

Speaking about someone or even reading some special words isn't easy at any time, but can be especially difficult for a funeral service. Read on to find some practical tips and ways to help you do the best that you can for the people you care about.

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A teenage boy doing a reading in church at the lectern

The Eulogy

It's always a great privilege to be asked to deliver a eulogy at a funeral of someone you knew. It's an opportunity to tell the story of the person you all knew and loved, and to share something of the impact they made on those around them.

Getting it ready

There are lots of ways to give a eulogy, but if you are the only speaker, then it's important to give an overview of a person's whole life as well as your own reflections.

Take time to find out key things about them across the years. One way of doing this is to divide their life into decades, and work out one key thing that was happening in each of those decades. Or you could think about childhood, family, work, interests. It's always good to have a key anecdote or story, especially if it will make people smile. You can never say everything – but you can give people 'hooks' onto which they hang their own particular and personal memories. It's a good idea to email it to the vicar or minister ahead of time so that they can make links into other parts of the service, like the prayers.

Practical tips

Remember every 100 words takes about 1 minute to read.

On the day there will be a lot of emotion. Always have a copy of your talk, and know that you can hand it to the minister to finish if at any time you can't continue.

Practice at home or in the place where the funeral will take place. If it's in the church, ask the vicar if you can slip in to practice, using microphones if there are any.

Other speeches

Sometimes there is an opportunity for more than one person to speak at a Church of England funeral. It may be that there are some key people from different aspects of the person's life. These can be very personal – it might even be that children or grandchildren speak.

Doing a reading

This is another way of taking part in the funeral service, and might involve a favourite poem or the Bible reading. Whatever it is, the key thing is to prepare. Check the reading beforehand for any strange words or phrases. Find an opportunity to read it aloud beforehand, and always take a copy with you. Just like any other speech, if you can't do it on the day, the vicar will be ready to help out.

