

Music: can be a main feature of the funeral, or you may choose to have none. Either live music, cd's or multi media presentations may be used.

Photographs, symbols, letters and treasured mementos: Include these by placing them either inside or on the casket or having a display at the funeral.

All age groups can be involved and it helps children and young people to have a part to play, so you may like to consider how to involve them as you plan.

Pallbearers: anyone of your choice may be a pallbearer. Funeral directors also have trolleys on which the casket can sit.

Costs

Most people will use a funeral director, feel free to phone around a few firms and compare costs.

You can reduce costs significantly by doing a little more yourselves.

There is a funeral grant available for beneficiaries from Work and Income New Zealand. This is income and asset tested.

Many funeral firms will allow you to pay costs over a period of time – ask them what kind of deposit you would need to make and what their terms are.

For some people pre-arranging and paying for the funeral eases a burden later – ask your local funeral director about this. A list of funeral directors is printed in the Yellow Pages under "F".

For further information on anything mentioned in this pamphlet please talk to a hospice or community health staff person. You may contact a funeral director of your choosing who will meet with you to discuss your concerns at no obligation or cost.



*Our namesake
The Venerable Mary Potter*

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Funeral Planning

Funeral planning

Introduction

This pamphlet is designed to help you and those around you begin thinking about funerals.

Often people find that being prepared for the many decisions which have to be made helps to ease a difficult time. Now may be a time when you feel the need to talk together about funerals but it is hard to know where to start.

Although a ceremony is not a legal requirement, often it helps those who are grieving to be able to express themselves in some kind of farewell. In this way, the funeral can be very much for the surviving family and whanau and friends.

However, the funeral is also a reflection of the person who has died. This pamphlet is therefore also for those who face their own dying – an opportunity for you to think about your wishes and to leave instructions for others.

Immediate concerns

When someone dies at home there is nothing that needs to be done straight away, although you can phone the district nurse, GP or funeral director if you wish. If the person has died during the night you may feel comfortable leaving things until morning.

It is not necessary to move or adjust the body in any way, although some people find that washing and dressing the body is something they want to do. Many people say that the time immediately following the death can be the most private and comforting time – there is no need to rush things at this stage.

When someone dies in the hospice, the nurses will immediately notify the next-of-kin. Family members are welcome but not obliged to come in to the hospice. The doctor certifies the death

and the body is washed and dressed if needed. In every step of the process, the family and whanau members are welcome to assist the nurses in caring for the person who has died. The nurses will contact the funeral director you have chosen to come and collect the body. This usually happens within 8-10 hours of the death.

Family members are welcome to remain with the person who has died until the funeral director comes, however, this is a matter of choice. You may leave prior to their arrival if you wish. After the body has been removed, the patient's room is then blessed.

Legal requirements

There are specific regulations relating to death in New Zealand. These involve registration of the death and disposal of the body.

Often funeral directors are the people who handle these legal aspects on behalf of families. However, it may be useful for you to know something of what is involved, or even to organise this yourselves with a little planning.

There is some paperwork involved and this differs depending on whether there is to be a cremation or a burial. If you are interested in finding out more about this, ask to speak with a hospice social worker.

The other legal requirement is some kind of casket or container for the body. You will need to check with your local City Council to find out what the regulations are for your area. Families may ask to purchase a casket from a funeral director's firm – you can do this even if you decide to arrange other things yourselves.

Embalming is not a legal requirement, but most funeral directors will recommend embalming to ensure adequate hygiene and also to give family members as pleasant a visual memory as possible.

Again, even if you plan to handle other aspects of the funeral, you can still ask a funeral home to do the embalming.

Some City Councils provide for "natural burial".

The funeral

This is an opportunity to grieve and give a farewell, and also to celebrate the life of the person who has died. Here are some points you might like to consider:

Venue: what is appropriate for the person – church / chapel, clubrooms, garden, home or hall?

Celebrant: any person can take a funeral. You may wish to consider clergy, funeral celebrant, friend or family member. Do talk to other family members and the celebrant about what you want. Funerals can be as formal or informal as you want.

Newspaper Notices: these are optional and can be formal or informal – perhaps you might like to put some thought into planning the notice to ensure a personal message.

Casket: whether you purchase from the funeral home or provide your own you may like to consider decorating the outside and lining the inside with special fabric.

Clothing: it may be appropriate to dress the body in formal clothing or something casual. Perhaps family members would like to be involved in dressing the body.

Paying Respects: some people find it comforting to have the body at home for the few days before the funeral. If you decide to visit the funeral home, children can accompany you if you wish.

Flowers: flowers from your own or a friends garden can be a way of adding a personal touch.