

A Short service of Thanksgiving for those we love

Offered for use by those who cannot attend funerals

Jesus said – I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though they die, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

The eternal God is our refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms.

We do not live only for ourselves. At every turn life links us with God; in death we come face to face. In life or death we are in God's hands. Christ lived and died – and lives again so that in life or death we can belong to him.

So you are invited to pray:

Though we cannot be physically together
I join my heart with all who honour our loved one who has died
Each of us has been touched by their life
And so are affected by their loss.
Help us to hear again the great words of our faith
Words that have sustained those in every generation
Who, like us, have mourned those they have loved and lost.

We pause to consider
To remember
And with quiet gratitude to give thanks for that life now passed
and our lives that continue.

We seek to renew our trust in God
And discover even in our isolation
The truth of those words of Jesus
"I will never leave you or forsake you"

Father, your love is stronger than death
By you we are all being brought into life
Help us as we hear the promises of your word
To believe them and receive the comfort they offer

You are the giver of hope
Fill us with joy and peace
So that in believing our fears might be dispelled
Our loneliness eased
And our hope re-awakened

PAUSE

This is the moment in our service when we would normally share the stories and memories of the one we have lost – perhaps through a sermon or a eulogy – but you have your own story of this person's life – so spend some time journeying through that story.

Think about your earliest memory of them, and how you came to know each other.
Think about the person they were – what were the qualities in them that you valued and admired
What were the things they did that made you smile?
What were the places that you met them – take a moment to remember the times you had there
What were the events that you shared together that you will always treasure
What did you accomplish together?
When were they there for you in your own struggles?
What were the events that you shared together? What memories will you always treasure?
What were their foibles – the things that made them unique – perhaps the things that at times drove you crazy

Hold those memories in your heart
Spend time inhabiting them
They are there to be recalled
There to sustain you in your grief
Those memories cannot be taken from you
And you should not be afraid to share them.

And there will of course be regrets
Don't feel that you have to contain them
These are natural,
and as you hold them in God's presence,
Seek God's comfort and healing.

There may be things done and said
That you wish had not happened
They are passed now,
None of us live perfect lives,
But God offers the gift of grace and forgiveness.

Current circumstances may have prevented you, or those close to them from being with them in their final hours
Acknowledge the pain of that, but they will have understood
And the one thing they would have longed for,
Is that those they loved would not have to suffer as they did.
They will have understood,
And they will have found comfort in knowing that even in their isolation
They were protecting and helping those they loved.

And as God can be present with us in our mourning
Draw strength from knowing that God would have been with them
Perhaps unseen and unnoticed
But God would have been with them as their days came to an end.
Do not deny yourself grief and regret
It cannot be eased by simply ignoring it
Acknowledge it, seek God's strength to bear it
And God's healing presence and your journey through it.

And so we pray:

Gracious God
We praise and thank you for the world in which we live
And for the lives you have given us.
Even in this time of isolation and anxiety
We come to appreciate even more those things which for a season we have been denied.

We thank you for the new life offered to us in Jesus Christ
Through his death on a cross, and his raising to life again.
We thank you for the life of the one we mourn today
And all that they meant to us
For those things in their life which gave us glimpses of your goodness and love
Especially we thank you for those memories and moments that we have just recalled.

Thank you that in you, sins are forgiven
Suffering comes to its end

And that the same love that surrounds us in our grief
Welcomes those who enter your everlasting Kingdom.
Help us to be content to release them to you

Grant that our grief will be neither overwhelming nor unending
Assure us of your love
Strengthen our trust in your grace
And grant us your peace
Through Jesus Christ our Lord AMEN

O God of infinite compassion
Look in love and pity on your sorrowing servants
Be our support, our strength, our shield
That we may trust in you
And be delivered from our distresses – and we pray together, the words of Jesus

Our Father in Heaven
Hallowed be your name
Your Kingdom come
Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us
May we not be led into temptation
But deliver us from evil
For the Kingdom, the power and the glory are yours
Now and forever
Amen

And so we release the one we love and mourn into God's safe keeping:

Depart I precious soul out of this world
In the name of God the father who created you
In the name of Jesus Christ who redeemed you
In the name of the Holy Spirit who sanctifies you
May you rest this day in peace
And find your dwelling in the paradise of God.

And now we pray for God's blessing
We have entrusted the one we love to God's merciful keeping
And we have committed their body to it's final end
Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust
In sure and certain hope of eternal life that Jesus secured

May the peace of God,
Which is beyond our utmost understanding
And of far more worth than human reasoning
Keep guard over our hearts and thoughts;
In Christ Jesus our Lord AMEN