



CHURCH OF NORWAY

The order for a
Funeral (2003)

Funeral liturgy adopted by General Synod of the Church of Norway 4 - 9 November 2002, and approved for use from 1 March 2003 and revised in 2014. This liturgy is a supplement to the version which is found in the Service book of the Church of Norway (Gudstjenesteboken, 1992). The general instructions apply both to the 1992 liturgy and to the 2003 liturgy.

General instructions (1992 & 2003)

1. The order *Funeral service from church or crematorium* is the final service our society extends towards its members. When a person dies, those that are near to the deceased (usually the family) ensure that the body is treated with dignity and is given a decent burial. The most important regulations concerned with burials are found in the Burial laws (*Gravferdsloven*).

Paragraph 9 of this law regulates who is entitled to, and therefore can carry, the legal responsibility for the necessary tasks involved with a burial.

When a member of the Church of Norway dies, contact should be made as soon as possible between the local parish priest and the family of the deceased. According to the Burial law, burials must take place at the latest 8 days after death, (see paragraph 10, third section, and paragraph 12 of this law).

2. The burial rites are a liturgical order with the characteristics of a church service. The liturgical form of the service expresses the most basic elements of the Christian faith: that mankind is created by God, that God has created the foundation of salvation of mankind through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and that at the day of judgement, all will be made responsible of their own lives, and all will be made alive in bodily resurrection.
3. Through the choice of text readings, prayers and hymns and that which otherwise is said or sung, all that are responsible for the funeral service shall contribute to the expression of the biblical message in all its complexity.

The individual elements of the service, such as decorations, symbols, and wreath-laying must be appropriately shaped to fit the service character of the liturgy. It is recommended that restraint be shown in the use of flowers, wreaths, and the like.

Speeches at the laying of wreaths must not take place without the permission of those responsible for the funeral service.

The provision should be made for participation by the bereaved.

4. Hymns and song texts must be approved by the person holding the service. The same applies for eulogies and other forms of involvement which are extraordinary to the funeral service. All music must be approved in advance by the cantor/organist. In order to find music which is best suited to the service, contact between the bereaved and those leading the service should be made as

soon as possible.

5. To ensure a dignified service, it is important to allow adequate time.

The person holding the service shall also ensure that all those involved in the service liturgy deport themselves according to the requirements of a dignified service, in accordance with the practices of the church.

6. According to the circumstances and local traditions, the liturgist leads the service in the church or chapel and at the committal, or in the home and at the committal, or only at the committal.

The funeral service may also take place in the church at cremations.

The burial law states that the church is not required to participate at the spreading of ashes (see Burial law paragraph 20, final point, and paragraph 9, last section).

When the liturgist leads the service in the home only, and at the committal, or only at the committal, the order *Funeral service from church or crematorium* is used according to the degree it is deemed appropriate. The same applies for funerals which take place without a congregation present. The involvement of the church may not, however, be limited to the graveside laying of earth on the casket.

The order *Funeral service from church or crematorium* may also be used, with necessary adjustments, as the basis for a memorial service in a church or chapel, and without the presence of the casket.

7. The same regulations apply for infant funeral rites as those for a child. See the final text reading suggestions in this order for a Funeral. This also applies for parents who desire a funeral service for a stillborn child. In these cases, it is possible to make changes to the liturgy as the circumstances must dictate. The Lord's prayer must, however, always be a part of the service.

It may be important to assist parents in naming a stillborn child in the course of pastoral visits.

When parents that desire that their child be baptised lose that child before baptism can take place, it is appropriate to remind them of the comforting words of Christ, such as "So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost." (Matthew 18.14)

8. The committal, with the laying of earth on the casket, takes place at the graveside. The liturgist may, under exceptional circumstances when external circumstances or weighty personal reasons apply, decide that this may take place in the church or chapel.

The laying of earth takes place at the conclusion of the liturgy in the case of cremation rites.

As a rule, the casket should be lowered into the grave before the laying of earth onto the casket. The local Parish council is authorised to decide that the laying of earth can take place before the casket is lowered into the grave.

The casket is, as a rule, lowered to the foot of the grave.

If there is any doubt whether the committal and laying of earth on the casket has taken place, for example in cases where the deceased has been cremated while overseas, this part of the ceremony may be included at the burying of the urn containing cremated remains.

9. The funeral service may be led by a deacon on the church, according agreements made between the deacon, parish priest and the bishop. If both the deacon and priest are hindered from leading the funeral service, a lay person may lead the liturgy, subject to approval from the bishop.
10. The largest bell may be tolled ca. 5 minutes prior to the same bell being used to ring in the service. The largest bell may also be tolled while the funeral procession leaves the church and processes towards the gravesite, and while the casket is lowered into the grave. At the completion of the funeral rite, the same bell may be tolled nine times, in groups of three tolls. The bells may be rung as the bereaved leave the gravesite.
11. The liturgical colour is violet.

The order for a **Funeral**

The scripture readings are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version* of the Bible (1989, 1998).

The choice of Bible translation for the Scripture readings and the version of the Lord's Prayer may be made by the officiating liturgist.

I. IN CHURCH OR CHAPEL

1 | The ringing of the bells

While the bells are ringing, the liturgist is seated in the choir.

2 | Prelude

As a prelude, suitable instrumental music, choral song or solo singing may be performed. The prelude could serve as an introduction to the first hymn.

3 | Hymn

This hymn may instead follow directly after Section 4.

4 | Opening words

L | Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
We are gathered here today to say a last farewell to (name of the deceased is stated).
Together, we will surrender him/her into God's hands [and follow him/her to his/her final resting place]

The text in square brackets may be omitted at cremations.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3.16

Subsequently, the liturgist may continue with one of the following scripture verses:

Either A

“Jesus says: Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”
Matt 11.28

Or B

God says in His word: “Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honour me.” Psalm 50.15

5 | Opening prayer

L | Let us pray.

Either A

Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;
Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.
If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?
But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.
I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.
I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.
Israel, put your hope in the Lord,
for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.
He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins. Psalm 130.1-8

or B

Lord, you have been our dwelling place
throughout all generations.
Before the mountains were born
or you brought forth the whole world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
You turn people back to dust,
saying, "Return to dust, you mortals."
A thousand years in your sight
are like a day that has just gone by,
or like a watch in the night.
Teach us to number our days,
that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Psalm 90.1-4,12

or C

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?
My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest.
But you, Lord, do not be far from me.
You are my strength; come quickly to help me. Psalm 22.1-2,19

or D

Holy God, Heavenly Father, you who rule over life and death. When we are separated
from a loved one, strengthen us in our faith, so that we - even at the grave - can find
hope in you.
Lord Jesus Christ, our faithful Saviour, who went through death and the grave for us. Be
with us in our final distress and grant us entrance your Father's house to gather with you
and all who are yours.
Holy Spirit, you who are our comfort both in life and death, fill all who grieve with your
consolation. Deliver us from spiritual death, gather all peoples to you and let us receive
our treasure in heaven.

or E

O Lord our God with you is the fountain of life.

In your light we see light.
In you we live, move and have our being.
Protect us in life and death in your love,
by your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord.

or F

Precious Lord, who sees us and knows us, bring us close with your comfort.

6 | Memorial tribute

A short memorial tribute is given by the priest or by a representative of the bereaved. This should contain some biographical elements, and special emphasis should be given to what the life of the departed has meant to those who were close to him/her, and other activities and organisations he/she was involved in.

This is followed by the opportunity for short greetings, the laying of flowers and/or wreaths, the reading of the greetings on existing wreaths/floral arrangements and optional other acts of remembrance, such as readings, musical tributes, candle lighting and so on.

This may be followed by

7 | Hymn or musical tribute

Musical tributes may be vocal or instrumental.

8 | Scripture readings

L | Let us hear what the Word of God says about life and death, the final judgment, and our hope in Jesus Christ.

Three readings are read at this point. The scripture passages are chosen so that they complement the elements mentioned above. The texts may be read by the liturgist, or by one or more of others present.

The congregation is seated during the readings.

The scripture reading ends with:

L | This is the word of the Lord.

Thereafter, a hymn may be sung

9 | Hymn

If Section 7 is a hymn, Section 9 may be omitted.

10 | Homily

A short homily is given on one of the scripture texts that have been read or on another suitable text.

11 | Intercessions

L | Let us pray.

Either A

L | Eternal God, our refuge in times of sorrow, be near us with your peace. Strengthen our faith. Give us a future and a hope. We thank you for NN and what you gave us through his/her life. Merciful God, we surrender him/her into your hands. You who have created us in your image and given us Jesus Christ as our Saviour, raise us up on the day of resurrection to eternal life with you.

or B

L | Jesus Christ, you who promised to be with us always, to the end, be our strength

and comfort, our light and our guide. Let us all one day by faith in you share in the joy of the resurrection.

or C

L | Eternal God, Heavenly Father, you have in your Son, Jesus Christ, given us victory over death. We ask that you, lead us by your Holy Spirit, so that we never lose hope in you, but live our lives by faith in your Son, and one day come into eternal life in your kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

or D

L | Lord Jesus Christ, who carried all of our sins, we thank you that your love that is stronger than death. Give us a share in the salvation that you won by your death and resurrection, and guide us with your mighty hand through life, death and judgment into your eternal joy.

or E

L | Heavenly Father, we thank you for what you gave through NN, who has now passed away. Strengthen and comfort all who sit in grief and loss. We surrender ourselves into your strong hands. Help us to live in fellowship with you, so that one day we can depart from here in peace, through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord.

or F

A prayer that has been written with what the families and the local community have experienced in connection with this death in mind may also be used.

This may be followed by

12 | In your hands

A | Into your hands, O God, I commend my spirit.

You redeem me, O Lord, O faithful God.

Into your hands, O God, I surrender my spirit.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Into your hands, O God, I surrender my spirit.

This hymn may also be sung as a round, see *Norsk salmebok 2013*, 936.

This may also be followed by the Song of Simeon (Luke 2.29-32) either read or sung, see *Norsk salmebok 2013* 908-909.

13 | The Lord's Prayer

L | Let us say together the prayer that Jesus taught us:

A | **Our Father in heaven,**

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,

and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

or

A | Our father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.

or

A | Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Other recognised translations of the Lord's prayer may be used instead.

14 | Hymn

15 | Postlude

*A vocal or instrumental work may be performed before postlude.
The casket is carried out of the church during the postlude.*

II THE COMMITTAL

A. At the graveside

Before Section 16 **Hymn** is sung, the casket is placed on the lowering device or on planks over the grave and remains there until Section 19 **The lowering of the casket** takes place.

16 | Hymn

This may be followed by

17 | Scripture reading

One of the following scripture verses, not previously used in this funeral:

Psalm 50.15

Psalm 23

Psalm 68.20

Psalm 121

Matt 11.28

Matt 28.1-10

Rev 1.17b-18

Rev 21.1-5a

Our God is a God of salvation,
And to God, the Lord, belongs escape from death. *Psalm 68.20*

“Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive for ever and ever.” *Rev 1.17b-18*

This may be followed by

18 | Prayer at the graveside

In this prayer, the liturgist may replace NN wherever appropriate – for example with the person’s full name, first name, our dear, our friend etc.

Either A

L | Lord Jesus Christ, let this grave be a place of hope and faith in you who rose from the dead.

or B

L | Lord Jesus Christ, you who yourself was laid in a grave; give us grace to follow you in the resurrection from the dead.

or C

L | Lord Jesus Christ, let NN rest in peace under the sign of the cross until the resurrection day. Help us to put our faith in you, both in life as well as death.

or D

L | Lord Jesus Christ, you who yourself was laid in a grave, let this be a place of peace, where NN will rest under the sign of the cross until the day when you call all people forth from their graves.

Help us to put our faith in you, both in life as well as in death.

19 | The lowering of the casket

The casket is, as a rule, lowered to the foot of the grave.

20 | Laying of earth

L | In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Thereafter, the liturgist lays earth on the casket three times whilst saying:

First time: L | From earth you have come.

Second time: L | To earth you will return.

Third time: L | From earth you will be resurrected.

21 | Scripture and blessings

Either A

L | Our Lord Jesus Christ says: “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.” [John 11.25-26](#)

or B

L | “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” [1 Peter 1-3](#)

Turning towards the bereaved:

L | Receive the blessing.

L | The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. +

22 | Hymn

B. In the crematorium

The funeral service (Sections 1-13) concludes with the laying of earth (Section 19-23). Under exceptional circumstances, this order may take place in a church or chapel. See the General rules, paragraph 8.

19 | The lowering of the casket

20 | Laying of earth

L | In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Thereafter, the liturgist lays earth on the casket three times whilst saying:

First time: L | From earth you have come.

Second time: L | To earth you will return.

Third time: L | From earth you will be resurrected.

21 | Scripture and blessings

Either A

L | Our Lord Jesus Christ says: “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.” [John 11.25-26](#)

Or B

L | “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” **1 Peter 1-3**

Turning towards the bereaved:

L | Receive the blessing.

L | The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. +

22 | Hymn

23 | Postlude

Where lowering of the casket is not possible, the casket should be carried away during the postlude.

III. SCRIPTURE READINGS

Scripture reading group I

Either A

L | I know that my redeemer lives,
and that in the end he will stand on the earth.

And after my skin has been destroyed,
yet in my flesh I will see God;

I myself will see him

with my own eyes – I, and not another.

[How my heart yearns within me!] Job 19.25-27a.[27b]

Or B Psalm 23

Or C Psalm 42.2-4 and 43.2-3.5

Or D Psalm 73.23-26

Or E Psalm 103.13-17

Or F Psalm 121

Or G Psalm 139.1-12; 23-24

Or H Eccl 3.1-2; 4.6a; 11a; 14a

Or I Isaiah 49.14-16a

Or J Lam 3.22-26

Scripture reading group II

Either A Rom 6.3-5

Or B Rom 8.31b-35.38-39

Or C Rom 14.7-12

Or D 1 Cor 13.8-10.12-13

Or E 1 Cor 15.53-57

Or F 1 Thess 5.8-11a

Or G Rev 21.1-5a

Scripture reading group III

Either A Matt 5.3-10

Or B Matt 28.1-10

Or C Mark 10.13-16

Or D Luke 12.35-38

Or E John 5.24-27

Or F John 6.37-40

Or G John 10.14.28-29

Or H John 14.1-6

The following readings may be used at the funeral of a child. They may be introduced thus:

L | Let us hear how Jesus opens up the kingdom of God to children:

The following three texts are to be read successively:

L | People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me, do not stop them; for it is to such that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly, I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them. **Mark 10.13-16**

L | I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. **John 10.14, 28-29**

L | And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." And the one who was seated on the throne said "See, I am making all things new." **Rev 21.1-5a**

Other texts may be chosen for the funeral of an infant or stillborn child. These might include Psalm 39.5-8, Psalm 139.1-6, 13-18 or other texts which express in particular suffering, pain and the inexplicable.

The other sections of the order are used according to the adult rite.