



People who cannot attend a funeral because of the coronavirus restrictions are being provided with prayers and suggestions on how to pay their own tribute at home to the person who has died, in a simple guide published today by the Church of England.

Under strict rules to prevent the spread of coronavirus, Church of England funerals may now only happen at crematoria or at gravesides. Only immediate family members can attend – if a crematorium allows – that is, spouse or partner, parents and children, keeping their distance in the prescribed way.

A [new resource issued by the Church of England](#) gives advice for those who cannot attend on how to hold a short and simple reflection at home on the day of the funeral.

This includes a set of simple prayers and suggestions, including finding a place to sit quietly, finding a photograph of the person who has died, writing down special memories of them, and playing a piece of music with a connection to the person who has died. The Church of England has also provided an online facility for [people to light a virtual candle](#) in memory of loved ones.

Rev Canon Dr Sandra Millar, Head of Welcome and Life Events for the Church of England, said: “It’s so difficult when you can’t go to a funeral, whether for family, friend or neighbour. You might have wanted to support a friend, or show respect, or you might want to say your last goodbye and know that your special person’s life has been honoured, prayers offered, and God’s love experienced.

“Many will not be able to do this now. When this time of social distancing is over, there may well be a time to share memories with others, but for now people can find comfort from setting aside time at home for a simple reflection, lighting a candle online or sharing a prayer card with someone else. God can feel very close in those moments.”

The reflection has been published alongside services for [funerals at crematoria](#) and [at gravesides](#) in the light of the coronavirus restrictions, alongside [advice for clergy](#).

Meanwhile the Archbishops and Bishops have [written to clergy reaffirming their guidance on the closure of Church buildings](#) to help reduce the spread of the virus.

The letter makes clear that while the Government rules currently permit church buildings to be used for funerals within strict limits, Church of England funerals nevertheless must only take place by a graveside or in a crematorium. They explain that medical advice clearly indicates that holding a funeral in a church in the current situation “represents an additional layer of risk” of transmission.

“Of course this is costly, but we believe the cost is less likely to be in human lives,” they write.

The bishops have also given serious consideration to their recent guidance preventing clergy entering churches to live stream an act of worship but concluded the restriction must stay in place.

“Not being able to use our church buildings is, of course, a huge loss to us all,” they write.

“We are aware that for many clergy it is hard not to be able to pray and worship in their church building; and for many lay people, not even being able to see worship going on in their church building is difficult.

“Streaming worship from home shows that we are alongside those who are having to self-isolate and those who are forgoing so many other things in their lives that they used to rely on.

“It also shows that we are facing up to the same restrictions as them and doing all that we can to take a lead in encouraging people to **stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives.**

“Moreover, to pray from and in the home may help us to show that the church is, as we all know, us, the people of God, not our buildings.”

Notes to editors

- There were 128,000 Church of England-led funerals during 2018, 61% of which took place in churches and 39% at crematoria/cemeteries

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/new-reflection-issued-people-who-cannot-attend-funeral>