

Example of a non-religious cremation service

Duration: about 25 minutes is usual.

Officiant: this could be a humanist officiant, member of the family or friend

Music: choose music during your entry into the chapel.

Introduction

Friends, we are meeting here today to honour the life of (full name) whom we always knew as (nickname). A funeral ceremony is an opportunity to join in taking leave of someone we have loved and respected, but it is more than that, it is the celebration of their life and personality and a time to comfort those of their family and friends who are here today and have been affected by their death. Our ceremony will be short, simple and non-religious. Although (the deceased) did not believe in religion, they did believe in the good within human beings and felt very strongly about the individual's right to freedom of choice in the main decisions about life and death.

Perhaps you would join me in a few thoughts about life and death. The separateness and uniqueness of each human life is the basis of our grief in bereavement. Look through the whole world and there is no one like the one you have lost. But they still live on in your memories. Though no longer a visible part of your lives, they will remain a member of your family or circle through the influence they had on you and the special part they played in your lives. We know that the value and meaning of life consists in living it and living it well. People who have been a strength and comfort to others and have worked for future generations, deriving fulfilment and satisfaction from so doing, these are the people who bring value and meaning to life.

The tree of life

The death of each of us is in the order of things; it follows life as surely as night follows day. We can take the tree of life as a symbol. The human race is the trunk and branches of this tree, and individuals are the leaves which appear one season, flourish for a summer and then die. I too am like a leaf on this tree and one day I shall be torn off by a storm, or I shall simply decay and fall and mingle with the earth at its roots. But while I live, I am conscious of the tree's flowing sap and steadfast strength. Deep down in my consciousness is the consciousness of a collective life, a life of which I am a part as to which I make a minute but unique contribution. When I die and fall, the tree remains nourished to some small degree by my manifestation of life. Millions of leaves have preceded me, and millions will follow me; but the tree itself grows and endures.

The tribute

In this section, the life, the love, the failures, the humour, the accomplishments of the deceased can be described in as much detail as desired. Family

members or friends could speak, if they wish.

A quiet moment

A moment of quiet may be included, and those with a religious belief might wish to say a prayer.

Poetry

This could be a favourite poem, or a poem that could have applied to the deceased, for example:

Happy the man and happy he alone, he can call today his own
He who, secure within, can say:
Tomorrow do thy worst, for I have lived today, come fair or foul or rain or shine
The joys I have possessed in spite of fate are mine
Not heaven itself over the past hath power but what has
been has and I have had my hour.

Committal

A committal does not have to occur, but if desired the words below can be used. Members of the family could say farewell first, by placing a rose or flower on the coffin. "Would you please stand for the committal". To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose on earth, a time to be born and a time to die. Here in this last act, in sorrow but without fear, in love and appreciation, we commit (deceased's name) to it's natural end.

Music

A favourite record, tape or CD could be played at this point (or even during the committal)

Closing words

We have been remembering with love and gratitude of a life that has ended. Let us return to our own homes and to our work, enriched and inspired by these memories. I leave you with the words of a North American Indian:

When I am dead, cry for me a little
Think of me sometimes, but not too much,
Think of me now and again, as I was in life
At some moments it is pleasant to recall, but not for too long
Leave me in peace and I *will* leave *you* in peace

Music

Choose for the end - sit and listen before you leave the chapel, if you prefer.