

Planning a funeral; your own or for another

My aim is to guide you through the maze of choices, sharing my knowledge and experience, dispelling misunderstandings and myths and empowering you to plan the most fitting funeral you can imagine for yourself, or for a loved one.

There are many choices to be made. Being well-informed can really help, and can save money too.

You may wish to allow your family to make all the choices. Or you may want to provide some guidelines, some suggestions for them, to support them in the organising when the time comes and they are lost in grief and bewilderment.

I offer face-to-face sessions. Let me guide and support you.

Also available on Facetime, Skype, Zoom or phone.

Some areas for decision-making are:

Burial or cremation?

Which crematorium?

Which burial site?

Would you prefer a relaxed funeral, with no set time-limit?

Transport? - eg a hearse, a friend's car, a camper van, a particular type of favourite car, a horse-drawn carriage, a vintage bus, a motorbike trailer ...

A coffin or a shroud? Which style / design?

What will your body be dressed in?

Would you like anything special to you to be placed in the coffin or shroud? Or on top of the coffin, or beside your shrouded body, for the ceremony?

Is an 'eco' funeral important to you, with a low carbon footprint, and what are your options, if so?

How much would you like to spend - what is your budget? How much involvement of a funeral director would you like?

In the planning of the funeral ceremony itself:

Where would you like it to be held?

How would you like it to look? Aesthetics; colour, lighting... Who would you like to lead it?

Are there people you would particularly like to be invited to participate e.g. to write a piece that they might like to read, to read a poem, to play an instrument or to sing?

Would you like some religious content, sacred ritual or none?

What might be your poetry and music choices? Would you like a period of silence for reflection?

Would you like the ceremony to follow the usual flow and structure, or to plan something different?

What is the meaning and purpose of the usual flow and structure, and what might be the effect of changing that?

We can discuss all these possibilities and more.

Would you like your words to be heard at your own funeral?

Does anyone know you as well as you know yourself?

If you think about your funeral, with everyone there waiting, ready to hear about you, your life, what was important to you..... What is it that you'd **really** like them to hear?

Can you identify the significant events in your life that you'd like them to hear about?

Are there personal messages for friends or family members you'd like them to hear after you've gone? It's good to be heard.

How long is a face-to-face session?

I offer one or two sessions, each of up to two hours in length.

During the first hour, we would explore all the *practical* options for a funeral ceremony, including potential costs and creative possibilities.

If you opt for longer than one hour, then we would explore practicalities in more detail. Plus, my suggestion would be that any remaining time is reflective: if you are planning your own funeral, I would ask you a series of questions that are designed to lead you through sharing any aspects of your life, and your words, that you may want to be shared at your ceremony.

How would this all happen?

Flexibility is important. We could meet at your home, or another venue of your choice.

Or we could speak on the phone, on Skype, Zoom or FaceTime.

Prior to my first visit, we will have a brief, friendly introductory conversation on the telephone.

I will then send you some guidelines and questions you might like to consider before we meet.

If we take this path together, you will be under no obligation whatsoever to use me as your celebrant at your funeral.

Will you receive anything in addition to the session?

I offer 3 options, with different prices.

For all 3 options, I offer the same high quality attention to detail and a very personal approach, listening to what you would like and sharing information with you, so you are more aware of what is (and isn't) possible.

Options 2 & 3 include an audio recording of our whole conversation during the sessions, if you have given permission and requested this.

This may also include recordings of personal messages to friends or family members that you might like to make during the session. Or you may choose to add these later, in privacy and in your own time.

The recordings may then be used by your family or friends who are organising, and by whoever you may choose to write and lead, your funeral ceremony.

It may also be a comfort to your closest ones to be able to listen to your voice once you are no longer present. A gift to them in their time of loss.

The 3 options

Option 1: Session only, for one or two people

1 hour: £40 for session

1-2 hours: £75 for session

I would work with you, but I would not make any written notes.

For your records, it would be up to you to take notes and / or make an audio-recording for future reference.

Option 2: Session + audio-recording, for one or two people

1 hour: £50 for session

1-2 hours: £80 for session

I would work with you, and make an audio-recording for you to keep, for future reference.

I would email you the audio recording, using a website called 'We Transfer', which is simple to use. Or, if you would rather, I would give you the recording on a memory stick.

I would not make any written notes so, as a record, it would be up to you to take notes.

Option 3: Session + audio-recording + printed document

1 hour: £85 for one person

1-2 hours: £155 for one person

In addition to the audio-recording, you would receive, within 4 weeks, an electronic PDF copy (as well as a paper copy) of your personal document called, 'My Funeral Wishes,' for you to keep with your will.

This fee covers my time with you, time spent transcribing and typing your personal document, 'My Funeral Wishes,' and it would also include the audio recording, should you opt for this.

I would welcome two people for the session, as always, but please be aware that if your funeral wishes differ from each other, and two separate bespoke documents are required, there will be an additional cost.

I look forward to guiding and supporting you.

Please note: there may be additional travel costs if outside a 15 mile radius of M16, Manchester. Skype or phone options are always available.

What people say:

“Debbie supported me in writing a funeral plan which included what I'd love her to say as a celebrant at my funeral.

I was and continue to be deeply touched and immensely grateful for Debbie's willingness to listen with huge compassion and empathy.

The document she sent me after each session showed, to me, such attention to detail also.

What I hadn't expected was, in addition to sadness which I had expected, we also touched in on a lot of joy & laughter as we explored my life together.

So in, and of itself, it was a very beautiful process that enabled me to move closer and accept death as a reality we all face.

In imagining my dear family who will be held, I hope, by Debbie at my funeral, I feel immensely confident they will be held with deep compassion and care from beginning to end. And they will have a record of my thoughts and feelings and gratitude for their presence in my life - what a precious gift to leave behind.”

PV, Leeds

“Reflecting on my life with Debbie in order to leave a personal final message to my loved ones at my death was an amazing and very positive experience that has left me feeling remarkably tranquil and at peace with myself as well as quite comfortable with planning for my future funeral.

It was an wonderful affirmation of a life well lived and I was able to really express how I want to be remembered as the person I am now, with a lifetime of rich and deep experience behind me, rather than through my family having to remember ‘snapshots’ of how they have seen me during that lifetime whilst they are grieving.

It was extremely helpful and remains so as I continue to grieve for my aunt. That, along with her impersonal funeral made me realise that your family can only truly reflect on your life if they REALLY know you, and that actually, quite often they don't - because they only see one or two aspects of you eg as a mother/ wife / the old person watching the sport on tele all the time! etc.

So its up to me to make sure that they remember me for who I really am, not just who they think I am.

Somehow it has made me feel that – yes – I am a Human Being, I am of the ‘Earth’, my life has purpose and meaning, I

have contributed to the well-being of others and I will be remembered when I die.

I am very grateful that I have had the opportunity, and I would recommend it to anyone.”

JH, Manchester

“Thank you Debbie.

It was very good, I'm left with a lot. I had a good talk to a close friend about it last night.

Wow, it is very professional and quite intense to see my thoughts and choices on paper. Thank you so much. ”

HP, Brighton

“Hi Debbie,

Thanks for all the links etc.

I found our session really helpful and strong too.

You facilitated it very well.”

TL, Manchester