

Funeral ceremonies help people come to terms with loss – profound loss.

As Funeral Celebrants, we work closely with families and loved ones to create meaningful services that are individual, respectful and reflective of the deceased.

Rituals are symbolic and powerful – and may replace words at times of overwhelming grief.

Funeral Celebrants listen carefully and respectfully when meeting with families to discuss funeral and memorial services. We thoughtfully suggest ideas that may symbolise and be incorporated into a ceremony for a loved one. It may be placing the person's photograph on the coffin and/or lighting candles; it may be decorating the coffin with stickers, photos, drawings or handwritten notes. The ideas are endless.

Here's a few ideas to consider:

- ❖ **CRAFTS** - if the person was a quilter or craft person, drape their quilts and creations over chairs and pews to display their creativity
- ❖ **ARTWORKS** - were they an artist? Display works on an easel or bring some brushes and a palette
- ❖ **GARDENERS** – for a keen gardener request that mourners bring home grown flowers or greenery to place on and around the coffin. If they loved grew vegetables, bring carrots and eggplants
- ❖ **PLANT A TREE** – to represent beauty, vibrancy and the continuity of life
- ❖ **RELEASE BUTTERFLIES** - to remind mourners that despite the fragility of life, there is always beauty
- ❖ **DOVE RELEASES** - the universal symbol of peace, doves may be released to remind the family that gentleness and peace surrounds them
- ❖ **NAMING** - if an infant has not yet been 'named', incorporate a naming ceremony into the service so that their short life, inside and/or outside the womb is given its rightful place within the family



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- ❖ **SOFT TOYS** – comforting, reassuring, tactile items that need no words to support them
- ❖ **AN HOURGLASS** - an enduring symbol of time to depict the past, the future, and the now. It can remind people to live in each moment– the only space where we can truly make a difference to our lives
- ❖ **HORSE and CARRIAGE** – motorbikes and sidecars – and other hearse options
- ❖ **BOOKS** - were they a writer? Read their poetry or distribute their favourite quotes on a bookmark
- ❖ **MUSIC** – charged with meaning and a great descriptor of the life you are remembering
- ❖ **CANDLES** - ageless symbols of light and illumination that shine through darkness to show a way forward
- ❖ **CHILDREN's CRAFTS** – decorations, painted rocks, decorated coffin
- ❖ **PADDLE OUT** – scatter ashes with a surfboard paddle out
- ❖ **SHROUDS and MEMORY QUILTS** – make a shroud and/or a memory quilt
- ❖ **CREATE YOUR OWN RITUAL** – what symbols reflect on your loved one?



Cultural traditions are rituals that unite communities, large and small.

Cultural traditions have historic and unique components. Encourage your families from whatever culture they originate to incorporate meaningful components into their services. *For example:*

ABORIGINAL – smoking ceremony - native plants are used to produce smoke. The smoke is believed to have cleansing properties and the ability to ward off unwanted and bad spirits.

MAORI – the time of mourning or **Tangihanga**, is an integral part of the grieving process for Maoris. It is generally held at the family home.

OPEN CASKET – some cultures request an open casket service.

SWEETS and/or MONEY – some Asian cultures hand out sweets to people who have come to pay their respects at a funeral to remind them that *'life is sweet'*. Sweets, or equally a gold coin can be given to remind everyone of life's riches and bounty. These ritualistic gestures are ways to help mourners move forward from a sad day with hope and cheer.

For more ideas, type funeral rituals and funeral customs in your favorite search engine.

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