible to have part of the service at the crematorium and part of it in church. The church service can take place before or after the cremation service. Your priest can help you decide which is the best option for you and your family. Your priest can also be there for you after the funeral and can offer prayers for when it is time to put the ashes in their final resting place.

Burial Funerals

There are several options if you choose to have a traditional burial in the ground. These are burial locations your church minister can come to:

An outdoor or green burial site

An outdoor funeral brings the sights and sounds of nature into a funeral service. Whilst there is some risk of bad weather, it can be just the right choice for some funerals. The coffin will be carried out to the burial site and the priest can do the whole funeral at the graveside.



Involving the church at a green burial site

If you would like, a service can take place in church followed by a shorter time of prayers by the graveside when it is time for the coffin to be placed in the ground. It does not matter if the burial ground is in a different location to the church. Your priest and funeral director will let you know how they can help you organise this.

In a cemetery or churchyard

If the person who has died can be buried in a churchyard or a cemetery, the priest can take the whole service outside at the graveside.

Involving the church at a cemetery or churchyard burial

Usually, there is a service in the church first and when the time comes for placing the coffin into the ground, everyone moves outside. If the cemetery is in a different place to the church, the priest and funeral director can help you organise this.

For a funeral at any church in the Akeman Benefice you should contact the Rector or Benefice Administrator in the first instance. If your loved one lived in any of the parishes in the benefice a priest or a licensed lay minister will be available to take the service. All of them are specially trained and have plenty of experience presiding at funerals.

Sometimes the place where the person organising the funeral lives and the place where your loved one spent most of their life might be different from the place where they died. Older people move into residential care or sheltered housing in later life, but their 'home town' might still be the place where they wanted to have a funeral. To explore the option of having a funeral in a place other than where your loved one lived at the time they died, it is best to first contact the priest of the church where you would like it to be. We are always happy to discuss this in the Akeman Benefice.

Funeral Service – Step by Step

The Arrival

When everyone has arrived at the funeral venue, the coffin will be carried by the pallbearers (who could be family and friends) into the building or onto the burial site, depending on where the funeral is to take place.

If the funeral is in a crematorium or in a church, music can be played as the coffin is carried in. You may prefer no music, and that is fine too.

Some funerals taking place outdoors have included live music at this point, such as a flautist or trumpeter, to accompany the coffin to the graveside. But it is also fine to have no music at all. The priest may also say some words of comfort and hope as the coffin is being carried.



Choosing a Hymn

When everyone is gathered, a hymn may be sung. It is fine if you do not want any hymn, but if you do, here are some popular choices for funerals:

- Abide with me
- All things bright and beautiful
- Amazing Grace
- Be still for the presence of the Lord
- Dear Lord and Father
- For the beauty of the earth
- Great is thy faithfulness
- The Lord's my shepherd
- Jerusalem
- Lead us Heavenly Father, lead us
- Lord of all hopefulness
- Love divine, all loves excelling
- Make me a channel of Your peace
- The day Thou gavest
- The King of love my shepherd is

Remembering a Unique Life

After the hymn, there is time to listen to the story of the person you knew and loved. You, another friend or relative, or the priest can do this. It may include readings and/or music, which reflect the character or interests of the person who has died.

A Message of Hope

You can choose the Bible reading for this part of the service if you would like to. The priest will speak about God's promises, of the hope that death is not the end.

Whatever your beliefs, hearing these words can bring a sense of hope and comfort, even at this very difficult time. Below are some popular choices:

- John 14.1 - 6, 27
- Revelation 21.1 – 7
- I Corinthians 13
- Psalm 23
- Ecclesiastes 3.1 – 8
- Psalm 139



Reflecting and Remembering

In a time of reflection, music can be played, or silence may be kept. Prayers will be said too.

At this point it might be appropriate to lay flowers on the coffin, or express your sadness and loss in another way. Some families choose a cardboard coffin so that messages and pictures can be drawn on it. Perhaps a poem or a reading may be just right.

Talk to your priest about any ideas you might have. Tell them about the person you knew and loved and they can offer suggestions for special ways to make it personal.

In your order of service there may also be time for another hymn, if you would like that. Talk to your priest about how much time you will have, especially if the funeral is taking place at a crematorium.

Saying Goodbye

It will then be time for the farewell. The priest will pray, asking God to keep your loved one in his care, using words that have been used for centuries:

“...earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust: in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ”.

This may be a very emotional moment. It may be possible to have some special music played at this point.

The priest will say a blessing and music may be played as the mourners leave the venue.

A Moment with God

There is so much to think about when organising a funeral, but God is with you and your church will help you through it.

After the Funeral

A place to be

Sometimes after a funeral all that is needed is a place to sit and think. In the Akeman Benefice churches are normally open all day, every day, and anyone can walk in and take a few moments in the peace and quiet.

A place to talk

Sometimes a funeral prompts big questions about life and death. All members of the Akeman Benefice Ministry Team are there to listen to your thoughts, and help you make sense of what has happened.



There are contact details on our website and on our monthly bulletins. The Church of England has centuries of experience in thinking about life and death, so it is a good place to take your questions.

A place to go

Every Sunday, and sometimes in the week, Christians gather together in our parish churches to give thanks to God, to pray, and to know God's strength for the week ahead. Everyone is welcome to join us. You might find new friends as well as the peace and comfort of God's presence.

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Extracts taken from: <https://www.churchofengland.org/life-events/funerals>