



**A Short Guide to**

# **Memorial Services**

**in the Parish of**

**Great St Bartholomew**  
**West Smithfield in the City of London**

After the death of a family member, friend or colleague, it may seem appropriate to have a service celebrating that person's life and work — a memorial service or, as it is sometimes termed, a service of thanksgiving. In planning a memorial service, you need to decide first whether a *formal* service would be more suitable than an *informal* one. Both the Priory Church of Saint Bartholomew the Great and the Hospital Church of St Bartholomew the Less are suitable settings for *formal* memorial services. The parish has a strong choral tradition and an excellent professional choir.

A memorial service in church is a *Christian* and *religious* ceremony and the content will reflect that, with certain aspects being determined by Anglican practice and custom. There is, however, no set form and the overall shape can be adjusted to allow the participation of members of the congregation, with eulogies, the sharing of memories, non-biblical readings, and instrumental music, as well as the usual hymns, psalms, readings, and choral music. The shape and style depends very much on the person whose life is being commemorated, their tastes, interests and concerns. The clergy and the Director of Music will help you to create an appropriate service.

It will often begin in a way that expresses the loss experienced through the person's death but it will end in a *joyful* and *hopeful* way. The service begins with a  **bidding**, a paragraph leading to a prayer, which states succinctly why we are present, beginning "We are here today to give thanks for the life of N." The officiant will ask you to assist in preparing this.

When the memorial service is separated from the funeral service by a matter of a few months and the funeral itself was private or people were unable to attend for other reasons, the beginning may be rather sombre, using funeral music, prayers and reading. This can lead to a transitional hymn and then one or more addresses, readings, choral item, etc.

It is unlikely that you will want the service to exceed 45-50 minutes in duration and this will determine the number and length of the **addresses**. A person's life sometimes divides neatly into two or three periods of time (university, working life, retirement pursuits) or aspects of living (work, family, public life, etc.) and these divisions suggest both topics and speakers. The maximum length of an address (if there are several) should be eight minutes. A single address should be no longer than twelve minutes.

Members of the family often want to speak or to read poetry or some favourite text. It is an *emotionally demanding experience* and should only be undertaken by those confident that they will manage it.

The readings, hymns and choir items are chosen in consultation with the minister who will officiate and with the Director of Music, as appropriate. Hymns frequently sung include “The Lord’s my shepherd”, “Praise, my soul, the King of heaven”, “Jerusalem”, “Guide me, O Thou great Redeemer”, “Who would true valour see”, “Lord of all hopefulness”, etc.

The overall shape may look like one of these:

Selected organ music	Funeral Sentences (sung)	The Bidding
The Bidding	The Bidding	Hymn
Hymn	Bible Reading	Non-biblical reading
Bible Reading	Hymn	Choir item
Choir item	Address 1	Biblical reading
Addresses (2)	Choir item	Hymn
Hymn	Address 2	Prayers
Addresses (2)	Hymn	Choir item
Choir item	Address 3	Address
Family Poems	Choir item	Hymn
Hymn	Non-biblical reading	Blessing
Prayers & Blessing	Prayers	Recessional
Recessional (Widor)	Hymn	
	Blessing	
	Recessional	

### Some Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

- Clergy other than those on the staff of the Parish are welcome to participate in the service with the agreement of the Rector, or in an interregnum, the supervising priest of the parish.
- The church seats 200-250 people comfortably but can be increased to over 300. There can be reserved seating areas for the family, etc.
- It is possible to place a book near the entrance for people to sign to indicate their attendance.
- A sound amplification service is available but there are no facilities for playing CDs or other recordings.

- There can be a collection during or after the service to support any designated charity.
- The cost of the service will depend upon the musical resources used but, with a choir of eight, organist and director of music, it is generally in the region of £1500.
- Instrumentalists and/or soloists may perform at the service with the agreement of the Director of Music.
- Flowers may be put in the church for the service. We recommend Felton Flowers (020 7363 0000) who often work here. Flowers are normally left as a gift to the church.
- There are a number of livery halls nearby that can provide refreshment after the service. Information can be obtained from the caterers and venue finders Chester Boyd on 020 7653 6666.

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