

“And I’ll always remember..”

How to Turn a Lifetime of Stories
into a Colourful Eulogy



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“And I’ll Always Remember...”

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Foreword

Funerals are changing

By Tessa Sheehy

Academy of Professional Celebrants

For generations, a funeral was often defined by formality - by what was expected rather than what was felt. Today, we are witnessing something far more real. Funerals that are becoming true celebrations of life. Not celebrations in the sense of glossing over grief, but in honouring a person fully. Their warmth, their humour, their flaws, their values, and the way they made others feel.

More than ever, the eulogy matters.

In truth, it has always mattered. What has changed is our understanding of just how central it is, and our willingness to do it properly. For far too long, tributes were rushed or reduced to a list of dates and accomplishments. Lives were summarised rather than revealed.

Today, families are asking for more and rightly so, it is what everyone deserves. They want to hear the heart of their person. A thoughtful and creative tribute doesn't just recount a life, it honours it. It gives voice to love, meaning, and connection, in a way that resonates with everyone present. That is so important - in fact it's not just important, it's imperative.

A eulogy should no longer be a simple chronology or a list of achievements (we have all sat in on those funerals and let's be honest, it's boring). While dates and milestones have their place, they do not capture a life. What families need and what mourners quietly long for is to hear who their person truly was. What defined them. What they stood for. How they loved, dressed and what their favourite scent was. How they will be remembered when the years fade.

A carefully and beautifully written eulogy gives voice to character, not just history.

When this is done well, the impact reaches far beyond the service itself. A meaningful funeral sets the tone for everything that follows: the wake, the conversations, the giggles, the shared stories, and the gentle steps towards living with loss. It allows families to leave feeling held, understood, and proud. It helps create a sense of closure while also offering permission to move forward, carrying love and smiles.

This is where the role of the celebrant becomes vital.

To create a service that truly reflects a life takes far more than good intentions. It requires skills, deep listening, sensitivity, emotional intelligence, and the confidence to guide families through one of the hardest conversations they will ever have. It requires training. At the Academy of Professional Celebrants, this is what we pride ourselves in.

We believe that every family deserves the very best send off for the person they love and have loved for what feels like forever. Anything less simply isn't good enough.

That belief is the reason Stuart Logan founded the Academy of Professional Celebrants in 2018. After more than twenty years in the industry, and having witnessed thousands of funerals, Stuart had seen first-hand what happens when services are delivered without care, skill, or proper training. Too many poor celebrants, too many badly delivered eulogies, too many missed opportunities to honour a life well lived or indeed a life that has to be handled with the upmost care. His heart told him enough was enough.

So, he wrote the training from the heart. Training designed to raise standards, restore dignity, and put families back at the centre of everything we do. Since then, the Academy has trained thousands of celebrants who now give families exactly what they deserve: meaningful, personal, and beautifully delivered farewells.

This book sits firmly within that belief. The author James Daniel is one of our graduates, and he has drawn on the academy's training – and his own experience – to guide you through the process of writing a fitting tribute.

James doesn't just explain why funerals are changing, he shows you how to rise to that change with skill, compassion, and professionalism. He offers insight,

structure, and guidance for anyone who wants to do more. For those who want to make a difference.

Being trusted with someone's story is an honour. Telling it well, well that's a duty.

If this book helps you feel more confident, more capable, and more grounded in the importance of this role, then it has already achieved something powerful. Because when we get this right, we don't just deliver better funerals.

We help families begin the long process of healing, wrapped in respect, care, and love.

Tessa Sheehy

Celebrant Success Coach/Training Manager



www.FuneralCelebrantAcademy.co.uk

Introduction

“Can’t Someone Else Do It?”

Let’s be honest about this. Most people hate the thought of standing up at a funeral to deliver a eulogy.

It means writing a tribute – telling a story – a task that can be daunting. Then it means speaking in public, which can be an ordeal at the best of times. So to do all this while grieving can be one step too far.

If you think “I’d never get through it”, you’re certainly not alone.

However, I’d like to offer you a different perspective. As a Life Celebrant who started out writing family eulogies, I can say this:

The writing part is easy if you follow a simple method. And more than that, it’s cathartic – a beautiful way of poring through your memories at a time of loss, and sharing precious new insights with family and friends.

The speaking part needn’t be overwhelming. You’ll be facing the friendliest audience possible, all of them willing you to succeed. They’ll appreciate every joke. They won’t judge if you lose your way. And they’ll thank you at the end for helping them say goodbye.

And as for the occasion – making a speech at such a difficult time?

Well, everyone handles grief differently, so it's not for me or anyone else to tell you it will be fine. All I'll say is, I've personally found that speaking actually helps.

When my mother died suddenly in her mid-50s, it was the eulogy that gave me strength.

I wasn't sure at first – at that time, I'd only given one eulogy, and that was for an uncle. This would be much harder. But then I remembered a friend of mine who lost her dad when she was 17. He was a prominent figure, and she stood up in front of 500 people to deliver a heartwarming tribute. If she could do that at such a young age, I felt that I – in my early 30s – could find my own way through it.

It turned out I was right.

The eulogy became my focal point in the funeral. In the lead-up, I was focused on the task ahead. Then delivering it was liberating – the pain left me in that moment, as I shared my mother's life story and forged a special bond with everyone in the room. And after, I was ready to finally say goodbye. It had a cleansing effect, giving me a keener sense of closure than I've ever felt at any funeral, before or since.

I didn't "get through" the eulogy. The eulogy got me through the initial shock, the grief and the funeral.

Now, to just to repeat this – I'm not saying it will be the same for you.

But I would say, please don't reject the option out of hand. It might help you, and your friends and family, more than you'd expect.

In this short book, I'll show you how to plan and deliver a eulogy. I won't go into endless detail, because this is a difficult time for you – we'll just work through a simple process that will turn a lifetime of stories into a fitting tribute. Then we'll close with a few thoughts on music, photos and delivery, and that's it. You'll have all you need.

Of course, you don't have to do this alone. Wherever you live, there are Celebrants just like me who can steer you through the process. They'll plan the eulogy, write it, and deliver it for you – or with you. You'll find someone near you at www.LocalCelebrant.com.

Good luck.

However you do this, I hope it brings you peace.

James Daniel

www.LifeCelebrant.Wales

PREPARING THE EULOGY

We're going to follow a three-step process, from finding stories to adding reflections and writing the finished tribute.

And don't worry – this can't be an epic task, because you only have so much time to fill.

In a religious service, with hymns and readings, you may have just 5 minutes to sum up a whole lifetime. And even in a celebration, with no religious content, a regular slot will only allow for 10-12 minutes of stories.

So our job is to cherry-pick.

We'll be going back through your loved one's life and choosing the highlights: the big events that defined their journey, and the small things that made them smile.

Let's make a start...

Step 1

Unearthing Stories

When I work with families, I like to start by mapping out a FAMILY TREE and a TIMELINE.

The family tree lists every important person (you can make space for friends), and the timeline covers the big events – what they did, where and when.

The timeline might include:

- When and where they were born
- Education and training
- Places they lived or worked
- Important people and relationships
- Key achievements and milestones

That gives you a foundation. But it will say more about what they did than who they were, so the next step is to flesh it out – to find stories that reveal the person behind the details.

In a moment, we'll look at some questions to help you choose the best stories. But there are a few points I want to make first:

1. These questions cover every stage of life, and of course you may have lost someone before their time. Just focus on the relevant stages, and answer whatever you can.

2. This will give you more stories than you need, but don't stop when you feel you have enough. Jot down everything that feels useable, then you can prune it later and keep the best material.
3. It might take more than one person to answer all these questions. Your loved one's siblings, lifelong friends and work colleagues can often add extra material.

Above all, don't worry if there are gaps or details you can't confirm. You're looking for half a dozen stories and some interesting thoughts, nothing more.

Are you ready to answer some questions?

INFANCY

Think about their early life and the family they were born into:

- What were the family's hopes, with a baby on the way?
- What changes came with the new arrival?
- What funny things did they say or do, as they learned to walk and talk?
- What was their favourite toy?
- Was there a piece of music they loved?
- How did they relate to pets, or people outside the family?

CHILDHOOD

Formative years are a rich seam for any eulogy. What do you know about...?

- The games they played
- Adventures with friends
- Practical jokes and mischief
- Their time at school
- Their hobbies and interests
- Favourite books and stories
- Family holidays
- Jobs they talked of doing
- Early signs of their natural talents
- Difficult times in their early life
- The moment that defined their childhood

GROWING UP

What were they like in their teens or student years?
Think about all the things that shaped them as an adult:

- Their favourite music
- Fashion choices (good or bad!)
- Sporting prowess
- Their academic journey
- Joining clubs or societies
- Personal values and causes
- Planning their career

STARTING OUT

What happened when they left education? Think about them:

- Starting work
- Honing their skills
- Hatching new plans
- Building their career
- Enjoying their freedom
- Spending their own money
- Buying their first car or home
- Finding their place in the world

TAKING ROOT

As they built their life, what mattered to them? Think about:

- Work life – promotions, career changes, retirement
- Coping with stress or pressure
- Dealing with disappointment
- Finding a sense of purpose
- Playing a community role
- Supporting causes or charities
- Cultural choices – books, TV, films, theatre, music
- Family holidays and excursions
- Enjoying simple pleasures
- Their priorities and wishes

RELATIONSHIPS

How was their life shaped by others? Think about:

- Parents
- Other older relatives – grandparents, aunts, uncles, godparents
- Siblings and cousins
- Close friends
- A spouse or significant other
- Children and grandchildren

How did things change, as these important people came into their life... or left? And how did they show their love? What big or small things symbolised these relationships?

REVELATIONS

It's always good to leave a funeral feeling that you know the person just that little bit more. So think of something you know about them, that most people don't. For example:

- An unsung act of bravery
- An interesting encounter
- Something they did before anyone else
- Involvement in a historic moment
- A hidden skill or talent
- An achievement they rarely talked about

These "claims to fame" are often the most remembered.

QUIRKS & FOIBLES

If they could laugh at themselves, it's fair game for their eulogy. So what was...?

- The petty thing that made them angry
- The foolish moment you'd laugh about
- The private joke they shared with a loved one
- The thing they couldn't do, that others found easy
- The story they loved to tell
- Their party trick
- Their guilty pleasure
- Their most embarrassing moment

REPUTATION

Everyone has a reputation. Some are more widespread than others, but we're all known for something, if only by friends and family. So think about:

- A domestic skill, like cooking or DIY (maybe they had a famous recipe?)
- An academic skill, like a flair for numbers or encyclopaedic knowledge of a favourite subject
- A talent that was celebrated by everyone who knew them
- An admirable quality, like kindness or dependability
- Wisdom, or a special way of solving problems

LOOKING BACK

If they had a chance to look back and reflect, what did they conclude?

- How did they reflect on the times they lived in – witnessing big events and moments of change first hand?
- What was their philosophy – their moral code, or a favourite mantra?
- What advice would they often give to others?
- What did they tick off their ‘bucket list’, and what did it mean to them?
- What did they regret, or learn through bitter experience?
- What made them proud, or gave them a sense of gratitude?
- What was the turning point in their life?
- What would they see as their happiest moment – something life-affirming?

END OF LIFE

You don’t have to talk about their final moments. But it can be cathartic, so we’ll touch on it here.

- Did they know their time was coming, or did the end come more suddenly?
- If they knew, what first alerted them to a problem?

- How did they receive the news, and how did they respond?
- How did they manage their decline – coping with illness and accepting there were things they could no longer do?
- What was their attitude to death? Did their outlook change in their final days?
- Did they leave behind a final wish, or some words of advice?
- What impact has their passing had on their friends and family?

LEGACY

How will they be remembered by you, and even future generations? Think about:

- The simple achievement of raising a family
- A saying that you'll always recall
- Their approach to specific problems, that will guide you in the future
- Anything they did to leave a footprint, however big or small

WHAT ABOUT THE DARKER SIDE?

So far, we've kept things positive. But you don't have to pretend your loved one was a saint. If they had their

faults, acknowledge them – it makes for an honest, well-rounded tribute.

Of course, “faults” come in many forms, and some can cast a shadow over the whole eulogy, so you’ll need to decide what to address and how. You might laugh about someone having a fiery temper, if they never did any actual harm. But if they were mentally cruel or physically abusive, that’s a different matter.

Only you can decide if you want to bring that side of them into the open – just know that there’s no right or wrong, only what feels right for you.

As a rule, there are three ways you might deal with bad behaviour:

1. **Sideline it.** What’s gone is gone, and for your own wellbeing, you want to focus on the better times.
2. **Give it context.** Mention it, but focus more on the positives. (The phrase “even though” can be useful here, as in “Even though he had his faults, and could be unreliable, his heart was in the right place.”)
3. **Address it head-on.** It’s less common for someone who’s been in an abusive relationship to stand up at a funeral and tell their story. More often, they’ll sit out the eulogy, simply asking a priest or Celebrant to give a basic account of the person’s life. But how

you do this is up to you – no-one else lived your experience, so no-one else can judge.

Hopefully, this exercise hasn't been too draining. But you might want to stop there, and pick this up tomorrow – that will give you time to reflect and refocus.

Do whatever works for you, and move on to step two when you're ready...

Step 2

From Stories to Reflections

Stories are a tonic, but we also want to give them some meaning. So choose a few of your favourites now – the stories that really capture your loved one’s personality and values. Then for each one, ask yourself:

“What does this say about them?”

Take this example:

“He once spent four hours fixing the garden gate, only for it to fall off again five minutes later. In the end, it took him three days. But that was him – patient, persistent, and convinced that anything could be fixed with determination and a bit of duct tape.”

You see how that works – the story reveals their character:

- A childhood story of helping a sibling shows bravery and a protective nature.
- A story about bouncing back from failure shows tenacity and resilience.
- A story of sacrifice shows discipline and a sense of duty.

Every story on your list will tell you something about your loved one, so this is where we take stock.

Let's make a new list with two columns: STORY and REFLECTION.

STORY	REFLECTION
Winning a sports event as a child.	From early days, it was clear - when they set their mind to something, they would give it their all.
Going to university as a mature student.	They set their own agenda, trying their hand at different things before settling into a groove.
Caring for a sick relative.	They never put their own interests first – love and duty mattered.
Turning down an opportunity on a point of principle.	There was a line they wouldn't cross, no matter how tempting.
Brushing off a mistake.	They tried, they failed, they learned... and they could always laugh about it.

Your list should have a good few stories paired with reflections now. But there's one more question to ask:

Does this list really sum up their life and personality?

Perhaps it does. But if you feel something is missing, try this exercise:

Describe your loved one in a list of words.

You'll probably think of generous words like 'kind', 'considerate' or 'funny'. But don't be afraid to dig deeper.

Words like 'cautious' or 'optimistic' might say something about their outlook.

Words like 'defiant' or 'unstoppable' might speak to their spirit.

Words like 'dependable' or 'selfless' might describe their values.

If one word is too restrictive, try writing a sentence.

For example:

- He achieved so much, but never talked about it.
- If you were in trouble, she was the first person you'd call.
- She loved dancing, and her parties were the stuff of legend.
- He'd start something, excel at it, then move onto something else.
- She cared about people, even if some took her good nature for granted.
- He never complained, even when his health took a turn for the worse.

Write the descriptions that you feel are missing from your list, and add them to your REFLECTIONS column. Keep going until you feel your loved one is well represented.

Then – if you can, find a new story to match each new reflection.

In the first example above, that could be a simple list of achievements. Or a story of modesty – the moment where they shunned acclaim.

The third example could spark the tale of a family gathering. One that's been talked about for years, or a party they threw "just because".

Try that, and add whatever feels right.

Now you should have a set of stories, each paired with a reflection. And combined, they'll offer a good insight into the life you're celebrating.

Step 3

Writing the Eulogy

You have the source material now, but it's not a finished eulogy. The final step is writing it up, and for that, you need a structure.

Here are five methods you could try:

1: THE TIMELINE

Let's start with the easy option – tell their story chronologically. Work through the timeline you created, describing the main events of their life, then drop in your chosen stories and reflections as they come up in sequence.

This method is fine, although it's not the most enthralling way to share a life story. At times, it can feel a little flat:

"She was born in 1946... then went to school... then got married... etc."

If you can, it's better to do this more creatively. The following methods will really bring their story to life.

2: THE KEY MOMENT

Dive straight into their story with a pivotal event. That could mean...

A dramatic episode in their life:

“When Joe found himself stranded on Dartmoor, one night in the thick of winter, he made a life-changing decision...”

Your first ever meeting:

“The first time I met Jack, he was climbing a tree barefoot. Forty years later, he was still climbing toward whatever adventure called.”

Or the moment where their true nature crystalised in your mind:

“I’ll never forget the day Jane danced in the rain outside the café. That was her in a nutshell – unafraid of being silly, unafraid of joy.”

Tell the story – perhaps with a cliffhanger, to keep the audience waiting for more. Then flash back to earlier times and build back to the key moment.

Then you can either end it there, so it forms a bookend, or roll the story forward to say what happened next.

3: THE EPISODE

You don’t have to cover their entire life. You can choose one era or segment, like their career, becoming a parent, or their retirement years:

“Sam was never one to sit around. So when he retired, he was more active than ever...”

Or build it around the story of one major incident – a favourite anecdote, a bucket list item, or a challenge you went through together:

“When Sarah said to me, ‘Let’s do up the garden’, I don’t think she realised what we’d be taking on...”

Tell it in detail, and pair it with two or three reflections. That makes a great eulogy.

4: THE CHARACTER SKETCH

Base your eulogy around a theme – their most notable character trait, like kindness, integrity, courage, love or whatever best describes them. Then choose stories that bring that side of them to life:

“Mary taught us all that kindness is contagious.”

“If there’s one word that sums up Michael, it’s ‘curiosity’.”

“Has there ever been anyone more single-minded than Matthew?”

5: THE TRINITY

Select three stories that show the diverse sides of their personality, like thoughtful, determined and funny:

“There’s no single way of describing David, because he was so many things to so many different people. Some of us saw his full personality, others saw just one side. Today, we’re going to celebrate everything he was.”

This method is simple, balanced, and very effective.

From structure to script

You have a framework for your story now, but you still have to sit down and write it. Some people are natural writers, some are not, so let me offer a few more thoughts to help you through this stage:

Let your thoughts run free

For your first draft, just write it. Don't stop, don't edit as you go. Set aside an hour, switch off all distractions, and let it flood onto the page.

Personally, I like to handwrite everything. I find that the pen forms a connection with the brain, and gets me "into the zone" in a way that I've never managed with a keyboard. But that's just me – you might be happier typing, or making it up as you go along with a voice recorder.

Choose whatever works for you – as long as you let it flow.

Edit wisely

Your first version will be long and unbridled. You'll be so connected in that moment that a rich and colourful draft will fly out of you (honestly, you'll look back and wonder where it came from).

Let that happen, then go back to it a day or so later, and look at it with a less creative, more critical eye.

You're not writing now, you're editing. Perfecting your tribute with pruning shears, to cut out the excess and let the best elements thrive.

At this stage, you'll want to think about:

- **Length:** aim for at least 300 words, and no more than 1200. Your Celebrant or Funeral Director can advise on running times, but on average 600 - 800 words is a useful target.
- **Language:** don't overload it with lyrical phrases. There'll be time for poetic language elsewhere in the service, when your priest or Celebrant talks about family bonds and eternal love. This is the life story, so everyday words and phrases will serve you better. Imagine you're relating the story to a friend in a pub or coffee shop.
- **Clarity:** when there's so much to say, it's easy to get tangled up, switching back and fore between stories until you lose the thread. As a rule, tell your first story, pair it with a reflection, then transition into the next story, and so on. One thing at a time, so the audience feels you're leading them on a journey.

Appraise it honestly

You have a finished draft now, but is it all it could be? Does it say everything you wanted to say, does it represent them fully? You'll need to be your own critic here, and check it for three things:

- **Authenticity:** does this feel like their story? Does it give a genuine account of your loved one's life, achievements, values and personality?
- **Entertainment Value:** will it hold the audience's attention? Will it make them laugh, bring back some warm memories, and offer a few surprises?
- **Emotional Impact:** do you have a mix of gentle humour, pathos and gratitude, to take everyone in the room on an uplifting journey?

Don't worry, I'm not suggesting you judge yourself too harshly. As I said earlier, no-one is there to criticise you, they're all on your side. Just do the best you can, and you'll be amazed at how well it's received.

More importantly, you won't believe how much it helps with your own grief.

DELIVERING THE EULOGY

You've written it. But the main task is still ahead of you – standing up to deliver it, in your loved one's final public moment.

Here are some practical tips, to help you prepare and deliver it on the day:

- **Practice it aloud.** Listen to the rhythm. Does it flow? Is it clear? Are you happy with the content? This simple exercise can give you a different perspective, so please don't skip this – and if needed, make some late changes.
- **Time it.** For your next readthrough, use the stopwatch on your phone. Pause where you plan to pause, so you get a good idea of timing. If it's overlong, talk to your Celebrant or Funeral Director and see if you have the time. Then make some final cuts if you have to.
- **Format it.** Use a large clear font (I like Calibri, size 28) and break it into small paragraphs of up to 4 or 5 lines. Emphasise key points in bold or italics, or with a colour highlighter. This will allow you to come off script... engage with the congregation... then glance back down and find your place.

- **Print it.** Electronic devices can let you down – batteries die, networks drop, screens lock and notifications disrupt you. Print a hard copy, and you can't go wrong. (If you're speaking outside, use poly pockets!)
- **Email it.** Send a copy to your Celebrant or Funeral Director, so they can add it to their running order. Then if you're indisposed on the day, they can read it on your behalf.
- **Ask a standby.** You don't know how you'll feel on the day, so ask a close friend if they could step in if things get too much for you. Ask them in advance if you can, so they can read it through just in case.
- **Take a handkerchief.** It's an obvious tip, but you might well need it on the day. You might even ask for some water to be placed near the lectern.
- **Relax.** As we've said, everyone is with you and grateful that you've had the courage to stand up and speak. If it helps, imagine that you're only talking to a handful of people. Pick out a few faces around the room, and make eye contact with them.

- **Vary your pace and tone.** Your script will be a mix of funny and poignant moments, so play each one for what it is. Milk the funny lines, enjoy the congregation's laughter, don't hold back... then lower your voice and let the serious moments breathe. Pause when you have to, even cry – you're only human, and you're allowing others to share in your grief.
- **Be yourself.** You don't have to tough it out, or try to be a perfect speaker. You're not there as a performer, you're there as you – the real you, who everyone wants to see.

PHOTO TRIBUTES & MUSIC

This is something separate from the eulogy, that's typically arranged with your Celebrant or Funeral Director. But it all stems from your wishes, and it all weaves in with the eulogy to create a meaningful service, so it's worth adding a few thoughts on this before we finish.

THE PHOTO TRIBUTE

If your service is in a crematorium, or anywhere with an audio-visual display, it's increasingly common to include a collage of photos set to music. All you have to do is supply the photos and share them with your Funeral Director – they'll take care of everything else.

That sounds simple, but first you have to gather everything in. Some will be on your phone or PC... some on social media... some in frames or albums... stuffed in drawers or attics... or in the hands of someone else. Friends and family members may have some lying around, perhaps that you've never seen – it's worth asking.

Then there's quality. Older photos might be badly exposed or printed. Polaroids may have faded. Some will be torn or damaged. But don't let that hold you back. There are free and affordable apps like PixGenie and PicMuse that can bring old photos back to life, and you don't need any technical skills. It's actually quite

incredible what these apps can do, and a quick Google search will show you.

Once you've done that, you can start on the real task - making your selection. You'll need 30 - 40 photos that tell your loved one's story, going back as far as you can.

It should be fairly easy to draw up a list of contenders:

- Baby and school photos
- Holidays and family outings
- Christmas and birthdays
- Weddings and christenings
- Family meals or barbecues
- School plays or dance recitals
- Sporting moments
- Public appearances
- Graduation
- Reunions

No doubt you'll find a mountain of photos from that list alone. But don't stop there - often, it's the more incidental photos that really capture a moment. When someone caught them off guard with a camera, shouting "Smile!", or they were enjoying some activity, unaware they were being snapped.

If you're spoilt for choice, pick one or two from each type of occasion or life stage, to make sure you get a full spread. And that's all you have to do.

It should be an enjoyable exercise.

CHOOSING YOUR MUSIC

I won't talk about hymns here. If you're including them, you'll have your own favourites, so we'll take that as read and look at the other music.

Typically, you'll need two or three pieces:

Opening Music

When everyone enters, what mood do you want to set? In years gone by, the staple choice was organ music or a light classical piece played on a harp or piano. But today, there are no restrictions.

It's usually something gentle, like a ballad by a popular singer or a slowed-down acoustic version of a well-known song. But you're setting the tone for this funeral, so it's for you to decide.

Tribute Music

If you're showing a photo tribute, this is where you'll want to reflect your loved one's personality. There is absolutely no right or wrong here, just whatever feels right.

For example:

- A slow burn, energetic song to pull at the heart strings
- An upbeat song that shows how they seized the gift of life

- A funny song to show defiance in the face of death
- A song that was dear to them, or meant something special to you both
- A song that shares their name
- A song that sums up their philosophy

Exit Music

Most funerals today end on an inspiring note, so the exit piece can really go for broke.

There are old favourites like “My Way” and “What a Wonderful World”... quirky choices like “Always Look on the Bright Side of Life”... but don’t be constrained here.

Think of their favourite Karaoke song, or the one they’d rock out to on the motorway! Or a song from their youth that would always get them out of a chair and dancing. Something vibrant and upbeat makes for a good ending, and allows people to leave in a positive frame of mind.

Final tip: tell your priest or Celebrant about your music choices. The background makes an interesting addition to the service, and helps the congregation to feel an extra connection as they leave.

I hope this short guide has been helpful, and brought back some happy memories.

In closing, let me wish you every success with your eulogy. Whether you do this yourself or with a Celebrant, I'm sure it will help you as you start to say goodbye.

With all my best wishes,

James Daniel

January 2026

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



James Daniel is a Life Celebrant based near Cardiff, who works with families and Funeral Directors across South Wales.

In a writing career that dates back to 1988, he's been a journalist, copywriter and scriptwriter, with credits ranging from sitcoms and sketches to computer games.

His first love is writing for children, and in 2020, he founded Tell It Your Way, a publishing start-up that personalises stories, placing the child as the hero in their own adventure.

As a performer, he's been a broadcaster, actor and stand-up comedian. As a speaker and trainer, he's lectured at Cardiff University, given after-dinner

speeches and trained hundreds of business owners in the art of writing.

He turned to celebrancy after a lifetime of writing and delivering eulogies for his extended family.

In James's words:

"Every life should end with a fully rounded tribute. Not a biographical list of things they did and people they loved, but a rich and frank appreciation of the life they lived. It should be funny, poignant, philosophical, and offer hope for the future – so that everyone leaves the funeral feeling more connected, and grateful for the life they shared."

For more information, visit James's celebrancy website: www.LifeCelebrant.Wales.

**We all leave footprints in this world,
and no two are alike.
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Everyone they cared for. Every experience, good or bad,
that gave them strength and wisdom. It all combined with their
skills... their values... their outlook... to create a new life story,
however long or short.

I'm James, an independent celebrant.
I help families say goodbye with a sense of joy and gratitude,
by sharing their loved one's inimitable story.

In this short book, I'd like to help you plan a fitting tribute.

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