

# *Saying Goodbye*

*A Sensitive Guide to*

**Preparing**

**A**

**Personalised**

**And**

**Memorable**

**Farewell Service**

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

For more than 20 years in pastoral work in large Parish communities in Australia, Lisette has advised and closely supported many individuals and families in their times of crisis and death. The scope of this work involved:

- Helping individuals and families to design (or pre-plan) meaningful and Personalised Memorable Farewell Services;
- Supporting them in their grief;
- Journeying with them through their vulnerable times;
- Gently moving them toward gradually incorporating their loss into their lives;
- Seeing them regain purpose and hope in a healthy and holistic way.

Lisette holds a degree in Administrative Leadership, a Diploma of Professional Counselling, and a Certificate of Liturgical Studies.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

*To Share Knowledge and Expertise  
For Preparing a Personalized  
Memorable Farewell Service  
In an Informed, Confident,  
And Sensitive Manner.*

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## FOREWORD

Our journey through life brings us to the realisation that dying is inevitable. In death, as in life, we want to be treated with respect. We deserve to be honoured and remembered in ways that express our individuality and acknowledge our accomplishments.

Death is no longer a "silent" subject. We have become much more aware of the need to prepare for it. The realities of the grief process and its immobilising effects are being recognised and addressed. In all sections of society there is an openness and motivation to prepare for death in many ways:

- The terminally ill and their loved ones have access to grief counseling to prepare for death, not only in the physical sense but also psychologically and spiritually;
- Information is available regarding the practical aspects of various forms of pre-planned Funerals or Cremation;
- Insurance companies offer policies that provide coverage for funding pre-planned Funerals or Cremations;
- We are continually being reminded about the importance of having an updated legal Will;
- Today, the wisdom of including family members and friends in preparing the Farewell Service for their loved ones is being recognised and encouraged in many religious and secular Memorial Rites.

The inspiration to write this book has come out of my extensive contact with the helplessness and vulnerability of people of diverse backgrounds and cultures when they are faced with the need to prepare a Farewell Service. This is an unenviable task particularly at a time when the intense grief of bereavement is overpowering.

Funeral Directors can help to organise the practical aspects of the Funeral or Cremation. However, my work in this field has brought me closer to the realisation of the pressing need for a comprehensive guide that will empower people to prepare a Memorable and Personalised Farewell Service for themselves, as well as for their loved ones.

This book fills that need. It contains practical suggestions for respecting the wishes of the family and honouring the memory of a loved one. It describes the benefits of involving ourselves as active participants, instead of remaining passive spectators in a Service that was often prepared without much input from the family and conducted with little recognition of those present. We no longer have to make do with standard Obituaries or Eulogies where anyone's name can fill in

the blanks. We can now choose to be involved in the preparation of a Personalised Farewell Service.

This book also describes the different elements of Memorable Services and sets out the details of how to prepare a Personalized Memorable Farewell Service. It is also recommended as a resource in Parishes, Schools and other Communal Settings where the need to prepare a Memorable Farewell Service exists.

## **WHY WE NEED A FAREWELL SERVICE**

By our solemn celebration, we affirm our own hope in eternal life, bring consolation to the bereaved, and pray that the deceased may enjoy eternal happiness with God.

A Farewell Service has many rational physical, psychological and symbolical aspects. As a public ceremony it honours and bids farewell to the deceased person. Family and friends come to pay their last respects to their loved one, show their love and express their support to the bereaved. A Farewell Service provides the opportunity to pay tribute to the special qualities and accomplishments of the deceased person. It acknowledges that in losing that person a significant change has occurred. The Prayers, Readings, Music and Words of Comfort console family and friends at this difficult time when they are experiencing and trying to control a myriad of overwhelming emotions. The Service is a fitting goodbye to a loved one. The love and support of those present helps the bereaved to come to terms with their loss and eases the pain of their grief.

For Christians (and others) the Farewell Service is a time to pray for their loved one, to commend the departed soul to the loving presence of God, and to celebrate solemnly his or her life with thanksgiving. Uninformed or inadequate preparation can become a cause for regret afterwards; on the other hand, a well-prepared Personalised Farewell Service provides a consoling sense of closure.

## **PRE-PLANNING YOUR OWN FAREWELL SERVICE**

Over the last few years, more people of all ages have become increasingly conscious of their responsibility to prepare for their death. More than ever, people are taking the precaution of making a Will, pre-planning a Funeral or Cremation, and pre-paying or taking out an insurance policy to cover the expense.

A trend that is also gaining acceptance is the wisdom of pre-planning one's own Farewell Service.

Besides being thoughtful, making arrangements in advance is practical. Preparing your own Farewell Service allows you to choose the most meaningful type of Service for you and your family. It offers you and your loved ones the opportunity of making this important decision together. You can choose the Readings, Prayers of Intercession, Hymns and Music, etc. Making arrangements in the calm of today will bring a sense of security and peace of mind to your entire family.

The process of preparing one's own Farewell Service rationally can be a satisfying experience even though strong emotions are involved at the thought of being separated from our loved ones. A sense of relief comes from knowing that we have lessened the burden of anxiety and confusion for the family.

This book takes away the confusion associated with carrying out that process. It describes the different elements and explains how to design a Personalised Farewell Service. It empowers you to accomplish this task with the confidence that your wishes will be known and respected.

## **HELPING A LOVED ONE TO PREPARE A FAREWELL SERVICE**

Everyone should be encouraged, in a gentle and sensitive manner, to talk about matters concerning their death. Broaching issues regarding death with someone who may be in the last stages of life is not always possible. Quite often, the person is afraid and unwilling to talk about it because they want to keep holding on to the hope that they are not going to die. We should keep in mind that people tend to approach their death in the same manner that they lived their lives. A person who has always maintained a "stiff upper lip" in coping with difficult experiences and pain throughout most of their life, cannot be expected to admit vulnerability about the possibility that he or she is going to die. Even with the best of intentions, such people find it difficult to discuss their feelings and concerns openly.

There may be times when a person might want to talk about putting their affairs in order but is hesitant to broach the subject. Simply offering your help might encourage them to talk about it. For example: "If you need to attend to anything personal or any unfinished business, I would be pleased to help you." You could also mention in general conversation, some interesting aspects of a Farewell Service that you have attended recently, describing where it was held, the

readings, the singing and music, etc. Some comments that would indicate their wishes in this respect could result from this kind of approach.

The assurance that we have lessened the burden of anxiety and confusion for our family brings a sense of relief. However, forcing a discussion about the need to prepare for death is never advisable; it could put more distance between a person and their loved ones at a time when closeness and companionship are needed more than ever.

## **PREPARING A FAREWELL SERVICE AFTER THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE**

Most often, families are faced with having to prepare an appropriate Farewell Service for a loved one who has died, perhaps unexpectedly, without disclosing their wishes. When this happens, the family has many immediate decisions to make and there may not be anyone knowledgeable enough to make the proper choices. The guidelines in this book should take away the uncertainty of having to settle for a Service that does not reflect the individuality and personality of the deceased person and the wishes of the family.

Endeavouring to include different opinions and wishes in the Farewell Service can be confusing and frustrating for all concerned even while everyone is striving to make it a fitting tribute to the deceased person. This is all the more stressful when those most closely affected are in a state of emotional turmoil. Nevertheless, the process of discussion and reflection involved in making up the Prayers of Intercession, choosing appropriate Readings, Songs and Music etc, does generate a deeper appreciation for the good points and accomplishments of the deceased person's life and can thus lighten the pain of grief.

## **ASPECTS TO BE CONSIDERED**

### **Funeral Directors:**

Funeral Directors offer a variety of services. They can also help with writing a suitable Obituary Notice to be published in the local newspaper. However your Funeral Directors must be able to provide the services that you want, instead of a package that does not satisfy your wishes. Some people may have a particular preference, such as using a white hearse (instead of black) or they might want a Vigil at the home prior to the Funeral or Cremation. Being in a vulnerable state at the time is no reason to have to compromise what you really want. This is all the more important because any regrets later can make the grief process even more difficult and painful.