



Care in a time of CORONA

## Funerals: A Guide for Families

### HOW TO DEAL WITH DEATH AT HOME

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed our way of life, including the way we grieve, honour and bury our loved ones. There are special regulations to follow when someone you love passes away in your home due to the virus, so keep the following in mind:

- Even though they have passed, your loved one is still contagious. Do not touch them. Close off the room until help arrives.
- Contact the Emergency Medical Services, they can certify the death, and help you.
- Once the death has been certified, contact an undertaker to remove the body. You will have to let the undertaker know that your loved one had Covid-19 so that they can ensure everyone's safety.
- Wash your loved one's bed linens and remaining clothing items at a high temperature, and wipe down all surfaces and possessions with sanitiser, bleach or disinfectant.
- Remember to wear gloves and a mask while doing this, and wash your hands often throughout the process.

*"The best thing to do is to treat every death as a Covid-19 death."*

- Bishop Malusi Mpumwana

- You and the other members of your household may have been exposed to the virus, so no visitors are allowed during this time.
- If you need to meet others in person, do so outside with protective equipment and physical distancing. Don't serve food, as you might expose others.
- Do not remove your mask when talking to people.



*"For the first time, we are safer apart. Together we die in times of Covid-19."*

- funeral attendee

### PLANNING A FUNERAL SERVICE

Losing a loved one is never easy, but in the time of Covid-19 this pain feels amplified. The coronavirus spreads very easily from person to person. So to protect yourself and others, we can no longer congregate in large groups. This includes at funerals. The government's funeral regulations are not meant to disrespect traditional burial practices. The regulations are there to protect you and everyone else, and to stop the virus from spreading.

- You will need to choose a funeral organiser who will take the lead and deal with the paperwork and legalities involved. They will be held accountable for following all the regulations. Your religious leader will be able to guide you.
- When planning the service, meet outside and wear your masks. No food or tea should be served, as when we eat we have to take off our masks.
- Discourage visitors. Rather keep in contact digitally.
- The regulations allow for only 100 people at most to attend the funeral, this is so that physical distancing is possible, and to contain any possible spread of the virus.
- Consider a venue that has windows and doors you can keep open so fresh air can circulate, and make provision for soap and sanitisers to keep surfaces and hands clean.
- If you can, video record or digitally stream the service for those who cannot attend in person.
- Remember that the service will have to be short. Make sure you know who will be speaking, and consult with loved ones to make sure everyone is content with the proceedings.
- Viewing or touching your deceased loved one will not be possible, and the service will need to be conducted without the body.
- There are certain groups of people who are more at risk, and therefore it is not a good idea for them to attend the funeral in person. These are people over 60, and those with underlying conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes and tuberculosis.



*"God needs you and I to be partners in order to save more."*

- Bishop Malusi Mpumwana

### DURING THE FUNERAL

*"This morning I attended my first funeral since the #Covid-19 breakout. All I can say is that we live in different times and the sooner we realise and accept this, the better. God bless."*

- funeral attendee

*Here are ways to keep each other safe when attending a funeral:*

- ♥ Your mask is your first form of protection. Wear it whenever you are around others, and keep spares just in case!
- ♥ Keep your distance, even in moments when it seems like a hug might help. Good health brings greater comfort in the long run.
- ♥ Avoid being in an enclosed space for long periods, and only enter the building when you absolutely need to.
- ♥ Don't shake hands. Rather show your appreciation with a nod of your head, or with words of thanks.
- ♥ Wash and sanitise your hands regularly.
- ♥ Keep the doors open to limit the number of hands touching the door handles.
- ♥ Instead of touching the coffin when you leave, consider leaving a flower or tribute by the grave.

**If you can't be there in person, you can still participate in the service at home:**

- Light a candle.
- Say a prayer.
- Sit in quiet reflection with your emotions.
- Don't rush your grief, allow yourself as long as you need.

**SAY YOUR GOODBYES TO THE DEPARTED IN YOUR OWN WAY. YOUR TRIBUTE MATTERS, JUST LIKE THE PERSON MATTERED.**

### AFTER THE FUNERAL

After the funeral might be the hardest time for you to follow the regulations. But if everyone works together to follow these guidelines, we can make sure we are all safe.

*"It is not about lack of hospitality. It is about saving lives."*

- Bishop Malusi Mpumwana

- No social gatherings are allowed after the service.
- No food, tea or drinks may be served.
- Since no group socialising will be possible after the service, consider alternatives, like a digital wake, or sending thoughtful messages.
- Express your gratitude to those who have attended with words, and avoid hugging and hand holding.
- If your family needs to come together after the service, keep your distance where you can, wear your masks, and meet outside if possible.
- For those that need overnight accommodation, a hotel or bed and breakfast would be best. You keep your loved ones safe when you keep your distance.
- If you test positive for the virus within 14 days after attending the funeral, the responsible and kind thing to do is to inform your religious leader or the funeral organiser straight away.