

Advice for high profile funerals

Whenever a death makes the news, the funeral will be of interest to the media too. The Communications team will assist you in planning and in handling journalists.

In coping with these funerals the aim is to balance a number of quite legitimate needs and to negotiate a solution that satisfies as many parties as possible.

1. To respect the needs and wishes of the bereaved.

This is of paramount importance and nothing should be done without the understanding and agreement of the next-of-kin concerned. *The Communications team can explain options to clergy who in turn will explain them to the next-of-kin before reporting back.*

2. To recognise the interests of the community.

Depending on the circumstances, many people may want to share in the expression of grief through the media and social media.

3. To use the opportunity for the Church.

The conduct of the service and the address will often be very helpful in assisting a wider audience come to terms the situation.

4. To enable journalists and photographers to do a professional job

Journalists and photographers will often have no alternative but to cover the service. Their need and your ability to make the most of whatever facility the next-of-kin agree to should put you in a position to where you help will be valued and appreciated.

A possible approach

Unless the next-of-kin have good reason for wanting the world to see the extent of their grief, the odds are that they will not want cameras at the service. The best way of ensuring this happens is to meet the media's needs before the service starts.

This can be done by inviting them to church 90 minutes before the service is due to start. Ideally they will be able to film the minister in charge robed strictly edited highlights of the address. In this way the minister can reflect on the circumstances, pay tribute to the deceased and say something brief about the

Please inform the Communications team on Communications@leccofe.org or 0794 338 7265 if you are going to do a media interview.

Christian hope. Any particularly personal words to the next-of-kin can, of course, be omitted. The cameraman would also like to film close ups of flowers, stained glass windows and any other useful feature of the building.

The organist should also be present if at all possible and be willing to play a couple of verses of the hymns to be used and extracts from the music to be used at the beginning and end of the service.

The cameras will then move outside to a designated area to cover the arrival of the cortege and its departure. This area should be chosen, where possible, to avoid cameras getting frontal shots of mourner's faces. A word with the funeral director may be able to provide a helpful human shield as mourners get out of cars.

The resulting piece on TV will probably show the arrival of the cortege, fade in the music, cross-fade to the minister's address, show a cut-away, return to another section of the address, bring back the music over another cut away and then show the departure. Only very aware viewers may discern that the cameras were not at the actual service.

Variations on this approach will be required if the next-of-kin are happy to allow a sound feed or cameras (still or TV). In either case the incumbent and any officiating ministers should agree too. If the media are to be present at the service, they should have a minder to ensure they remain in designated positions. It will normally be helpful to operate a pooling arrangement.

In addition to these arrangements, with next-of-kin permission, make sure that an Order of Service and (edited) script of the sermon is made available to them just before the service.