

Order of service for a Vigil

I find a service such as this one particularly helpful for a church member. It is not uncommon now for the family to want a private committal service prior to the funeral and where that is the case, to hold a vigil on the night before the funeral service allows the person who has died to rest in the church building where they were a faithful member.

I have included the celebration of communion as part of this service rather than in the main funeral service. This is because often at the funeral there will be many people present – including close family members – who would not want to receive communion. By placing the communion in this smaller, more intimate setting, it provides hope and sustenance to the deceased's fellow church members and other Christian brothers and sisters.

As the coffin is received at the church door, the minister sprinkles it with water with these words:

Minister: In the waters of baptism, N died with Christ and rose with him to eternal life. As Christ went through the deep waters of death for us, so may he bring us to the fullness of resurrection life with N and all the redeemed.

The congregation is encouraged to follow behind the coffin and remain standing as the coffin is placed on the catafalque.

Symbols of the deceased person's faith are placed on the coffin, in silence or accompanied by the following words:

On the placing of a Bible:

In life, N cherished the Gospel of Christ. May Christ now greet her/him with these words of eternal life: Come, blessed of my Father!

On the placing of a Cross:

Lord Jesus Christ, for the love of N and each one of us, you bore our sins on the cross.

On the lighting of the Paschal Candle, placed next to the coffin:

May the light of Christ, rising in glory, banish all darkness from our hearts and minds!

A hymn may be sung, or a Psalm read together

A Bible reading is read. If Communion is to be celebrated as part of the service, a gospel reading should be used.

Silence may be kept, or a brief sermon given.

A time should be kept for prayer, either silently or led prayers of intercession.

The Lord's Prayer should be said either here or after the consecration of the communion elements.

All should stand for the Peace

Minister: Jesus said, Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.
Not as the world gives do I give you.
Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. Alleluia.
The peace of the risen Lord be always with you.
And also with you.
All may exchange a sign of peace.

Holy Communion

Holy Communion should be celebrated according to the rites authorised by the tradition of the church where the service is held.

After they have been consecrated, tokens of the bread and wine may be placed upon the coffin with these words:

Lord Jesus Christ, you sustain us through our lives with your body and blood in the Eucharistic meal. Be present with *N* as *she/he* travels the journey of death into the arms of God.

All baptised Christians are invited to receive communion

The bread of heaven in Christ Jesus
The cup of life in Christ Jesus

After all have received communion, a prayer should be said

All: **Heavenly Father, in your Son Jesus Christ,
you have given us a true faith and a sure hope.
Strengthen this faith and hope in us all our days,
that we may live as those who believe in the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection to eternal life;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN**

Minister: On the night before Jesus died, after supper with his friends, they sang a hymn together, and departed into the darkness of the night. So we sing a hymn before departing in silence or resting in prayer, in the confusion of our grief, but with the hope of heaven in our hearts.

A hymn is sung and the congregation is encouraged to spend time in silence or leave silently when it is ended.

Prayers and liturgy have been taken and adapted from Church of England Common Worship Funeral Order and Roman Catholic Order of Christian Funerals.