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What makes a good funeral?

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Abstract

This thesis explores what makes a good funeral in contemporary Britain today. Situated within the discipline of practical theology, it examines the funeral from anthropological, psychological and historical perspectives. This provides the context for the qualitative study which involved interviews with ten bereaved people who have arranged a funeral within the last two years and ten funeral officiants including clergy, humanist and civil officiants. The methodological framework was provided by mutual critical correlation and the findings analysed using thematic analysis.

The findings of this study suggest that funerals are generative and as such bring new life in the midst of death. Previous research has highlighted the life motif present in many funeral ceremonies. This research adds to earlier studies by identifying many ways in which funerals can be generative. In this study the role of the officiant is perceived as one involving considerable professional skill. The marks of a good funeral were identified as compassionate care, tailored rituals, ceremonial expertise and death containment. This is the first study that applies the concept of compassionate care, widely researched within the health profession, to the work of the funeral officiant. Within this study the psychological concept of containment is applied to funerals for the first time, arguing that through providing containment, the funeral ritual can prevent death being overwhelming to the bereaved. Christian ceremonies were seen to offer a unique aspect of Christian hope whilst Humanist ceremonies may offer hope in a different form.

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Contents

Acknowledgements

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my late parents Edward and Olwyn Luckley

and grandparents William and Betty Beck.

Introduction

This thesis has been completed as part of professional doctorate studies. My goal in undertaking this study was to learn how to lead a funeral well. My experience as a psychotherapist working with bereaved people and ministerial training within the Scottish Episcopal Church both suggested to me there is value in learning to lead funerals to a high standard and that a multi-disciplinary approach may bring new insights into what makes a good funeral. In recent years there has been a focus on achieving a *good* death and progressing through *good* grief (Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care 2013). This caused me to wonder what constitutes a good funeral in the understanding of bereaved people. Considering this led to more questions such as, what is understood to be the purpose of the funeral? Is it important that the deceased's beliefs on life after death are reflected in the funeral rites? How can differences between church doctrine and the beliefs of the deceased or mourners be overcome? Is the funeral primarily about death and grief or about celebrating the person's life? These are some of the questions that arose when I considered what makes a good funeral in Britain today. They are addressed within this study which includes critical analysis of current research literature and the findings of a new piece of qualitative research on funerals today.

The experience that led me to consider studying funerals is multi-disciplinary spanning ordained Christian ministry and work as an accredited psychotherapist. This thesis is situated within the field of practical theology and the funeral ceremony is examined within a multi-disciplinary framework. The structure of the thesis includes early chapters reviewing relevant literature followed by an explanation of the methodology used, and an examination of the findings of this study. Chapter one examines the funeral from an anthropological perspective. Chapter two approaches the subject of the funeral through the psychological areas of grief and bereavement. Chapter three focuses on the history of Christian funerals within Britain through the ages. These early chapters provide the context for the qualitative research study on contemporary funerals which is introduced in Chapter four. Ten practicing funeral officiants including clergy, humanist and civil officiants, along with ten bereaved people who have arranged a funeral in the last two years were interviewed. The research findings and analysis of these

interviews are the subject of chapters five to nine, including theological reflection on a unique aspect of Christian funerals.

Changes in funeral rites have occurred in the United Kingdom in recent years, including there being a preference for cremation over burial, an increased focus on the funeral being a celebration of life, with less focus on grief, the increased use of the services of humanist officiants and a growing preference for woodland burials (Davies 2008, Davies and Rumble 2012). Research has demonstrated that although church attendance is in decline, many people still opt for a church funeral and for those who arrange for a ceremony led by a humanist officiant, the spirituality of participants in the funeral remains important (Holloway et al 2010). Clergy leading funerals today may find that mourners' expectations regarding funeral arrangements are significantly different to those held in previous years. The views of people who have been bereaved and ceremonial leaders of funerals (humanist, civil officiants and clergy) are sought within this research to explore what their experiences have led them to believe constitutes a good funeral. There has been very little research which has included the perceptions of humanist officiants, despite the fact that the development of the humanist ceremony is one of the recent significant developments in contemporary funerals within the United Kingdom.

Grief is widely recognised to be one of the most painful experiences human beings undergo and the funeral can be very important for the principal mourners. The funeral may be a 'healing opportunity… a sensitively conducted the funeral can allow safe expression of difficult emotions, bring the family together and enable 'letting go'' (Coghlan and Ali in Cook et al (Ed) 2009: 76). The purpose of undertaking this research was to learn about what makes a good funeral in order to be able to lead funerals well myself and to benefit other clergy training for ordination within Scotland. A very limited amount of the existing research on funerals was undertaken in Scotland. This research adds to the small amount of research on death rites conducted within a Scottish context although most officiants interviewed spoke about funerals taken in England as well as Scotland and some bereaved people spoke about funerals that took place in England. This research provides insights for ceremonial leaders of funerals, including theological reflection on current death rites, equipping leaders to offer services which bereaved people find fitting and helpful. It may also provide material for

reflection for those involved in arranging the funeral of a loved one or those considering their own funeral. Working on this study has provided a rich opportunity for me to learn about this important area involving serving the bereaved and deceased. I hope to share this learning widely and put it into practise in years to come.

Chapter i) The perspective of anthropology: funerals as ritual

Introduction

In beginning to examine the funeral from a multi-disciplinary perspective the first area to consider is an anthropological one. The funeral is at its heart, a ritual and as such it is important that an anthropological perspective be explored when considering the funeral. The perception of death throughout history and within a variety of cultures will be considered, as will the role of death touchers including the development of the role of the funeral director. It is notable that when death is focused upon, life motifs are prominent and the presence of symbols of life and resurrection within funerals are explored below as are associations between women and death in a variety of contexts. The idea that funerals persist due to a result of widespread fear of death is challenged although it is clear that death still remains taboo in contemporary British society.

Death though history

Ariès (1981) examined how death was dealt with from medieval to modern times and identified five categories. The first he called 'tamed death'. This involved the dying person dying publicly such as the wounded hero or martyred saint. Death was perceived as familiar and not to be feared. Generally, people were buried in common graves and the practise of having individual tombstones developed later. This attitude to death was found in ancient history and persisted until the Middle Ages. In describing the second category, 'death of the self' originating in the late Middle Ages, Ariès (1981) suggested that the sense of each individual having a personal biography developed and this impacted on perceptions of the afterlife. Death was less familiar and seen more as an adversary that needed to be prepared for. The third category, according to Ariès (1981) was marked by a sense of technological control and termed 'remote and imminent death'. In the Enlightenment era, suffering was understood to be an aspect of nature not yet controlled, rather than evil. Rather than something that could be best faced through death-bed rituals, death was perceived to be a state that led to life itself being faced with sobriety. The fourth category which was believed to appear near the end of the eighteenth century was termed 'death of the other' (Ariès 1981). This involved affectivity being focused on the nuclear family rather than the community. It led to family members being perceived as irreplaceable and the use

of individual tombstones. There was an expectation of reunion with loved ones after death. The twentieth century involved death occurring in institutions such as hospitals rather than being managed by the loved ones of the dying. Death and bereavement began to be seen as distasteful and something to be hidden (Ariès 1981). Ariès terms this invisible death. A growth in technological control was seen to take the place of rituals in dealing with dying. This had implications for the perception of suffering which was no longer perceived through a religious framework. In the view of Williams and others, much in this analysis is credible; however some elements may be questioned such as the uniformity suggested in the first category which spans a very large time period. It is argued that there were widely differing views on death in existence in this period (Williams 1990: 89). Houlbrooke (1989) questioned Aries' emphasis on the rise of individualism as the cause of the change in attitudes towards death and suggests his view of tamed death is idealised and unconvincing. Perhaps inevitably, when approaching such a large subject as attitudes to death through the centuries, Ariès has focused on some aspects of culture and not on others which are also connected to death such as death in the context of war. Some important historical developments have been highlighted but others such as the Reformation, ignored. Additionally, examples of grief from ancient texts such as the grief of Jesus and the sisters of Lazarus following his death recorded in the Gospel of John around the first century or Augustine's grief on the death of his Mother in the fourth century may suggest that seeing family members as irreplaceable began earlier than Ariès suggested. Although the work of Aries on categories of death can been critiqued, he remains the first historian to have produced a study of death through the ages.

Walter (1996: 7) explores three ideal types of death. Traditional death, which equates to 'tamed death' as described by Ariès (1981). Modern death which Ariès (1981) referred to as 'hidden' and post-modern death. Post-modern death Walter suggests is death influenced by the hospice movement, where personal choice, and the opportunity to express feelings are sacrosanct. This may be followed by a funeral that aims to be a celebration of the life of the individual. It is Walter's (1996: 7) view that the traditional death involves living with death, the modern death denying or hiding the reality of death, whilst the post-modern death involves living with dying, living conscious of one's mortality. Spirituality, making meaning of life and death without requiring reference to a religious authority such

as the church is used to navigate a personal journey. Walter (1996: 7) argues that as most individuals are not experienced in the matter of dying, they are influenced by others' ideas on death and bereavement including those espoused by hospices or bereavement groups and therefore the process is one in which they negotiate with others in dealing with death. Rather than individuals operating autonomously, they operate as social beings and a social understanding of death is most accurate argues Walter (1996). The hospice movement has undeniably had a significant impact on the contemporary perception of death and elements of the form of palliative care offered within hospices have moved beyond the bounds of the hospice to the homes of the dying facilitated by visiting palliative care medical staff.

Good and bad death

Bloch and Parry discussed the concept of 'good' and 'bad' death as it applied in various communities around the world (1982: 15). In nearly all the examples given, a bad death was one in which there was an absence of control over biological processes and in which such processes were believed to not result in regeneration. A good death was one which suggested an element of control and could be seen as an instance of a pattern needed for the reproduction of life. For instance, for a devout Hindu, a good death was experienced by the person who had fulfilled their earthly duties, renounced their body, died at the right time and place, making their death a sacrifice to the gods. A good death amongst communities of Hindus, the Merina or the Lugbara was seen as bringing a renewal of life for the living. Vitality was believed to be imparted into the lives of the living community. There are parallels here with the Christian perspective on martyrdom and the death of Jesus which is believed to bring new life. In contrast, suicide in many societies is seen as the ultimate bad death (Bloch & Parry 1982), a form of death from which renewal does not come. This has been a factor in the stigma surrounding suicide within many cultures.

Since the publication of 'On Death and Dying' by Kübler-Ross (1970), the concept of a good death involving the completion of unfinished business, the resolution of denial and anger and a peaceful acceptance of death has come to form the foundation of the hospice movement and influence much end-of-life care in hospital settings (Hart et al 1998). As discussed elsewhere, there has been strong

criticism of theories of loss which propose a linear movement through stages; however there has been little criticism of a peaceful death marked by acceptance being seen as a 'good death'. This concept has endured and found purchase amongst bereaved families as they reflect on the death of their loved one.

Bradbury (1996) conducted fieldwork in England into representations of good and bad deaths amongst death-workers and the bereaved and found a diverse range of descriptions of what made deaths good or bad. She defined good or bad deaths as fitting within three types, the sacred, the medical and the natural (Bradbury 1996: 84). The sacred good death involves the rebirth of the dead person, concurring with Bloch and Parry's (1982) description of a good death and Aries (1981) description of a tame death. In this form of death, typically the dying person is able to say goodbye to loved ones on their death bed and clergy may also be present. The medical good death involves death being controlled by medical intervention. It is generally situated in a hospital, sometimes in a hospice and medication used to control the pain may result in the person being unconscious or semi-conscious before death occurs. This death may involve embalming of the dead body by the undertaker to present the deceased as sleeping peacefully. This links to Aries (1981) 'hidden' or taboo death and Walter's (1996) modern death. The third type of good death according to Bradbury, the natural good death can be used to designate deaths where pain has been minimal and so may include sudden deaths. There is a lack of medical intervention, similar to natural childbirth. There are marked differences between Walter's (1996) postmodern death and Bradbury's (1996) natural death. Both the medical and natural good deaths are profane and do not involve rebirth. Bradbury noted that no deaths were designated neutral; they were all seen to be good or bad. Moreover, as well as a multiplicity of perspectives amongst the bereaved people she interviewed, there were also marked differences between how professionals such as nursing staff and the bereaved categorised deaths. Professionals formed judgements on deaths largely based on the dominant medical model of a good death. For the bereaved, the representation of death provided a way of conceptualising their loss and framing their grief. For families being alongside a dying relative can be very demanding and their evaluation of the experience may be influenced by how well they are supported by others including the professionals involved in end-of-life care.

Contemporary attitudes to death

Exploring attitudes to death in Aberdeen, Williams (1990) noted that when asked about the timing of death some spoke of moral expectations such as there being a natural time to die. There was a sense of acceptance in relation to dying, the older making way for younger generations, for instance. There were views that one should not live too long, nor die too soon. Alongside this there was a concept of individual destiny, 'your time', which could explain dying at a young age as well as someone older living longer than expected. The study identified two ideals related to dying well. The first, dying quickly and as unconsciously as possible; the second dying after an affectionate last meeting with kin. The threat to these kinds of deaths came from the third form of dying which was when people were believed to be 'better off dead' than in their current situations (Williams 1990: 99). The third kind of deaths were seen to arise when dying in the first two ways was being impeded. Examples of these kinds of situations occurred when people were believed to have lost their dignity or being a burden on others (Williams 1990). Although some individuals spoke of the view that it was better for those who were 'as good as dead' (in their view) to have interventions which ended their lives, there were various difficulties surrounding this in terms of the principle of the sanctity of life and who would take a particular decision and act to end a life (Williams 1990). The ethical and legal issues involved meant that such thoughts remained thoughts that were not acted upon. In 2019, a survey involving interviews with over five thousand and fifty citizens of the United Kingdom found that 84% of people supported a change in the law to permit assisted dying for terminally ill people (www.dignityindying.org.uk). This demonstrates increasing support for assisted dying to be formalised for those who will require palliative care for their condition. For many being able to choose assisted dying was preferable to having less control over the end of their life.

An older study involved hour long interviews about death with four hundred and thirty four people in the Los Angeles area of a range of ethnicities (Kalish and Reynolds 1977). The study showed that it was a minority of people who were afraid of death, 10% for older people. Most people were accepting of their death and older people, particularly accepting. Older people were found to be more likely than middle aged and younger people to seek comfort in religious observances, prayer and financially giving to religious organisations. One

limitation of this study is the reasons behind these attitudes are unclear. Older people thought about their death more, went to more funerals and had thought more about their own death and dying, therefore this, along with a perception of death being likely to occur soon may have led to their sense of acceptance but this is not confirmed.

Kissane (2012: 1505) offers a typology of existential suffering that he believes can be helpful to those working with people who are aware they are facing death such as hospice patients. Eight existential challenges are presented. They are death anxiety, grief at loss and change, freedom and autonomy, dignity, fundamental aloneness, quality of relationships, meaning of life, mystery and the unknowable. This typology may be more helpful than assuming that the main emotion associated with death is fear as it offers a more complex and nuanced picture of the kinds of responses individuals living today may have towards death, bearing in mind that in many cases today medical care ensures that life is sustained for considerably longer than in previous centuries and many need to face death visibly approaching.

Women and death rituals

Bloch examines connections between women and sexuality, and between sexuality and death. Along with case studies from various cultures including the cults of the dead in Portugal, they draw attention to the Roman Catholic teaching on the Assumption of the Virgin Mary whose ascent to heaven was believed to occur without decomposition of her virgin body (Bloch 1982). However, the link between women and the pollution of death is not universal and they cite examples from the Laymi in South America and from Hinduism where this is not the case (Bloch 1982).

Bloch describes the funerary rituals associated with the Merina of central Madagascar who hold a strong association with the land, such that people see themselves as descendants of the land as of their ancestors (Bloch 1982). He highlights that as in many cultures, within the Merina it was the women who took on mourning for death. Sorrow and pollution was focused on women. They wept with the visitors who came to express condolences, washed the corpse and the house, and threw themselves on the corpse to take on its pollution. The first funeral ceremony happened close to where the person had died, then a second

followed once the body has decomposed and this involved the body being exhumed and taken to the communal family tomb on the ancestral land. This journey and second burial was marked by rejoicing, often involving singing and dancing (Bloch 1982: 216). It was a time of re-grouping and blessing, of fertility in crops, children and of wealth. The ceremony involved a dramatic association between women and death. Blessing and unity was achieved through means of assault on women and death. Bloch argued strongly that although not universal, within many cultures throughout the world women have a dominant role in mourning practises (Bloch 1982). He cited the images in sacred art of women weeping at the crucifixion as further evidence of this. Furthermore, in the New Testament, it is women who go to retrieve Jesus's corpse which would have been seen as ceremonially polluting and treat it with spices. It is women who express the sadness of grief through weeping and it is they who take on the pollution of death.

In recent years in Britain, those present at the point of death in hospitals were invariably female nurses; however there has been a minority of morticians that are female. In many funeral businesses a division of labour existed on gender grounds, including within the business examined in the study of an East End of London Undertakers by Howarth (1996). It was men who did work on the dead bodies and men who moved the bodies from place to place. Women covered administrative duties, cleaning of the premises and escorting visiting relatives to view the body of the deceased in the chapel of rest. Historically, women were more involved in the body handling aspects of death-work. Until after the Second World War women were involved in laying out the body of family members and there were women in many neighbourhoods who were known to undertake this task. Women were gradually replaced by men in this role as chapels of rest were introduced and undertakers sought to professionalise their trade.

Today, anecdotal evidence suggests that there is an increasing number of women working as funeral directors, crematorium managers and funeral officiants. These areas of work are becoming feminised. In this we may see a reflection of the association of death with fertility and new life. Women bear children and enable new life to be generated. In taking on key roles within the area of death they bring a life motif and a visible representation of the capacity for new life to be formed. Walter (1990) highlighted that although funeral business had been dominated by

men as funeral directors and ceremonial leaders for a period within the twentieth century, this is changing and many bereaved people prefer the influences a woman may bring. Women have led the way in the care of the dying and bereaved internationally (Mother Teresa, Kubler-Ross, counsellors) but were not in public roles in great numbers; however again this is changing. Women are developing a presence within the area of death that enables fertility and new life to be reflected in death rituals once again.

Symbolism of new life and rebirth in death rituals

One striking aspect of funerary rituals is that many involve symbols of rebirth and fertility. Bloch and Parry (1982), edited a collection of studies from a wide range of cultures from China, India, New Guinea, Latin America, and Africa on the treatment of the dead, and explored the way in which the symbolism of fertility and rebirth is used in mortuary rituals and the social implications of mortuary practises. They declare that 'almost everywhere religious thought consistently denies the irreversible and terminal nature of death by proclaiming it a new beginning' (Bloch and Parry 1982: 9). This is proclaimed through symbolism associated with conception, birth and rebirth; however at times biological reproduction is perceived as something to be overcome rather than celebrated. They draw attention to Golgotha representing the site of centre of the world where Adam, was created and buried as well as the site of Christ's crucifixion. The crucifixion is understood to be an act of regeneration for all time, a death that is re-enacted during the Eucharist ritual.

Resurrection motifs are present in many funeral rituals. In Christian funerals, the concept of resurrection, the resurrection of Jesus, which makes possible the resurrection of all people is central and underpins the theology of the entirety of the funerary rites. The Liturgy for the Service in Church within the Funerary rites of the Scottish Episcopal Church (1970) begin with the following verse which is stated to be essential and always used.

> *Jesus said I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. (John 11.25f).*

Within the Christian tradition, these are archetypical words against death (Davies 1997). They bring resurrection into the heart of the theology of a Christian funeral

by making a close association between the individual's death and the death of Jesus Christ which was believed to be followed by his resurrection. Death does not have the last word but is perceived as a transition to heaven to be followed by resurrection in some form.

Bloch and Parry (1982) argue that funerary rituals enact a transformation of the image of life from one of constant flux and division to one of still, transcendental order in which previous oppositions such as birth and therefore death no longer exist. It is significant that in many cultures 'death is harnessed into the cycle of regeneration and converted into birth' (Bloch and Parry 1982: 26). In the symbolism of medieval Christian art, a maggot infested corpse, may sometimes be seen to house a pure soul, depicted as leaving the body and rising to heaven.

In the religious systems of the Dobuan, Tikopian, Laymi, Merina and Lugbara, the community is constructed by reference to the dead (Bloch and Parry 1982). There are efforts to keep a pure aspect of the deceased which is involved in constructing and reproducing a living community. This does not occur in Hinduism, where the total destruction of the body is emphasised, in contrast to the other systems. However; in Hinduism as in the other religious systems, life is seen to come from death. The authors stress that within some cultures there are clear links between mortuary beliefs and rituals and the legitimation of the social order and authority structures. The rituals which transform death into fertility at times involve the perception of fertility as a gift, given by those who have power to those whom they have authority over.

The funeral as rite of passage for the deceased and mourners

Hertz (1960) argued that there is evidence of a parallel process between beliefs about the disintegration of the body, the fate of the soul and the mourning of the bereaved. He did not suggest these aspects cannot occur in isolation; however he believed that the final burial ceremony in the pacific region which occurred some weeks after the funerary rites began, was performed to bury the remains of the deceased in their final resting place, ensure the soul was at peace and reunite it with ancestors and to mark the end of the mourning period for the bereaved. The strengths of these rituals, is that they deal with the deceased and the bereaved in parallel.

Van Gennep (1960) discerned three phases in what rites of passage are conducted to achieve. The first phase of rites of separation or pre-liminal, the second of transition rites or liminal, and the third phase, rites of incorporation or post-liminal. The limen or doorway is a chaotic place of transfer that must be passed through to enter into the new world. Research conducted by van Gennep (1960) revealed that most funeral rites were rites of transition. Sheppy (2003) draws on the work of Littlewood (1992) who summarises the work of van Gennep on transitions. Separation removes the deceased and mourners from the rest of society which is living, transition moves the dead from the world of the living towards the world of the dead, and the living from the world of the dead towards the world of the living; incorporation moves the deceased into the world of the dead and the living back into the world of the living with the rest of society. The funeral, therefore, is a rite of passage for the dead and the living (Sheppy 2003). Sheppy explores this in relation to the Christian funeral 'For the dead, the journey passes from life in this world, through death, to life beyond death. For the living, the way leads from life where the departed has been part of their physical experience, through bereavement, to life where the deceased is present by recollection and memory' (Sheppy 2003: 79). Sheppy argues that within a Christian context death is not extinction, rather it is transition. Death is the way to continue eternal life begun during the believers earthly life. Eternal life ultimately involves being incorporated into God.

Sheppy (2003) explores the three aspects of the rite of passage as understood by van Gennep in the light of the three days of the Paschal Mystery; Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday, days marking the death and resurrection of Jesus. He offers an exegesis of the myth of descent, drawing on texts which state Jesus died and descended to the place of the dead before the resurrection, to offer a theological understanding of the Christian funeral ritual (Sheppy 2003). Sheppy offers a theological anthropology which sees death as total and resurrection as God's way of dealing with this. He speaks of Christ's life, death and resurrection being 'normative', bringing hope for the dead and through drawing on the work of Dorothee Sölle makes a case for the death and resurrection of Jesus being understood to be representative rather than substitutionary in relation to the rest of humanity (Sheppy 2003: 76). This leads to a view that within the funeral, death is confronted in its totality, accompanied by the doctrine of

resurrection and the particular death being understood to be taken up in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Sheppy suggests that the funeral ritual cannot fully complete the rite of passage that it marks, but it can 'rehearse the journey' that the deceased and bereaved need to travel (Sheppy 2003: 83). He has words of caution for those who may feel the end point of grief is reached when the bereaved are 'back to normal' as the process and the accompanying rite of passage lead the deceased through the threshold or 'limen' to a new place in their life. All is not normal, all is new. Sheppy effectively marries the funeral rituals with their theological context, although it may be argued that today many seeking and attending a Christian funeral are unfamiliar with many of the theological resonances the ceremony may contain.

Words against death

The work of Davies on performance utterance offers a theory of 'words against death', citing Baptism and the Eucharist as examples of rituals which incorporate words against death, along with funerals (Davies 1997). Baptism for the Christian brings with it a belief in transformation into a new person, a disciple of Christ, a 'new creation', whilst at the heart of the Eucharist is the belief in the bread becoming the body of Christ, again a transformation. Davies draws on Bloch's theory of rites of passage involving an encounter with a transcendent power or dimension and argues that funeral rites have this aspect of transformation within them – the power to change identity. He suggests that death rituals have the power inherent within them to 'add a new energy to those who are left', therefore effecting a change in society as it goes forward after a death (Davies, 1997: 20). Developing van Gennep's work on rites of passage being transformative and Bloch's work on rituals being a source of new life, this theory focuses on the power of words within a ritual context to effect psychological and existential changes for participants (Davies 1997). Davies argues that death is a threat to self-consciousness, and is responded to with 'words against death' which are able to harness the power to generate energy which can propel participants forward to a place that is different from where they were before. This may be understood theologically to be a process of transformation in which God is active.

Bailey and Walter have used this theory in making sense of recent data on mourners' experience of funerals and in their view the theory can be extended to

'relationships against death' (Bailey and Walter 2016). This aspect has been drawn from mourners highlighting the significance of those who knew the deceased attending the funeral, grieving in ways that were perceived to be authentic and giving eulogies, whether spoken publicly or through writing to the family or speaking of the deceased at the funeral tea following the ceremony (Bailey and Walter 2016). It may be argued that the funeral tea, a form of gathering with refreshments, generally held after the service and burial if the body is to be buried, is an integral part of the ritual in which the grief of the bereaved can be consolidated by sharing memories with others who knew the deceased.

Finding meaning in funeral rituals

Sheppy highlights that the privatisation of religion and the loss of a common overarching worldview and set of values that is shared across society in Britain has resulted in a 'sense of meaninglessness in the ritual of mourning' (Sheppy 2003: 54). A post-modern interpretation of the current situation would suggest that there are a multiplicity of meanings amongst mourners gathering for a funeral ritual today (Loewenthal & Snell 2003). This presents challenges to officiants taking funerals. Sheppy (2003) considers the significance of actions and meanings in relation to the funeral ritual and concludes that they cannot be separated when considering their significance. The officiant is tasked with explaining what is done and why to mourners, although symbols such as an empty cross or a candle cannot be explained fully and generally lose their power if attempts to try and explain them are attempted. For funerals where Christian liturgy is used, if the congregation do not have a faith some may question how mourners can find meaning in words crafted to express Christian theology. However, Bailey argues that even mourners who do not share the Christian faith may find a Christian funeral meaningful (Bailey 2013). Her research suggests that rather than faith or lack of it being of primary significance in mourners' experience of a funeral, for some, whether the officiant knew the deceased, the accuracy of the portrayal of the life of the deceased and the mourner's own relationship to the deceased hold greater meaning (Bailey and Walter 2016). Recent research into mourners' experience of funerals has strongly suggested that it is effective personalisation that mourners find satisfactory in a funeral (Caswell 2011, Bailey and Walter 2016). This includes elements of choice for those planning the funeral, customising the funeral so that it appears unique and the symbolic representation

of the deceased person (Bailey and Walter 2016). It is interesting to note that although other forms of funeral are available, some continue to choose a Christian funeral including some who would not identify as having a personal faith. A Christian ritual may hold cultural significance which may give reassurance at a time of change and loss.

The significance of ritual in funerals in Scotland

This thesis involved research into funerals in Scotland. In a survey of religious identification in Scotland in 2018 the largest group of 50% had no religious identification (Clark 2022). The largest Christian denomination was the Church of Scotland at 22%, Roman Catholic 14% and other Christian denominations combined including the Scottish Episcopal Church was 10% (Clark 2022). There is a considerable difference between funerals within the Church of Scotland and funerals within Roman Catholic and Episcopal Church within Scotland. Within Church of Scotland funerals the sense of ritual having significance of itself is minimised, there are no prayers for the deceased and usually no celebration of communion. As will be explored later on, the Reformation led to the removal of prayers, masses and alms for the dead and this is reflected in funeral services within the Church of Scotland. Roman Catholic funerals within Scotland traditionally involve a requiem mass in which the belief is that the mass aids the soul of the deceased in the after-life. Indeed every Roman Catholic mass involves a propitiatory sacrifice being offered for the living and the dead and prayers for those who have died. Although this theology underpins Roman Catholic funerals, in practice today many with faith within the Roman Catholic tradition in Scotland do not have a requiem mass within their funeral. More people with a connection with the Roman Catholic tradition or Church of Scotland in very recent years within Scotland are opting to have a non-religious funeral led by a humanist or civil officiant that focuses on providing comfort for the bereaved and an accurate personal portrayal of the life of the deceased. It appears that this is due to the existence of alternative forms of funerals being available and the decrease in religious affiliation.

Within the Scottish Episcopal Church, although funerals can include the eucharist and prayers for the dead with the belief that these aid the deceased in the after-life, in practice it is unusual for a funeral within an Episcopal church in Scotland to

include a eucharist. However Scottish Episcopal Churches along with Roman Catholic churches annually mark the Feast of All Saints and the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed when the names of the deceased are read allowed and prayers offered for them (Martimor et al 1988). Furthermore at every Eucharist within the Scottish Episcopal Church there are prayers for 'our brothers and sisters living and departed' with the belief that the Eucharist is for the whole church on earth and in heaven (Scottish Episcopal Church 1982).

As chapter ix) will detail, Christian funerals in Scotland offer Christian hope including a belief in the after-life and this is clearly different to a humanist or civil funeral. Christian funerals endeavour to be liturgically cohesive and embody the theology of a God of hope and a belief in the after-life. When they include a eucharist and prayers for the dead within the Roman Catholic or Episcopal traditions then the ritual is understood to be of assistance to the deceased. The term purgatory is rarely used in churches today but there is often a belief in the deceased being in an intermediary stage after death rather than immediately moving to their eternal resting place. Funerals led by a civil or humanist officiant do not aim to offer a liturgically complete experience and there is no agreed format for such a funeral although the centrepiece, in humanist funerals is usually telling the life story of the deceased. A choice of other elements such as poems or readings are often included and chosen by the bereaved or deceased before death. There is no aim to aid the deceased through the funeral ritual in contrast to a Christian funeral ritual. Christian funerals are distinctive in offering this.

Why death rituals endure

Howarth suggests three reasons for the existence of death rituals today. The social and individual need to deal with loss, a desire for control over mortality and fear of the dead and of death (Howarth 1996). Howarth refers to the work of psychoanalytic psychologists who cite fear of death as the main motive behind the creation and continuation of death rituals. Both Field (2000) and Williams (1990) conducted research on attitudes to death in England and Scotland respectively and did not find evidence of a widespread fear of death; however we may ask why death remains taboo in contemporary society. Research into the feelings that do currently exist around death would be very valuable. Including an exploration of

the influence of digital death on feelings about death would situate any studies in the current culture in which digital is considerable.

Funerals are seen to fulfil the need of the community and individuals who were in close relationship to the deceased to adjust to the loss of this person which requires considerable adaptation. More social adaptation is required within a simpler society than a complex one, and it is in some of these societies e.g. in the Neapolitan area of Italy, that there may be secondary burials which extend the funeral rituals (Howarth 1996). Rando (1984) highlights many benefits to those who participate in funerals in addition to being a rite of passage for the final disposition of the remains. These include confirming the reality of the death, assisting in the expression of grief whilst offering a structure that contains grief, stimulating recollections of the deceased individually and collectively, providing social support to the bereaved, reaffirming their new identity, incorporating them into the larger community, offering possible meanings of the loss and reaffirming the social order. The ritual of the funeral is multi-faceted and has many purposes for the deceased and the bereaved which will be explored further in the qualitative study in later chapters.

It is not only within the funeral that ritual acts mark a death. Individuals may also take actions involving will making, bodily disposal, memorialisation and mourning (Hallam and Hockey 2001). Such actions taken by the deceased or by others associated with the deceased, form a ritualised way of remembering them after death or maintaining a sense of connection. This can include choosing to retain certain possessions of the deceased as mementoes such as clothing or jewellery. Hallam and Hockey (2001) also give examples of every day actions such as a favourite walk being ritualised in everyday life to memorialise the dead. Virtual memorials on websites form another way in which enacting rituals enable a visual representation to remembering the dead.

Rituals - an aid or hindrance to grief?

In the view of Romanoff and Terenzio (1998: 697), bereavement rituals in the west often focus exclusively on 'letting go' due to an emphasis on this in bereavement theory and do not encompass the entire process of bereavement. Their thinking is that bereavement includes three main dimensions: intra-psychic, psychosocial and communal. Each dimension is linked to a function of

bereavement rituals, the *transformation* of the self, the *transition* in social status and a *continuing bond* with the deceased within a communal context. Remembering the dead publicly by the reading out of their name at an All Souls service or keeping a chosen memento of the deceased may assist with the dimension of transformation, a funeral may facilitate a sense of transition and remembering the deceased on what would have been their birthday by planting a tree may mean a sense of a continuing bond. There are many strengths to the model proposed by Romanoff and Terenzio (1998) which broadens the perception of how rituals may play a part in the grieving process of the bereaved. It is perhaps a weakness that they refer to the need to attend to the various dimensions of bereavement as 'grief work'. The concept that 'grief work' is necessary for successful resolution of bereavement, as argued by Freud has not been substantiated by research studies as explored in the chapter on grief and bereavement in this thesis. However, there are differences between the Freudian idea of grief work as working through emotions and Romanoff and Terenzio's understanding of grief work as using rituals to move through a bereavement process involving intra-psychic, psychosocial and communal aspects. It is noted that in their theory, Romanoff and Terenzio (1998) only have the bereaved in view and are not including the process the deceased may go through in terms of how they are perceived by relatives and society. This may be seen as a limitation, in contrast to the work of the leading anthropologist Hertz (1960) who compared both the process of the bereaved and the deceased.

Where people die today

The process of dying has generally moved to institutions, rather than occurring in the home of the person whose life is ending. In 2014, 22% of deaths in England occurred at home, 76% in an institution, such as a hospital, hospice or care home and 2% elsewhere (Public Health England 2016). In Scotland, 25% of people died at home or in a non-institutional setting, whilst 75% died in an institution in 2014 (National Records of Scotland 2016). Singer et al (2005) found that 90% of 76 caregivers interviewed thought that death at home was a positive experience. The small qualitative study conducted by Donnelly et al (2006) described how, facilitated by visiting nurses in most cases, relatives experienced the moment of their loved one dying at home, including a high level of intimacy being present. This study questioned whether such a death would be as meaningful and whether

those involved would feel as free to allow such intimacy to be present in a hospital or hospice setting.

Being a death worker or death toucher

Ancient Jewish Texts such as the book of Numbers refer to dead bodies as ritually impure (Numbers 19: 11-12). Those who touched them could not participate in religious activities and therefore Jewish priests in the first centuries could not touch corpses as it prevented them from being able to fulfil their religious duties. The concept of the impurity of dead bodies has persisted in wider society. The role of death toucher or undertaker is one that brings stigma with it due to the close associations with dead bodies which are perceived as polluting. The stigma is demonstrated by derogatory humour, apprehension and typecasting (Howarth 1996). Those Howarth interviewed described ways of dealing with this level of stigma; efforts to 'pass' as normal members of society including forms of distortion, evasion, omission and nurturing the stereotype (Howarth 1996: 91). Various techniques were used by the staff to protect themselves from becoming emotionally affected by the death of individuals whose bodies they worked with, namely avoidance, dehumanisation, distancing, stressing the essential nature of the service, professionalization and referring to a typology of death (Howarth 1996). There were times when these strategies were less effective, such as when workers knew the deceased, or when the deceased was a child. Having to deal with the stigma, the risk of experiencing sorrow repeatedly at the deaths of others and needing to manage unpleasant aspects of the job suggest that death work is personally costly in its social and emotional impact. In some roles there may de-briefing of professional supervision to assist professionals to deal with the impact of work that is emotionally demanding and at times traumatic. No formal supervision or de-briefing is provided for funeral directors who must process the impact of their work on them informally with colleagues.

Marvin and Ingle (1999) relate how in an American context, the military are death touchers. The fundamental principle which governs their service is that they are willing to die in battle. Military groups are separated from the rest of society by this obligation and develop extremely strong bonds with each other. The wearing of uniforms, haircuts, distance separateness from civilian life and the closeness of the group. Until recently women were not permitted to join and upon their being

allowed to join, on the ground combat roles were denied them and so did not encounter death through combat. Marvin and Ingle (1999) suggest that women did not touch death in a military context; however it is the case that female nurses touched death in caring for wounded and dying soldiers. Men killed and were at direct risk of being killed. They were trained to cross borders, places of liminal space and to kill in war. For the military, although the soldiers' blood is pure and their sacrifice purifying to society, their touching death makes them impure and maintains the need for separateness from the rest of society (Mavin and Ingle 1999). The public emphasis on patriotism and separateness from civilian life may obscure the impact of the trauma caused by some combat situations and it is now known that around 20% of ex-military personnel experience post-traumatic stress disorder which can be extremely debilitating and if not effectively treated lead to veteran suicide (Haveman- Gould 2018). It is also true that with some missiles being guided by computers staffed by military personnel many miles from the area of conflict, post-traumatic stress disorder can also impact those who kill from a distance. This emphasises that currently touching death may occur digitally rather than physically encountering a dead body and is part of the hidden cost of touching death for those in the military.

The history of the role of funeral director

The profession of modern funeral directing began with individuals practicing the art of heraldry providing funerals for the aristocracy in the medieval era. The Victorian period saw funerals becoming more and more elaborate; however there was a backlash against the expense involved in such occasions. A stereotype developed, present in the novels of Dickens of the undertaker mercilessly exploiting those made vulnerable by grief. Since the beginning of the twentieth century undertakers sought to professionalise their trade to make it more acceptable and respected, a necessary public service. By 1940 in Britain the term 'funeral director' had replaced 'undertaker' and professional organisations were formed with codes of conduct for funeral directing businesses. From early in the twentieth century funeral directors in Britain began to acquire training in embalming and provide chapels of rest where the corpse could be housed whilst awaiting the funeral. The preference for the dead to be housed by the funeral director rather than the family arose in the context of public health concerns and

lack of time for those who worked long hours in the growing industries (Howarth 1996).

With the majority of people dying in a hospital or care home then being transferred directly to the funeral directors who prepare the body, funeral directors have an established place in death rituals today. Howarth (1996) underlines that once a death has occurred, the dead body is generally perceived as polluting and becomes the signifier of mortality. In contrast to fifty years ago, today, when the death is at home, relatives usually seek the removal of the body as soon as it can be organised by the undertaker, therefore releasing the home from perceived contamination. Her research identified that undertakers present themselves as providing a service to the relatives which relieves them of the difficult task of laying out the body, taking care of it until the funeral and making all the funeral arrangements at a time when they are vulnerable through grief, enabling them to return to some form of 'normality' in their home (Howarth 1996: 108).

The process of dying and the remains being disposed of entails a large amount of bureaucracy, complex and alien to bereaved relatives unfamiliar with this administration. Funeral Directors relieve them of needing to attend to this. In addition, some aspects of the process are virtually impossible to complete as a lay person, for instance, crematoriums which will only take bookings from funeral directors, to avoid being subject to hoax calls. Funeral Directors describe themselves as dealing with all matters from death to the grave. Howarth describes the funeral directing business which was the focus of her research (Howarth 1996). A family business since 1840, it is not lucrative, has a small staff, areas that are open to the public including the chapel of rest and 'hidden' areas that are for the use of staff only. There is an area which has combined use of storing funeral cars and where the bodies of the deceased are embalmed. It is an area bereaved relatives do not see and it may be surmised that some bereaved people would not support their deceased relative's body being intimately attended to in an area which is used a garage.

The treatment of the dead body

When the body or cadaver arrives on the funeral director's premises it is believed to be a source of pollution and a signifier of mortality. In the nineteenth century

there was considerable concern about the public health risks attached to being in the proximity of a dead body. Some funeral directors suggest that embalming decontaminates the body as bodily fluids are removed and the remains are treated with a preservative which slows the process of decaying. The possession of the body by the funeral directors is understood by Howarth (1996) to give them power and protect their own interests in providing the entire funeral service, whilst alienating relatives from death and dealing with the remains of the deceased. Undertakers transport the dead body in vehicles which obscure what they are carrying such as a sign on the vehicle stating it is a 'private ambulance'. The process carried out on the dead body on their premises she suggests involves 'decontamination' and 'humanisation' (Howarth, 1996: 107). The relatives may now see the remains of the deceased once more following this process.

Since the 1960's, some bereavement experts have been of the opinion that viewing the body aids mourners in their grief (Howarth 1996). This is related to the theories of grief that suggest mourners need to progress from a state of numbness or shock to accepting the reality of the death. Funeral directors also maintain that embalming and presenting the body for viewing allows the bereaved to view the deceased which is psychologically beneficial. The claim is made that their viewing the deceased with a natural appearance, appearing to be sleeping spares them any revulsion they may feel if viewing their dead in an untreated state. The suggestion is that to see the deceased with such a 'natural appearance' is reassuring and allows grieving to begin (Howarth 1996). Howarth remarks that many directors do not use a photograph of the deceased taken when they were alive as they are not aiming to present them as they were when they are alive, but to soften their appearance in death, creating an impression that death is similar to sleeping and they are 'at peace'. If the death has been violent and the body damaged, the funeral director may do a considerable amount of reconstructive and cosmetic work to remove the signs of damage and present the deceased as attractive. Directors may take a pride in their work on the body, 'humanising' the remains and associate these tasks with the level of professionalism they aspire to maintain.

Howarth (1996) remarks that, through their preparation of the body for viewing, funeral directors may aim to create the impression that the deceased individual is sleeping peacefully with no evident scars of old age or injury. She suggests this

may be a response to the desire to control mortality (Howarth 1996). She argues that the appearance of the embalmed corpse leads it to become a symbol of immortality, that the majority do not believe in victory over death through Christ, rather the funeral director uses the science and technology of embalming to replace theology and give the impression that immortality may be possible (Howarth 1996). We may consider that rather than mourners believing in theology or science alone, there may be a mixture of these elements and more present in many mourners. It is likely the beliefs of mourners are nuanced and varied.

The role of the funeral director in the process of the funeral

The funeral director has close oversight of all aspects of the funeral, other than the ceremony itself, during which authority is handed over to the priest, minister or other officiant (Howarth 1996). The priest is paid by the funeral director in cash at some point during the proceedings, emphasising the greater power the funeral director has over the funeral as a whole. As discussed elsewhere, historically, the majority of funeral directors have been male; however this is changing and the number of female funeral directors and directors of crematoria is increasingly significantly. The funeral director's staff all take direction from the director and it is their responsibility that all aspects of the ritual are enacted without mishaps. There is considerable drama in some of the funeral director's actions such as the practise, still maintained in some areas of the director in silk top hat and dress coat walking in front of the hearse for a distance as the hearse carrying the body of the deceased leaves their home. There is a hierarchy that the director pays close attention to in terms of the next of kin and immediate family and this is used when seating the relatives in the cars carrying mourners to the ceremony, in the chapel or church and in arranging the flowers in proximity to the coffin. The closer the relative, the closer they are to be positioned in relation to the body of the deceased. Howarth also gives examples of people from minority ethnic communities who may conduct the ceremony themselves e.g. a Vietnamese family (Howarth 1996). It has been noted that traditionally recognised forms of family relationships are usually drawn upon by those who arrange the funeral with the funeral director (Howarth 1996). As Doka (2002) has highlighted, this may lead to the disenfranchisement of others who are grieving and had close relationships with the deceased, such as a gay partner unknown to the relatives of

the deceased or girlfriend/boyfriend of a deceased teenager. Not all funeral directors support children being able to view the body of a deceased relative. Unless these views are challenged, some children are disenfranchised.

Howarth argues that dramatizing the funeral ritually disempowers mourners and ensures the funeral director maintains control over the ceremony (Howarth 1996). The director in her study argues that his control over the entire operation ensures that all goes smoothly whilst a sense of dignity and the importance of the bereaved is maintained. The majority of deaths in Britain involve cremations, 77 % in 2020 (The Cremation Society of Great Britain). This usually occurs within the context of a short service of fifteen to twenty minutes in the crematorium chapel. Getting timings wrong and missing the booked slot at the crematorium causes havoc with the sense of dignity and professionalism of the organisation of the ritual. For directors, such a mistake could mean a loss of future business as word of mouth would convey to others that a significant error was made undermining trust that future clients may have in the director's business.

Conclusion

Funeral rituals endure although evidence has not been found to support the view that this is largely due to fear of death (Howarth 1996, Field 2000, Williams 1990). Contemporary funerals have become for some a celebration of the life of the individual and the accuracy of eulogies and symbolic representations of the dead are important (Walter 1996, Bailey and Walter 2016). For many, a satisfactory funeral is one which offers effective personalisation and one which they are actively involved in (Caswell 2009, Bailey & Walter 2016, O'Rourke 2011). Within Scotland, funerals conducted within the Church of Scotland do not include prayers for the dead and there is a large focus on the bereaved whereas within funerals in the Roman Catholic and Episcopal churches prayers for the dead are always included, and a mass or eucharist may be offered for the departed which is believed to aid them in the after-life. The place of funeral directors in society is well established and they often have possession of the body, only relinquishing control when an officiant conducts the funeral service (Howarth 1996). Throughout the world there are examples of funeral rituals involving symbolism of new birth and renewal (Bloch and Parry 1982). Rituals such as funerals can constructively aid individuals and communities in their processes of grief,

facilitating change on many inter-related levels including psychic, psychosocial and communal (Romanoff and Terenzio 1998). At its heart, the funeral is a rite of passage for the deceased and the bereaved. It rehearses the journey both must travel. The funeral has the powerful effect of giving energy which can propel participants forward to a different place and it is not only the bereaved family and deceased who are significant participants but the whole assembly (Davies 1997, Bailey and Walter 2016). These shifts can be understood theologically to be transformations through encountering God in the context of the funeral ritual. The following chapter will continue the multi-disciplinary examination of the funeral by considering the experiences of the bereaved and to an extent the dying in looking at grief and bereavement from a psychological perspective.

Chapter ii) The perspective of psychology: understanding grief and bereavement

Introduction

Having considered the funeral as ritual from an anthropological perspective, the focus now turns to the psychological experiences of grief and bereavement. Although each person may be affected differently by the death of the deceased, there has been a considerable amount of research exploring experiences of grief and bereavement seeking general characteristics of bereavement as will be discussed below. The dying may experience grief as they face their own death. Officiants conducting funerals may spend time with the dying before their death and with the bereaved family after the death planning the funeral. My own experience of bereavement and work with the bereaved in psychotherapy and church ministry has led to a belief that an understanding of the processes involved in grief and bereavement is central to planning, conducting and evaluating a funeral well.

Facing death

When approaching the subject of grief and bereavement, the first area to consider is the time before death when individuals and their families are faced with the prospect of their dying. In her work exploring attitudes to death and dying, Kübler-Ross (1970) advocated that the dying should always be told the truth about their condition. How individuals respond to news of their condition relates to how they have dealt with earlier difficult situations in their life, such as through denial. How the news, especially news of a terminal condition is conveyed, was believed by Kübler-Ross to be the main factor in a dying individual's ability to begin to accept this reality. In her research, empathy shown by those who conveyed the news of terminal conditions along with the assurance that everything possible would be done, are very important (Kübler-Ross 1970). Kübler-Ross advocated a five-stage approach to grief including denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance (Kübler-Ross 1970). Kübler-Ross relates that 'denial, at least partial denial, is used by all patients, not only during the first stages of illness or following confrontation but also later on from time to time' (Kübler-Ross 1970: 35). This first stage of denial is followed by a second stage of anger, namely feelings of anger, rage, envy and resentment. The next stage is bargaining. It could be understood by some as bargaining with God, or with life

itself. Either way it involves attempting to postpone a future stage arriving, such as death. It includes a 'prize' for good behaviour and a self-imposed 'deadline' (Kübler-Ross 1970: 73). The fourth stage is depression. The depression is a response to the reality of the losses the individual is enduring or are to come as a result of their condition and may be many and varied. Along with current losses, many experience what Kübler-Ross describes as preparatory grief, as they anticipate their death. To achieve acceptance may involve working through much anxiety and anguish. The stage following this according to Kübler-Ross is acceptance. Her understanding was that an individual could reach this stage if they had had enough time and opportunity to work through the feelings associated with the previous stages. In this stage the feelings, pain and struggle are past and there is a tendency for the individual to sleep more and more, described as 'the final rest before the long journey' by a patient of Kübler-Ross (1970: 100). The time for talking is past and they are in a stage of detachment which will be followed by their death.

The quality that Kübler-Ross argued persists throughout the various stages of grief is hope. This hope may be present whilst a terminally ill person arranges their affairs and comes to an acceptance of their impending death. It is engendered by sensitivity on behalf of family members and those professionals caring for the person and can be adversely affected by the comments of these individuals too. Hope helps individuals have trust in those around them, even if good news is not forthcoming. Hope sustains them in difficult times and makes it possible for them to bear their current experiences. If an individual stops expressing hope, Kübler-Ross suggested it is usually an indicator that they will die soon. This hope is not a religious concept such as Christian hope which involves a belief in an afterlife. It is rather finding meaning in experiences even when they are difficult such as facing the ultimate loss of one's life.

Kübler-Ross brought the subject of death and dying to prominence when first published and lessons from her work are valued today such as focusing on the dying person as a human being and including them in discussions about their health and treatment (Corr 2019). These two aspects of how to treat the dying are fundamental to good palliative care today and through them Kübler-Ross has remained an important figure in work with the terminally ill. Empirical evidence has not substantiated that people move through the five stages she described in a

linear fashion therefore it has not been used in its original form as a basis for work in contemporary work with the dying.

In a more recent study on dying, Williams conducted qualitative interviews with seventy individuals in Aberdeen and analysed the quantitative survey data from over six hunderd randomly selected Aberdonians. Unlike the work of Kübler-Ross, Williams was surveying the general Aberdeen population's views on death, and not speaking with the terminally ill or recently bereaved. He identified several patterns in relation to attitudes to dying (Williams 1990). The first he coined 'ritual dying'. This involved aiming to achieve a readiness for death, reunions with loved ones before death, along with the dying being fully aware of death approaching and a belief in the sanctity of life. The second, 'disregarded dying' included the moral expectation of a natural death in old age, the ideal of a quick death, the wish to die unaware, therefore practical decisions about the timing of death were excluded. The third 'transitional pattern' is between the first and second patterns. It encompassed elements of a lifelong state of preparedness, with the ideal of a quick death and ignorance of what was happening. The fourth pattern, 'controlled dying' included being given some control over the time of death, with a full knowledge of one's condition, a reunion with loved ones, combined with a quick death, or other form of death believed to be good. Williams explained that it was not the case that individuals all had a coherent series of views and beliefs about death. There were many inconsistencies and contradictions within individuals' views, and some participants acknowledged these contradictions. The commonest coherent pattern of thought was 'disregarded dying', but it was more common to combine two patterns with a desire to see arrested dying resulting from medical intervention (Williams 1990:118).

That there were contradictions and inconsistences in the data gathered by Williams is interesting. It appears that the views held by individuals were not clear cut and were subject to revision based on later experiences. It should be noted that whereas Kübler-Ross examined the *feelings* she saw her patients experiencing, Williams identified the *views* of his research participants. The cultural contexts are different – Chicago, the United States in the late 1960's, for one study, Aberdeen, Scotland in the late 1980's for the other. Kübler-Ross was aiming to discern a process in order that those working with the terminally ill and

bereaved could better support the dying and those affected. Williams, in contrast, conducted an ethnographic study and examined the influence of religious history on beliefs about dying. The form of dying advocated by the work of Kübler-Ross, according to William's theorising is closest to 'ritual dying'. Williams found that most surveyed favoured 'disregarded dying'. It should be noted that in line with the work of Kübler-Ross, a majority of 74% of those William's surveyed said they would 'probably, definitely or certainly' wish to know that they were dying (Williams 1990: 107). There was a tendency for participants to wish to know more than not wish to know, the wish to know was more prevalent amongst the middle classes, as opposed to the working classes surveyed (Williams 1990: 107). The middle classes arguably may have more access to resources to respond to the news, such as arranging for additional paid for medical treatment or paying for counselling and may have a greater desire to ensure their will is updated if they had sizeable financial resources. There may be fewer options for those described as working class therefore less urgency around learning that they were dying.

Theories of grief examined

Bereavement is the situation of someone who has lost someone significant through death. Grief is the emotional or affective response to the loss. Mourning are the acts of expressing the grief, influenced by culture and society (Stroebe and Stroebe 1987: 7). The first theory of grief was devised by Freud (1957). At the heart of this was the concept of 'grief work'. The process of acknowledging and expressing painful emotions such as guilt and anger. This was believed to lead to the bereaved being freed from bondage to the deceased, being able to adjust to life without the deceased and build new relationships. Freud maintained that failure to complete grief work would result in a complicated grief process with risk of mental and physical illness and an ability to return to normal functioning. Stroebe and Stroebe (1987: 17) highlight that Freud and Klein wrote the first leading papers on pathological grief. Klass et al (1996: 6) trace the current understanding of loss from Freud's theories, which they suggest did not incorporate his own experience of the loss of his grandson, aged four years. In the work of Bowlby (1980) that followed, with his development of attachment theory, the goal of bereavement continued to be to sever links with the dead. The stages of mourning Bowlby identified are protest, searching, disorganisation and reorganisation. Parkes (1986: 84) developed grief theory further. His description

of the stages is numbness, when the situation seems unreal, yearning and searching when the bereaved tries to recover the lost person, disorganisation and despair when difficult feelings are experienced such as anxiety and desolation, and reorganisation when a new identity is forged that involves a level of acceptance of the loss. The idea of there being stages of bereavement has, Cleiren (1992) claims been found to be untenable. He suggests that it has more validity to argue that grief involves a large variety of emotional states. A 'component', rather than 'stage' model appears more valid. Parkes (2009) has adjusted his view of the process of bereavement to a more 'component' view, rather than stages or phases. In the Leiden study, which examined the experiences of bereavement of over three hundred people in the Netherlands following death by traffic accident, suicide or terminal illness, extreme loss reactions at four months, was an indicator of future problems in adaptation and not, as some may believe evidence of the bereaved effectively 'working through' the loss (Cleiren 1992). The study did suggest that bereavement by a range of means, not just sudden or violent bereavement can result in high levels of post-traumatic stress which may be a useful finding for those working with bereaved people.

Stroebe and Schut (1999: 197) theorise that grief is a dual process involving the bereaved being both loss orientated including the intrusion of grief, a denial or avoidance of changes, breaking bonds with the deceased and restoration orientated, which includes distraction from grief, meeting day to day needs, completing every-day tasks, developing new roles, identities and relationships. The suggestion is that bereaved people oscillate between both these, back and forwards. There is a dual process happening rather than a staged process going in one direction. The strength of this theory is that it comes closer to encompassing the complexity of experiences the bereaved may have rather than giving the impression that a linear series of stages are being moved through. It may resonate with some bereaved individuals who experience being suddenly ambushed by grief in the midst of getting on with their life.

As Rosenblatt highlights (in Silverman and Klass 1996: 50) grief can recur over a lifetime. This is related to the issue of a death setting a motion a sequence of losses, a sense of one's own mortality, and losses in family relationships that come as a result of the way grief impacts on various members in one family. A loss can reawaken grief from previous losses. Grief work is defined as a 'cognitive

process of coming to terms with a loss through confronting the loss and restructuring thoughts about the deceased, the events of the loss and the world as it is without the deceased' (Stroebe in Klass et al 1996: 52). The cultural and philosophical influences underlying this concept have been de-constructed in recent years. In addition, the idea that those who have worked through the emotions associated with bereavement, known as 'grief work' are better placed to achieve a good outcome compared with those who have not done so, has not been evidenced by research studies (Stroebe and Stroebe 2007). Martin and Doka (2002) suggest that there are different styles of grieving including those who grieve in an intuitive way by expressing deep feeling and those who grieve in an instrumental way by expressing grief in physical, cognitive, or behavioural ways. Researchers have also noted that grief can suddenly powerfully surface in an individual when they are not expecting it. For some, this may be extremely difficult to deal with, whilst for others it can be understood as a reminder of the significance of the loss and lead to the surfacing of memories of positive experiences of the relationship with the deceased. As Rosenblatt remarks 'there is more to grief than sorrow' (Klass et al 1996: 55). The creation of memory boxes containing items associated with the deceased by bereaved children for instance may evoke happy memories of past shared activities which confirms for the child the significance of the deceased in their earlier life.

In his paper 'A new model of grief: bereavement and biography', Walter (1996) argues that forming a biography of the deceased is an important aspect of grieving and that speaking with others who knew the deceased can be more helpful in resolving bereavement than sessions with a grief counsellor. To Walter, the purpose of grief, rather than working through painful emotions (Freud 1957) or breaking bonds with the deceased (Bowlby 1980) is rather, 'the construction of a durable biography that enables the living to integrate the memory of the dead into their lives' (Walter 1996: 7). The desire to talk with other people about the deceased, and especially with those who knew the deceased personally is present for many bereaved people. Walter's argument that grief is about moving on with life having found an appropriate place for the dead in the bereaved person's life, is one that is compatible with the continuing bonds perspective. Stroebe (1997) suggests that this aspect of Walter's thesis may be similar to Bowlby's idea of relocating the deceased. It may not be necessary to argue that talking with those

who knew the deceased is more helpful than bereavement therapy. It may be for some people, both are helpful. My own experience offering psychotherapy to bereaved people has been that some bereavements can be particularly difficult to speak about such as a loss through suicide or through substance mis-use and in cases in which the death involves stigma, the opportunity of bereavement therapy can be particularly useful. Additionally, experiencing multiple bereavements close together or a bereavement combined with another significant loss such as the loss of a job can all lead some bereaved people to feel that speaking with other lay people who knew the bereaved is not sufficient and the involvement of a grief counsellor is sought.

The continuing bonds theory

Klass at al (1996; 2018) argue for a concept of continuing bonds in bereavement theory. The development of the concept of continuing bonds between the deceased and bereaved marked a significant new development in grief theory and opened new avenues of understanding of the ongoing place the deceased may have in the lives of the bereaved. They suggest that none of the main grief theories accept the idea that grief may involve a changed bond with the dead person, rather than the severing of bonds. In the most recent revision of Worden's book, a classic text on grief therapy used regularly in the training of grief counsellors he defines the last task of mourning as 'to emotionally relocate the deceased and move on with life' (Worden 1991: 16). Although this goes some way to acknowledging an emotional tie with the deceased continuing, in the view of Klass et al (1996) it stops short of their theory of continuing bonds.

The main premise of the continuing bonds perspective is that the bereaved keep the deceased in loving memory for a long time after their death, often for the rest of their lives and hold an inner representation of the deceased, which can be regarded as typical rather than pathological behaviour (Klass et al 2018). The term 'paradox' fits well here (Klass et al 2018: 351). The deceased is not alive, and yet they are present in the life of the mourner and in their social world. For many, there is an inner system that is still centred on the deceased. There may be an interactive quality to the relationship with the deceased as it now stands such as the bereaved taking the deceased into account in decisions they make. This is not to say that the mourner or survivor is unhealthily focused on the past, rather, they

may have a sense that the deceased wants them to forge new relationships and enjoy life. A bond may remain between the dead and the living and in some cultures rituals and religious systems may legitimise it such as in Japan (Klass 2018: 351). It should not be assumed that all forms of continuing bonds are adaptive, rather, the form the continuing bond takes is crucial. If a bond is such that the bereaved person continues to seek physical proximity to the deceased, operating as if the deceased has needs and are still in some way physically present, it is an indication that the grief is unresolved and there is a lack of acceptance of the reality of the change that death brings to relationships. If there are clear indications that the bereaved has formed an inner representation of the deceased that is important to them in the midst of seeking to go forward in their life, the theory views this as healthy.

The theory of continuing bonds has been very valuable in making sense of how many bereaved people understand the process of grief as 'coming to terms with the loss' rather than a 'getting over the loss'. There are parallels with the psychological theory of relational depth. In this theory, the client carries around an inner representation of the therapist when they are not with them in a way that promotes their wellbeing and is a positive support to them in making choices which benefit them in their every-day lives (Knox et al 2013). In both the continuing bonds theory and the theories of relational depth, the interrelatedness of human beings is emphasised and the bereaved person's ability to promote their own psychological healing through relationships that dwell within their person and can be drawn upon when they need them. Arguably, these ways of operating are empowering to bereaved people who may be vulnerable in many ways.

The continuing bonds perspective may be given additional support through the work of Davies (2020) on the dividual self. This critiques the concept of the individual or bonded self as a western concept that does not take into account a broader view of self, more commonly found on the Indian subcontinent and known as a dividual sense of self. The concept of dividuality sees those whom a person is close to as part of their sense of self and this has implications for understanding attachment and bereavement. The sense of an ongoing social presence of the deceased may be understood to be due to their being an ongoing part of the personhood of the deceased. The work on the dividual self provides a

valuable cross-cultural critique of westernised theories and supports continuing bonds between the deceased and bereaved as adaptive.

Factors affecting adaptation to bereavement

Worden suggests there are many factors which influence how an individual makes progress through grief (Worden 1991: 32-34). These include the nature of the relationship between the deceased and the mourner, how the deceased died, the bereaved person's skills in coping with anxiety or stress, previous experience of bereavement, cultural or religious connections with expectations of behaviour or of support and whether there are other stresses in the bereaved person's life. The Leiden study found that kinship relationship to the deceased is a major factor influencing adaptation following bereavement, a finding not identified earlier (Cleiren 1992: 61). Much research before this focused on spousal bereavement which differs from the loss of other family relationships in many ways. Generalising about bereavement based on spousal relationships was misguided in the view of Cleiren (1992: 247) and the argument for this is strong. He highlights that generally, adaptation after spousal bereavement, in contrast to other family bereavements is strongly affected by the personal resources of the bereaved, rather than the mode of death. The second significant difference is that in all kinship groups except spousal bereavement, women suffer greater loss reactions and health difficulties than men. However, in spousal bereavement, women and men suffer equally and widowers have greater social difficulties after bereavement (Cleiren 1992: 247). Contrasting bereavement by traffic accident, suicide and long-term illness, there were more similarities than differences and by fourteen months there were no significant differences in the level of adaptation. It should be noted that each death is unique and there may be vast differences between deaths that were grouped together in this study. For instance, the differences between a ninety-year-old grandfather dying after living with dementia for many years and a twenty five year old daughter and mother dying after six years of living with cancer; however both may be deemed to have died through long term illness for this study.

Cleiren (1992: 247) suggests taking a developmental view of bereavement. Rather than looking at the mode of death to ascertain the level of difficulties the bereaved may have in adaptation, he argues that to a large degree, the history of

the bereaved person and the family determine adaptation. One area where there is difference is the attitude of the bereaved towards the death. Those bereaved by suicide are more likely to experience guilt, and along with those bereaved by long term illness, a sense of relief. The group most at risk for problems following bereavement are mothers who have lost a child (including adult children), followed at a distance by widowers, fathers and sisters (Cleiren 1992: 253). Bowlby's (1980) view is that the most significant early attachment is between mother and child. The Leiden study supports the argument that the degree of attachment between deceased and bereaved affects the intensity of the loss (Cleiren 1992: 261). The degree of loss reactions, depression and health problems was significantly higher for mothers than any other group.

Sisters were highlighted as a group which may be forgotten but which experienced greater difficulties with adaptation in comparison to widows who fared relatively well. Sisters often reported having a special relationship with the bereaved and feeling some responsibility for them (Cleiren 1992: 196). In some relationships, this sister-sister relationship in the context of a family may mirror some characteristics of the mother-child relationship and therefore such a bereavement may mirror some of the difficulties mothers have following the death of a child. The emphasis on the bereavement of sisters may be useful for bereavement professionals who risk overestimating the difficulties of bereaved widows and underestimating those of bereaved sisters. In a bereaved family, the loss of a child may be followed by a focus on the parents' grief and that of the sister(s) may be overlooked. It was found that sufficient practical and informational support are important in adaptation (Cleiren 1992). The Leiden study provides important findings for bereavement professionals, although it must always be borne in mind that general trends provide useful background information only. Each person's bereavement is unique to them and an individualised approach is important rather than assuming they will respond in a particular way suggested by research findings.

Anger and bereavement

The five-stage process of Kübler-Ross (1970) included anger and although this theory is not accepted in its entirety due to lack of empirical evidence, anger is accepted as a natural and typical emotion for bereaved people to experience

(Drenovsky 1994: 303). It has been theorised that anger is a secondary emotion and emerges as a result of other emotions such as fear, sadness or helplessness (Goleman 2005). Goleman (2005: 50) suggests anger may be conceived of as an iceberg. Anger is what may be presented and visible; however beneath its surface there may be many other emotions. For some bereaved people, anger may emerge due to the experience of sadness associated with their loss, fear of what the future will be like without the deceased or helplessness as the deceased is no longer available to assist them in their life. For others, anger may be evoked as a response to their treatment by the deceased during their life which may lead to the presence of mixed emotions which make planning a funeral challenging. It may be more socially acceptable for some groups to express anger than others, typically in the United Kingdom, it is less socially acceptable for females to express anger than males. There can be many constraints for those who are experiencing anger if it is not an emotion they are used to expressing. Difficulties in finding appropriate ways to express the emotion can create a sense of isolation, as can directing the anger at friends or family who may react negatively to it. For officiants planning funerals, allowing anger to be expressed during the planning process may be helpful to the bereaved. Additionally, there may be times when an officiant's reference during the ceremony to the anger a bereaved family feel may be fitting and appreciated by those who are struggling with the reality of their loss. This may allow the anger to be experienced in a contained way which ensures those attending the funeral feel safe, supported and that their feelings are known and respected. Within the context of a Christian funeral all feelings may be brought to God for transformation through the prayers or other aspects of the ceremony.

Problematic grief

It was Lindemann (1944) who conducted the first study into morbid grief reactions. He suggested that a morbid grief reaction was one in which grief was delayed, either through the individual behaving as if the death had not occurred or in such a way that one of the features of grief was disturbed. The study was heavily criticised by Parkes (1965) as lacking validity. Findings were presented anecdotally, there was a lack of defining normal grief reactions to compare others with and the participants, who were all his psychiatric patients, were deemed unrepresentative. Parkes (1965) conducted a further study, and used data from

earlier studies to identify three pathological forms of grief, namely, chronic, delayed and inhibited. Chronic grief involves grief being prolonged indefinitely, often with very intense symptoms. Delayed grief occurs when grief symptoms are experienced only after an extensive delay. Inhibited grief is believed to occur when normal grief symptoms are not present, but the grief finds expression in somatic symptoms; however Parkes did not find any occurrence of this form of grief and it was developed based on the psychoanalytic theory that individuals may exhibit defences against emotional experiences and so repress feelings (Stroebe and Stroebe 1987: 18). In the view of Stroebe and Stroebe (1987) a bereaved person is clinically unwell when their grief reaction is excessively intense and the process of grieving excessively prolonged. If the kinds of symptoms that could reasonably be expected in the months following partner bereavement are still present after a couple of years, then it is likely clinical depression would be diagnosed. There appears to be a particular risk of this occurring when the process of grieving has been inhibited or delayed. Although delayed grief is deemed pathological, there may arguably be situations when it is necessary for grief to be delayed, for instance in the circumstances of refugees fleeing their country following the death of a family member in civil war when the focus needs to be on ensuring their immediate safety.

Parkes and Weiss (1983) used data from the Harvard Bereavement Study to develop theory on the kinds of bereavements that are likely to cause more complicated grief reactions. They include when the bereavement is untimely or sudden, when the relationship with the deceased had been one of ambivalence or involved difficulties such as arguments, or in the case of chronic-grief syndrome, when the relationship had been one of a high level of dependency. They identified symptoms for each of these and suggested different kinds of therapeutic interventions. Stroebe and Stroebe (2007) have analysed studies on risk factors regarding poor outcomes to bereavement and found that there are many interpersonal, intrapersonal, situational and coping factors that affect outcome. How these factors may affect each other is not known in many cases. Other risk factors have not been researched. The ways that particular risk factors relate to particular outcomes is not known.

Parkes (2009) later examined the hypothesis that the nature of attachments formed by an infant affects later grief reactions, with the expectation that those

with insecure or ambivalent attachments have more complicated grief reactions. The study suggested that grief reactions are affected by attachments; however there are also other factors such as separation from or loss of a parent in childhood, migration, unexpected, multiple or traumatic losses which may interact with attachments to aggravate any vulnerability. The importance of services supporting the development of secure attachments between infants and their carers is emphasised. However, the work of Parkes reveals that although early attachments can be significant in building resilience to later losses, many other factors are at work and predicting who may experience complicated grief is highly complex.

Bereaved people, especially those bereaved recently are more likely to have physical health problems including disabilities, require hospital admissions and medication (Stroebe and Stroebe 2007). It may be assumed that a good level of social support would make a good outcome to bereavement more likely; however research has not substantiated this (Stroebe and Stroebe 2007). It is clear that inadequate social support affects the bereaved and the non-bereaved negatively. Parkes (2009) research suggests that except for those who lost a partner, social support and living with others alleviated grief and loneliness in the bereaved. This is a useful finding for those offering pastoral care to the bereaved to be aware of and may be a factor which deserves mention at a funeral in terms of reminding the congregation that they can be a valuable support to the bereaved family in the months to come.

Currently, those who experience lasting, intense grief may undergo a psychiatric assessed and be diagnosed with Persistent Complex Grief Disorder which is a category of DSM 5(Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Disorders, 5th Edition). If the grief symptoms are intense and have not improved after a year for adults and six months for children this diagnosis may be considered. This condition is believed to apply to less than 5% of bereaved people of all ages and a diagnosis is likely to result in the offer of anti-depressants along with bereavement therapy. Most officiants taking funerals are unlikely to be in touch with bereaved families this long after the ceremony. However, some clergy or chaplains may provide pastoral care to bereaved people in the months following the ceremony and so encounter those for whom grief remains extremely difficult over a long period.

Walsh et al (2002) conducted a study involving questionnaires with one hundred and thirty five close relatives of people receiving palliative care before the death of their loved one and one, nine and fourteen months after. At nine months it was found that those with strongest religious beliefs resolved grief most quickly in comparison with those of less strongly held religious beliefs. By fourteen months, those with less strongly beliefs had caught up with those with strongly held beliefs; however those with no religious beliefs were experiencing intensified grief symptoms. This study does not involve any qualitative data and so how religious beliefs play a role in grief resolution was not explored. If future studies have similar findings, it would suggest that those with strongly held beliefs (not necessarily religious adherence) may be better equipped to deal with the loss of a close relative than those with no religious beliefs and that those with no religious beliefs may have an increased risk of experiencing problematic grief. Further qualitative study to identify in detail how the beliefs made a difference would be valuable.

Grief and culture

Klass et al (1996) analyse the cultural context in which previous theories of grief developed, namely one in which there is a western emphasis on autonomy, and individualism rather than interdependence. They believe qualitative rather than quantitative methodology to be more appropriate when researching grief as it enables in depth exploration of meaning making. Quantitative methods, are embedded in empiricism, and as such are concerned with observable phenomena that can be objectively measured (Klass et al 1996: 21); however the nature of grief suggests that being examined qualitatively could add valuable nuances and insights to what can be found in quantitative studies. My own experience of psychotherapy with bereaved people concurs with this argument.

Stroebe et al (1996) argue that an understanding of what is culturally acceptable and what is seen as pathological in terms of grieving is strongly affected by the cultural, philosophical context. Within a modernist framework grief is generally seen as something to be overcome or worked though so that the person can move on and develop a new life for themselves with reduced attention given to the loss. However, in a previous age, the romantic period, close relationships were those in which people developed deep bonds and grief was seen to demonstrate

the significance of the relationship. There was an emphasis on holding onto the departed loved one and for some the belief prevailed that grief may be a lifelong experience. Stroebe et al (1996) argue that the Tubingen Longitudinal Study of Bereavement, which examined the grief process of younger widows and widowers over the first two years of bereavement, has provided evidence that some people living more recently responded to grief in a way that resonates with romanticism, rather than modernism. Similar results were reported by Schter and Zisook in an Amercian study and Silverman and Worden in a study looking at children dealing with the death of a parent by maintaining a sense of the deceased in their current life (Stroebe et al 1996: 9). Additionally, a study of parents dealing with the death of their sons during recent Israeli wars by Rubin concludes that as the years passed the parents showed virtually no change in their preoccupation with their deceased sons (Stroebe et al in Klass et al 1996: 40). From a Romanticist worldview, to reduce the attention given to the deceased would suggest a diminishing in the significance of the relationship, the death and the cause for which their sons died. In such a study the socio-political context affects the way in which the bereaved deal with their loss.

In his discussion on the interaction of grief and culture, Walter (2010: 5) argues that those working with the bereaved need a high degree of reflectivity about their own culture and assumptions they may be making about mourning rituals and the expression of grief in order to work effectively with those of other cultures who are bereaved. He suggests that when working cross-culturally, asking the bereaved questions to gain understanding of their expectations and that of their community is important. In my experience, learning through reading and receiving additional training on working cross-culturally are also important as relying on the bereaved person to educate the bereavement professional places an added burden on the already vulnerable person who is seeking in need of support and help.

Stroebe and Stroebe (1987: 26) explore the area of how culture influences grief, asking 'is grief universal?' Whilst some theorists believe emotions to be largely driven by culture, others believe physiology determines emotions. It may be argued that these two ways of understanding are not mutually exclusive. Cultural expectations related to facial expressions may influence emotions, although research evidence of this is not conclusive (Stroebe and Stroebe 1987: 32). A

social constructionist approach takes the view that how individuals make sense of arousal and what they feel, is by reference to cultural norms (Stroebe and Stroebe 1987). According to this perspective different cultures will apply different social norms therefore a wide variety of symptoms and behaviours would be expected across varying cultures. Virtually all theories of emotion regard culture as having some impact on emotional experiences. Hochschild's (1979: 551) research led her to argue that emotional experiences are shaped both by bodily reactions and cultural norms and this concurs with the approach taken by Stroebe and Stroebe (1987: 32). Questions arise related to the gendered nature of expressions of grief. In recent years in the United Kingdom, it has been more socially acceptable for females to express grief through tears than for males although there have been notable examples in which well-known males have cried publicly. My experience of offering psychotherapy has been that within a safe therapeutic space males may choose to cry, but not necessarily feel able to allow this form of expression of emotion to be seen publicly which suggests that cultural expectations can leave to the inhibition of grief.

Surveying research on crying during mourning rituals as a response to grief throughout many cultures, Stroebe and Stroebe (1987: 33) conclude that crying is often the response of many bereaved people in Western and non-Western cultures. Other symptoms of grief, uncommon in the west may be observed, often related to beliefs about the afterlife. Stroebe and Stroebe (1987) argue that research evidence suggests that people across cultures do experience sadness and despondency when someone close to them dies. How long the symptoms of grief last and the forms of social support and social norms associated with funeral rites and mourning differs in different societies. These aspects they argue, are different cultures' attempts to ameliorate the deficits brought about by the death. There are clear differences in the amount of time cultures suggest mourners should grieve for. Grief is ritualised by mourning rites and the length of time they continue for varies greatly across cultures from a few days to several months or years (Stroebe and Stroebe 1987). In Japan, ancestor veneration reveals the belief that death does not separate the human community (Klass in Silverman and Klass 1996: 70). Traditionally, the living maintain personal, emotional bonds with the dead for thirty five to fifty years after their loved ones have died, chiefly through a shrine in their home. As Valentine (2009: 1) has demonstrated, the way that

Japanese people grieve in society today has a diverse range of influences, with some prioritising meeting the needs of the bereaved therapeutically over following traditional rituals for grieving.

It is not the case that each culture has a unique way of grieving, rather similarities and differences are found when comparing grieving within British and Japanese cultures and a much more complex picture suggesting an individual or communities way of grieving may be influenced by many different factors including their cultural background (Valentine 2009: 1). For those working with bereaved people from diverse cultures, being aware of cultural influences provides important background knowledge but may not provide the key to understanding the meaning of a particular loss or to what may be helpful for the bereaved as they go forward in their life. When taking funerals, clear communication is very important when there are cultural and particularly linguistic differences. Agreeing what will happen and what will be said during the ceremony in writing beforehand can be helpful and ensuring that the funeral director has the same understanding of this as the officiant and the bereaved family can minimise the chances of misunderstandings occurring.

Stroebe et al (1996) consider how bereavement may be perceived in a postmodern context. The current cultural milieu in western countries may be known as a postmodern one in which a multiplicity of perspectives is emphasised and one worldview is not given a privileged position over another. They suggest that this context may suggest three ways forward in terms of grief therapy, for those who sit alongside the bereaved, firstly conceptual integration, combining different ways of responding to bereavement. Secondly, culturally embedded practises, tailoring the therapy to the cultural context. Thirdly an expansion in the moral or social responsibility of those working with the bereaved, involving much greater self-reflective dialogue and consideration of the values and beliefs underlying different ways of working (Stroebe et al 1996: 42). These guidelines suggest that understanding the impact of grief on an individual is a dynamic process involving many factors which necessitates an openness to learning about cultural influences that are new to them, drawing on a plurality of psychological models and considerable self-reflection. For those such as some clergy, who lack a place to reflect on their work and do not have a wide range of training to broaden

what they can offer the bereaved, offering what Stroebe at al (1996) consider important may seem a distant prospect.

Children and grief

For children who experience the death of a parent, research has shown that within two years some children achieve an internalised version of the relationship with the deceased parent. This includes memories of times together, but also an awareness of the deceased's views, beliefs, interests, physiognomy and personality which can provide a sense of the relationship being ongoing and influence the bereaved child's choices and decisions (Normand et al 1996: 109). The children in this study were between ten and twelve years old. For younger children, memories may be harder to retain and a cognitive sense of who their parent was less available from their own experience, therefore mourning may be more difficult (Buchsbaum 1996: 123). Various studies have suggested that when children grieve, rather than a letting go of the relationship with their deceased parent, there are the formation of new bonds, influenced by their previous relationship with the parent, their beliefs about the after-life and their need for the relationship to in some way continue (Normand et al 1996: 110). Kübler-Ross (1970) maintained that how a young child may construe death and express loss, depends to a degree on their age and stage of development. Sensitivity, acceptance and a willingness to allow the bereaved child to express their feelings are important for children to be able to process their grief. Children may 'puddle-jump' which involves jumping in and out of grief, expressing the emotions of grief for a period then quickly shifting into a joyful state such as when enjoying playing (Crossley, D & Sheppard, K 2009). For a child who has lost a parent to death, the adequacy of the care from the remaining parent in terms of warmth and discipline and the child's own levels of resilience are significant in determining a good outcome (Stroebe and Stroebe 2007). The remaining family members can aid the child developing an internal representation of the deceased parent through speaking about memories which are helpful for the child to know of. In recent years there have been advances in understanding how children grieve and developing child-centred services to support them and provide resources to those adults who care for them. These developments have the potential to assist children in developing resilience in relation to grief experiences in childhood. My own experience has been that children can make excellent use of grief therapy

and can be trusted to draw on their own innate wisdom to find ways to enable them to go forward positively following major losses. The importance of adults being honest with children in terms they can understand when their loved ones are dying or have died, so they know what is happening or has happened cannot be underestimated. This gives children a solid foundation to begin to come to terms with the reality in their lives rather than the confusion that can result from hiding the reality of death from children.

Spousal grief

Stroebe and Stroebe (2007) looked at all the available studies to examine whether there is a risk to mortality following spousal bereavement. They found that there was an increased risk of mortality from many causes including suicide and that in some studies this risk continued over six months after the death. Studies found that widowers are more at risk of increased mortality than widows, although some deaths affect women more, for instance the death of a child was found to result in a greater risk of mortality to mothers, than fathers. Research conducted by Parkes (2009) suggested that in later life men were more inhibited in their expression of grief than women. When exploring what bereavement meant to Aberdonians, Williams described that along with the incalculable loss of a loved person there were also social losses that came with the change in circumstances. This was felt particularly by widows who had a sense of losing 'married society' (Williams 1990: 133). Socialising became more difficult without a partner. Some friendships with couples could no longer be sustained in the same way. Widowhood held a form of stigma and some previous activities were no longer continued due to this such as holidays, evenings out and shopping in the city centre (Williams 1990: 133). For those who established ways of socialising as a couple for many years, shifting to operating as a single person socially can be daunting, but if new opportunities to socialise are not found loneliness can result.

Moss and Moss in Klass et al (1996: 163) argue that along with experiencing loss and a letting go of the bond with the deceased spouse, there are also ways in which widows hold on to the bond. William's findings support this. 'He's (my Husband) still with me. I have lots of friends, but he is *the* friend' (Williams 1990: 143). Moss and Moss suggest that there are five ways in which the bond continues, namely through caring, intimacy, family feeling, commitment and

reciprocal identity support. It may continue indefinitely such is the strength and depth of the bond that physical death may alter it but not sever it. Remarriage means the beginning of a new spousal relationship, but it is not a case of one spouse being substituted with another – there can be no substitution, only addition. It is suggested that care towards the first remains, undiminished by affection that may develop for a new spouse. Along with this, an individual may continue to find their identity is deeply linked to the first spouse. This may be further supported by family relationships that came from the first marriage. Some research indicates that the second spouse's acceptance of the ongoing tie with the first spouse enables the success of the second marriage (Moss and Moss in Klass et al 1996: 175). Rather than the maintenance of ties being pathological or problematic, spousal relationships may be so significant for individuals that they have a timeless quality that ensures their continuance alongside new spousal commitments. 'It is as if there were an arithmetic unique to families, in which there is no subtraction, only addition' (Moss and Moss In Klass et al 1996: 177). An aspect of the relationship to the deceased that may have particular importance for the remaining spouse is memories. These are believed to be significant in allowing the bereaved widow to process the shift in relationship whilst dealing with the loss and finding meaning in life (Conant 1996: 194). Conant's research found that memories provided 'a safe haven to help mend the trauma of the loss, an inner voice to lessen current social isolation, an internal reworking of self to meet new realities and reassurance of the possibility of immortality' (Conant 1996: 195). This research highlights that although memories re-lived through speaking with others can be helpful, memories can assist the bereaved internally even when there is no opportunity for sharing them. Naturally there may also be difficult memories to deal with such as being alongside a spouse who was unwell or who had a difficult death. These forms of memories may be more difficult to share informally and counsellors or support groups can be a valuable source of help for those who struggle with distressing memories. Online support groups now make it possible for those in areas with no existing support or who may find face to face groups challenging to access support from their home, increasing the number of people who may receive important help.

Parental grief

Klass (1996) reports on the grief process experienced by parents whose child has died. For parents in this situation the organisation Compassionate Friends offers support groups and a helpline. The social aspect of the group is an important element as the grief process invariably involves 'transformations of the inner representation of the dead children in the parents' inner and social worlds' (Klass 1996: 214). It is important to newly bereaved parents that others care about the loss of the child's life, it matters whether others attend the child's funeral and are visibly affected by the loss. Parents commonly report experiencing interactions with the dead child and are helped by being able to share these within the support group provided by Compassionate Friends. There is sharing of the pain of bereavement, honouring and acknowledging the reality of the dead child's life and the reality of the continuing bond between the parents and child. When parents reach the point where they feel they do not need the help of support group anymore, their dead children, Klass suggests are part of their ongoing inner lives and social bonds in which they feel at home (1996: 215). It is significant that although the loss of a child has been found to be one of the bereavements that carries most risks, especially for mothers, the form of help that parents report makes a significant difference is that provided by other bereaved parents rather than bereavement professionals. This informal form of support is not usually time limited which counselling will often be if provided through the National Health Service or a charity and this can be important to bereaved parents who typically experience a long process of grieving. Furthermore, whereas counsellors may only be available for an hour a week, friendships can develop through groups with other bereaved parents that go beyond this. For some parents there may be benefit in supporting other parents in relation to their own empowerment and use of interpersonal skills which may risk being lost. Perhaps most significantly in such groups is the sense of solidarity with others who have experienced a form of loss that those who have not experienced it can find hard to speak about as it appears to go against the natural order and brings with it acutely painful feelings.

Disenfranchised grief

Doka (2002: 5) argues convincingly that if an individual is not afforded the right to grieve then the grief experience has been disenfranchised. If this happens the grief is not openly acknowledged, socially validated or publicly observed. The reasons can include the way the person grieves, the nature of the loss, the nature

of the relationship, that the grieving person is in prison or that others do not think the person capable of grief for instance, a young child or person with learning disabilities. Social expectations inform the public grieving process. Valentine et al (2016) draw on several studies of bereavement following substance use to illustrate that social stigma related to substance use and suicide can lead to disenfranchised grief for bereaved families. This involves their grief being devalued and therefore them being denied forms of social support that may assist in grief resolution (Doka 1989). As research studies of those involved in substance use evidence, users run the risk of death whilst being involved in illegal activities, and may be stigmatised on many inter-related levels (Edwards and Loeb 2011). The practise of making meaning of the death has added complex dimensions when the death is perceived as 'self-inflicted'; however being disenfranchised can mean a lack of support and acknowledgement of the pain of the loss (Valentine et al 2016).

Thornton and Zanich (2002) analysed empirical studies on disenfranchised grief and found that these studies support the idea that grief can be disenfranchised. Some kinds of losses are believed to produce less grief and are reported to be less acknowledged. The amount of social support offered is likely to be less and those who have experienced these losses may not seek social support, believing that it will not be available. They conclude that 'people do, in fact differentiate losses based on the nature of the pre-loss relationship, the nature of the loss, and the nature of the griever' (Thornton and Zanich 2002: 86). This differentiation can lead to disenfranchisement of grief and of grievers. Alongside this, Corr (1998-1999: 1) has argued persuasively that disenfranchisement can occur in relation to every aspect of grief and mourning. For instance, a widow may be told that as her husband died over six months ago, she should not be grieving any longer but beginning to contemplate finding a new husband. Such a response disenfranchises the mourning process being engaged in. Corr's expansion of the concept of disenfranchised grief does much to broaden the scope of understanding of disenfranchisement; however, it could be argued that any bereaved person who has faced an insensitive comment about their grief or mourning has experienced disenfranchisement. This widening of the concept may risk the focus being lost on those for whom disenfranchisement has had a significant impact and caused a loss of much needed support.

Bereavement support and treatment

Regarding effectively supporting the bereaved, it appeared that those who had poorer psychological health were less able to benefit from help being offered (Cleiren 1992: 261). The Leiden study does support the provision of booklets with practical information for the bereaved on what to do after a death and suggests that at four months after the death it is apparent who will need additional support to help them with adaptation. Whether or not an individual is able to utilise the support is another question. Cleiren singles out the group of mothers who have lost children as that most likely to experience health risks after bereavement and suggests effective intervention would involve helping the mothers with 'detachment from their child' (Cleiren 1992: 267). This is in conflict with the continuing bonds theories which emphasise the bereaved finding healing through ongoing links with the relationship to the deceased (Klass et al 1996). The important issue may be whether the level of attachment is adaptive or not; however, it needs to be remembered that this form of grief often involves a long process and expecting mothers to return to normal functioning soon after the loss of a child is likely to be unrealistic.

Considering the provision of bereavement therapy, there is limited provision for those who cannot afford to pay for private therapy. Therapy which is funded by the government is usually short term such as six sessions of counselling, which may not meet the needs of the bereaved. In terms of the forms of therapy, in contemporary society in the United Kingdom, psychological therapies are required to be validated by empirical evidence, usually in the form of large randomised controlled trials. Funding from government bodies is only granted for those therapies which provide evidence of effectiveness. There is a culture of valuing psychological theories which can be validated by large research studies. There are clear benefits in being able to offer services based on ways of working that have been proved to be effective through research trials. However, inevitably, large randomised trials have weaknesses. They usually have a limited criteria in those who can take part and sections of the population are often excluded. They are a quantitative method that can miss the nuances and rich forms of data produced by qualitative studies. Bereavement is a highly personal experience influenced by many factors and some bereaved people or professionals in the field may find

worth in those theories that are not empirically validated and therefore they should not be dismissed completely.

Conclusion

Freud's work (1957), on bereavement theory, including the concept of 'grief work' has held an important place in western thinking since its publication. His work continues to be widely respected although his concept of 'grief work' has not been found to be essential to successfully resolving grief. Viewing bereavement as a staged process which the bereaved move through in a linear fashion as espoused by Bowlby (1980), Parkes (1986) and Kubler-Ross (1969) has also been strongly critiqued. Despite this, aspects of these theories are now regarded as typical aspects of bereavement such as anger (Drenovsky 1994). Parkes (1988) modified his theory to include components rather than stages in response. The significance of attachment, emphasised by Bowlby (1980) in relation to bereavement theories remains, although many other factors are understood to also influence the successful resolution of grief. Bereavement has been found to be a highly individualised process and a strong case has been made that in the process of effectively resolving their grief many bereaved adopt a continuing bonds perspective, although some forms of continuing bonds may indicate a failure to accept the reality of the death. The work of Doka (2002: 5) and others arguing that those whose grief is not recognised and afforded public acknowledgement can be disenfranchised and miss out on valuable support is likely to continue to remain significant. In diverse cultures in different eras, a variety of groups will experience stigma and find themselves disenfranchised. It has been found that mothers are the group at greatest risk of difficulties in grief resolution, followed by widowers. There is strong evidence to suggest that it is possible to identify at four months those who will have longer term difficulties with grief resolution. The issue of how to support those who have most difficulties with bereavement is complex as those with the poorest psychological health were found to have great difficulty benefitting from help being offered. For the minority of bereaved people who seek grief therapy, tailoring clinical practise to the individual by drawing on a wide range of ways of working, operating in a culturally sensitive manner and practicing with self-reflexivity are advocated. For those facing one of the most difficult bereavements to resolve, the death of a child, the form of support highlighted as helpful by the bereaved was not that

provided by professionals, but support groups with other bereaved parents. This can provide a network of ongoing support that is not time limited. In order to serve the dying and bereaved well, funeral officiants may benefit from understanding the grief process. This may include feelings which commonly arise such as anger and the importance of the bereaved being supported by their community in the period after the funeral when the bereaved need to face the implications of their loss. For those officiants who provide pastoral care in the months following the funeral and are aware of bereaved people for whom grief remains intense and long lasting, support to seek a psychiatric assessment may result in the offer of medication and therapy. Having considered grief and bereavement from a psychological perspective, the multi-disciplinary approach will continue by examining the history of the funeral in Britain.

Chapter iii) The perspective of history: Christian funerals In Britain through the ages

Introduction

The previous chapters have examined the funeral as ritual and the psychological experiences of the bereaved who are required to face the reality of the death at the funeral ceremony. To this context, the next chapter will add a historical perspective through focus on funerals in Britain through the ages. Williams defines history as 'a set of stories we tell ourselves in order to understand better who we are and the world we are now in' (2005:1). This chapter seeks to demonstrate that what is perceived to make a good funeral has developed through the centuries. Funerals have changed according to religious, social and political influences. The chapter focuses on Christian funerals in Britain and charts changes in funeral practises wrought by the Reformation and the development of cremation. Arguably, the largest change in funeral practises was not that wrought by the Reformation, far-reaching though that was, but the beginning of cremation, which today is favoured by the majority over burial.

Medieval Funerals

The earliest funerals about which significant amounts of evidence remain are medieval funerals and we begin our examination of the history of British funerals here. St Augustine taught that there were three main ways of benefitting the souls of the dead (Augustine 421). These were masses, prayers and alms (Houlbrooke 1998). In late Medieval Christianity it was believed that dead Christians did not proceed immediately to heaven but entered an intermediary place where their souls experienced a painful purgation of their sins that they might become fit to enter heaven proper. The crucial difference between purgatory and hell was that hell was the place for the damned whereas the redeemed went to purgatory where they worked their way towards heaven. The doctrine of purgatory led to the use of orbits, chantries, devotions and intercessions. The dead and the living were believed to be one community and the living had a duty to perform religious actions to reduce the suffering of the dead in the afterlife. The names of those who had died who were to be prayed for were kept on a document known as a bede-roll. Those remembered on the bede-roll were named and any objects they had purchased for the church announced,

thereby publicly recognising their contribution to the ongoing life of the church. There was an element in which salvation was communal and the bede-roll affirmed this (Duffy 1992). Through this the dead and the living remained closely connected. Galpern suggests that late Medieval Catholicism was in many ways 'a cult of the living in service of the dead' (Galpern 1974: 149). However, it may be argued that these acts are likely to have given the bereaved comfort and a framework for the grieving process, enabling the bereaved to take action which may have been emotionally helpful for them. Worden (1991) emphasises the importance of tasks which enable the bereaved to progress in their grief. Duffy (1992) argues that through the living serving the dead, life was affirmed and community bonds strengthened. Additionally, there were ways in which the dead were seen to be in the service of the living such as through the practise of praying to the relics of saints. Only those who had been dead for some considerable time and acquired a special ancestor status became relics which people made pilgrimage to and prayed to (Davies 2008).

Typically, in medieval times, the body of the deceased was watched from death to the funeral. Candles and prayers were used and believed to be protective and some watchers took part in games or convivial drinking (Houlbrooke 1998). Funerals in this period had several stages, most of which included intercessory prayers for the dead. Liturgies were often said again a month later marking the 'month's mind'. Some arranged for a bell to be rung every day within the first month of their death, the intention being that the bell would remind others to pray for their soul. The desire for public recognition of the death of a loved one can be a need the bereaved have within the grieving process (Worden 1991) and bell ringing would have been one way this need could be met. Doles to the poor and sums for priests who would attend or celebrate the mass were given out. There was an understanding that those who received gifts would pray for the departed and the prayers of priests and the poor were believed to be particularly pleasing to God (Marshall 2002). Such acts were likely to have been experienced as supportive to the bereaved through what can be a lonely grieving process (Parkes 1986). Some priests were chantry priests employed specifically to pray for the souls of the deceased for as long as a year. After the year there was the institution of an obit, the anniversary commemorations or 'year's mind' which involved a re-enactment of the original funeral rites. For the dead to be ritually

remembered in years to come would have allowed the bereaved to notice changes in their grief and may have led to a sense of salvation as communal, bonding the community together through and beyond death. Prayer was clearly important to many lay people, not only in communal liturgies, but private prayer using a primer or Book of Hours was widespread (Duffy 1992). The prayers for the dead were one of the most important elements within these books and used at funerals. Many lay people were familiar with these prayers and left directions in their wills for them to be used at their own funerals.

Duffy describes the Reformation as a 'violent disruption, not the natural fulfilment, of most of what was vigorous in late medieval practise and piety' (1992: 4). It is also argued that the liturgy provided a way of negotiating social relations and ordering society. There is ample evidence of great internalisation of the themes and patterns of the church year within lay people such as bequests to provide lights for Good Friday services. For medieval lay people, society was governed by the religious calendar and seasonal observances affected everybody. It was not a matter of having faith and observing Christian practises or being secular and not doing so. All participated in the observances of the time, there was no alternative calendar. The strength of the communal aspects of religious adherence is that communities were held together by religious practises as a way of life for all. Difficulties must have arisen for families when an individual was not deemed someone who burial rites could be afforded to such as an individual who had ended their own life. This would have meant isolation rather than inclusion within rites practises by the rest of the community.

One important way in which the medieval context differs to life today is in life expectancy. From 1541 to 1871 life expectancy in England ranged from twenty-seven to forty-two years (Houlbrooke 1989: 2). It was only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that this began to change significantly. From 1870 to 1970 nearly thirty years was added to life expectancy. Until the twentieth century, the largest number of deaths were in the first year of life. It should be noted that these figures relate to the working classes and members of the nobility enjoyed a higher life expectancy. Causes of death included infections, working conditions and epidemics such as smallpox, typhus, cholera, tuberculosis, influenza and the plague (Houlbrooke 1989: 3). Belief in an afterlife therefore held out the hope of life continuing in some form after an early death and preachers

taught that the dead would have heavenly reunions with family and friends (Houlbooke 1998: 4). Christianity did espouse belief in suffering after death for those who were damned. Images of the dance macabre, seen in many prayer books and decorating walls within churches was a reminder of mortality in terms of the importance of seeking eternal salvation.

The impact of the Reformation on funerals

The Reformation caused a seismic change in the lives of people in Britain and affected the religious calendar, religious practises especially prayer lives and reception of the mass, burial rites and most significantly who was perceived to be part of the community. Through removing the doctrine of purgatory and prayers for the departed, the dead were effectively denied participation in the life of the community through communal rituals. Considering the need of human beings to grieve we may ask whether remembrance of the dead was displaced to the domestic setting, or became an internal matter for those grieving. Burial rites were severely simplified (Sheppy 2003).

To Williams (2005), the Reformation developed in part through the papacy operating as a tool of particular parties in European disputes and showing signs of being pre-occupied with itself as other princedoms of Italy were. Ultimately, there was a loss of faith in the papacy in relation to its effectiveness in solving disputes. It was a period when the church was forced to reconsider its identity, particularly what made it distinctive from society and why it was different.

Martin Luther (1517) challenged the doctrine of purgatory for several reasons. He sought to undermine the belief in the efficacy of indulgences offered by the Roman Catholic Church for money, believed to aid souls to get out of purgatory. Luther espoused the doctrine of sola scriptura and as purgatory is not explicitly mentioned in the Bible he argued it undermined belief in salvation by faith alone. In 1530 he 'declared war' on the doctrine of purgatory (Houlbrooke 1998: 37). His use of language reveals how there was a sense in which some leading figures in the Reformation aimed to be destructive on religious grounds. Where liturgy was used, references to purgatory were removed, and prayers for the dead were almost completely taken out. Rather than a commendation of the soul, the body was committed to the ground. A simpler order was used and a homily or sermon, at times, lengthy, replaced the use of psalms and antiphons (Rowell 1976: 30).

John Knox taught that the body should be taken to the grave before the minister preached on death and resurrection to the bereaved. This as Sheppy (2003) notes, marked a change of focus from the deceased to the bereaved within the funeral ritual. The Protestant church led by the Reformers had a strongly held belief in the necessity of repentance from sin for someone to be counted as a Christian by the local church and admitted to heaven after death. They therefore denied Christian burials to those who they thought had not shown evidence of repentance (Sheppy 2003). Rather than there being a focus on judgement in the next life involving purgatory, Protestants judged before death and those who appeared unrepentant were denied dignified Christian burials.

Funeral sermons in the Reformation

Funeral sermons came under scrutiny as the Reformation progressed. Marshall argues that with beliefs about purgatory being replaced by a Protestant repudiation of the doctrine, the issue of whether to have a sermon at funerals was contentious for some during the latter years of the Reformation (1560-1630) (Marshall 2002). Funeral sermons in medieval times had included a focus on the deceased and some reformers were concerned that this could be interpreted as a form of prayer for the deceased to make progress through purgatory. Raeburn argues that the Scottish Kirk outlawed funeral sermons; however this did not mean they disappeared (Raeburn 2016). Although some declared that sermons were associated with belief in purgatory and chantries, this appears to have been a minority position and most advocated a sermon that involved the preaching of the word of God and caused the hearers to think of their own mortality. The Edwardian and Elizabethan sermons that have been preserved reveal that speaking against the doctrine of purgatory was a central theme. In James's reign a smaller proportion of them were focused on anti-purgatorial polemics but teaching against purgatory and penance was still common (Marshall 2002: 157). Marshall relates how officially sermons were for the 'edification of the living, not the exaltation of the dead' (2002: 274). Some preachers, whose sermons were printed at the turn of the seventeenth century reported that they wished to preserve the memory of the deceased in their listeners and in essence appeared to hold the view that the two aspects were not mutually exclusive. Sanctifying the memory of the dead was seen as a duty and a way of providing inspiration and a good example to the living. The funeral sermon, as well as offering biblical

doctrine on death and the afterlife also included an account of the life of the deceased, especially focusing on their death (Houlbrooke 1989).

Will making, alms giving and piety

In the centuries before and after the Reformation the achievement of a good death by means of overcoming the temptations of the death bed appears to have been very important to the pious (Houlbrooke 1989). Death was seen as a test of virtue and a written guide to preparing for death was produced. Houlbrooke (1989) argues that from 1700 onwards the place of clergy at the bedside of the dying was diminishing. Will making and death were becoming more private. The practise of doles or almsgiving was one that did not completely die out with the process of religious change. Indeed, it was the only religious practise within wills that was permitted to continue. Although some Protestants spoke strongly against leaving money to be given out after death, others, in early Elizabethan times regarded charity after death as appropriate and not necessarily tied to a desire for prayers for the soul. Furthermore, leaving doles for the poor gave status to gentry and nobility. Marshall (2002) highlights that both bell ringing and doles reveal that religious change was worked out within a context where social status, local custom, piety, and doctrine all affected developments in religious practises.

The Reformation and changes in prayer practises

Bellringing was associated with prayer for the souls of the dead and some Protestants were against continuing the practise. However, the ringing of bells was not outlawed, rather Bishops devised rules that there was to be bell ringing to mark dying, one short peal after the death and two others before and after the burial (Marshall 2002). Marshall describes them as 'instruments of social and political utility, bells were firmly woven into the social and temporal fabric of sixteenth century English communities' (Marshall 2002: 161). Within Scotland, bell ringing continued, Raeburn (2016: 39) argues, for practical reasons, as well as perpetuating a tradition. It was a means of informing the community of the death. Bell ringing was able to remain, albeit in an altered from, fitting with the different theology of Protestantism. Meanwhile, Reformers supported the drastic reduction in the number of candles around the body, believing this a superstitious practise. This had in fact been a devotional practise whereby the faith of parishioners even those of limited means could be expressed.

The changes in rites for the dead in the 1549 and 1552 prayer books were huge. Medieval funerals had a great focus on community and the community included the dead. The 1552 funeral prayers are purely focused on the living – all trace of prayer for the dead has been removed. Whereas in the 1549 prayers the dead was addressed by the officiant 'I commend thy soule to God the father almighty', in the 1552 prayers the dead was spoken about 'Forasmuche as it hathe pleased the almighte God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soule of our dere brother here departed' (Duffy 1992). The dead were taken to be distanced from the living community, out of reach of their prayers. 1547 – 1553 saw huge physical changes in churches as saints images, altars, brasses, orbit inscriptions reminding the congregation to pray for the dead were all removed and bede-rolls silenced therefore indicating that the dead were no longer part of the community the living inhabited (Duffy 1992).

Following the Reformation, within Scotland prayers for the dead were outlawed as they were perceived to be attempts to intercede with God on behalf of the dead although some argue that records suggest their removal from funerals was a gradual process rather than happening suddenly (Raeburn 2016: 37). At the graveside, there were a lot less prayers said in this period though it may be argued that it was not until three centuries later when the Disruption of 1843 lead to the expulsion of the Free Church of Scotland from the Kirk and burials within municipal cemeteries began that protestant funerals reflected more accurately the desire of the first reformers to have no prayers at all said for the dead (Raeburn 2012: 199). Removing prayers for the dead led to a focus on the bereaved and it appears that this change of focus from the deceased to the bereaved has been influential on twentieth and twenty-first century funerals in Scotland in which there is a large focus on the bereaved family and less focus on the deceased person. The largest Christian denomination in Scotland is the Church of Scotland and the practices of the Church of Scotland have had a pervasive effect on funeral practices within Scotland since the Reformation (Clark 2022). The focus on the bereaved alongside the belief that nothing more can be done for the dead has led to a sense within funerals in Scotland that the funeral is largely for those who are left behind. This may have led to some religious believers choosing humanist or civil officiants when they became available.

The extent of the changes the Reformation brought to death rites

The Reformation brought about significant change in the areas of death rites, new liturgies were created, new ways of ecclesiastical organisation developed, new forms of public and civic commemoration, new uses of spaces for ritual and new cultural expressions (Marshall, 2002). As many religious practises associated with purgatory ceased, so belief in purgatory is believed to have diminished largely during the Reformation. The changes may have not been as thorough as the initial Reformers had hoped but they still meant huge changes primarily relating to the dying and the dead, but affecting the living in a variety of ways. Protestants, as their Catholic ancestors before them continued to have a strong interest in the fate of their loved one's soul after death, and the nature of the afterlife (Marshall 2002). Raeburn (2012) argues that in Scotland, the changes the Reformers tried to make to burial practises had limited impact and it was the Disruption of 1843, which necessitated the Free Church of Scotland using cemeteries rather than Church of Scotland churchyards that marked amongst one group at least, an embracing of the changes the Reformers sought.

Houlbooke (1989) cites the purposes of death rites in late-medieval and early-modern England as fulfilling a duty to the dead, meeting obligations towards kin and community on behalf of the deceased, affirming the social status of the deceased and ensuring their heir was able to succeed them in this position. That death rites were social affairs is clear; however this lead to considerable financial strain for the poor. It may be argued that funerals were also an opportunity for the bereaved to express grief at their loss. Raeburn (2016), commenting on the practise of the coronach or funeral dirge performed on the bagpipes, particular to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, and its equivalent in Ireland, the caoineadh, argues that this form of public lamentation gave voice to the grief of the bereaved through continuing an ancient cultural tradition. This musical form remains powerfully evocative when performed at funerals today.

It appears that in contrast to the religious elements of funerals which underwent great changes due to the Reformation, the social elements, which conferred respect for the body of the deceased and the provision of hospitality for all connected with the deceased continued unchanged. All connected to the deceased were invited to feast at the funeral dinner, a custom which increased

the financial strain that some experienced following a bereavement (Frisky 2019). The puritan influence after the Reformation involved criticism of lavish expense on funerals, including the amount spent on food and drink; however there is evidence that generous quantities of food and drink were still a part of many, especially rural funerals in the eighteenth century (Houlbroke 1989). In Scotland, the Kirk outlawed dancing and drinking alcohol at wakes and Raeburn (2016) cites an example from Moy in 1675, of a Highland Presbytery seeking to terminate the employment of a Church of Scotland Minister whom they thought did not take a hard enough line on this kind of behaviour at local funerals.

The reformers regarded seeking to be buried in consecrated ground as superstitious. It may be argued that one person's religion is another's superstition. Being buried in the local graveyard where previous generations had been buried maintained a sense of the dead remaining part of the community. By the mid seventeenth century, most wills requested a decent Christian burial, with no mention of a churchyard; however this was not only related to views on consecrated ground being challenged but also a matter of public health as urban churchyards were becoming unsanitary and there were real risks of the spread of serious diseases such as the plague through the continued use of such areas (Jenner 2005; Houlbrooke 1989).

Victorian Funerals

In the Victorian era, the expense of lavish funerals, popular amongst those who could barely afford them weighed heavily (Frisky 2019; Houlbrooke 1989). Perhaps inevitably there was a negative reaction to the social expectations of expensive funerals. During this period, funerals were ostentatious affairs, and a demonstration of social status. Great stigma surrounded the idea of a 'pauper's funeral'. Undertakers were conscious that the working classes, wherever possible, sought to have funerals that mirrored the wealthy. This resulted in the exploitation of the lower classes and the funeral business being criticised and known as the 'dismal trade'. However, Parsons suggests the charge of exploitation 'be viewed with some caution' (2005: 20). Various others collected up to a third of the cost of the funeral costs, such as the clergy, cemetery owners and monumental masons, therefore funerals costs were not the responsibility of the undertakers alone. Moreover, costs were higher in urban areas, as in rural areas

the help of non-specialist undertakers was used, along with extended family. There is evidence that Victorian funerals involved the laying out at home of the body by local women which would limit the costs of the funeral. Mourners wore black. Neighbours would view the body and assist with drawing the curtains, preparation of the funeral tea, and the provision of flowers (Houlbrooke 1989). Death was an affair in which the whole community was involved. In 1880 the Burials Act was passed which allowed services other than those using the Prayer Book to be held in churchyards as long as they were Christian, orderly and did not involve expressing contempt for the Christian religion or ministers of a different denomination (Rowell 1976). However, it would not be long before the dead began to be buried elsewhere due to the unsanitary condition of urban churchyards.

The development of cremation in the UK.

Cremation had been used in the Roman era (Parsons 2005), as evidenced by cinerary urns found in many locations, containing bone fragments and coins. Christianity considered cremation to be linked with paganism and the practise ceased with its arrival. The first document in the United Kingdom promoting cremation in the nineteenth century was one produced in Scotland, a paper given to the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1815 by John Jamieson, 'On the Origin of Cremation or the Burning of the Dead' (Parsons 2005: 21). This document would be used later by the cremation movement in seeking a fresh beginning for the practise of cremation in Britain. Two important pieces of legislation passed in 1836. Firstly, the Births and Deaths Registration Act requiring nominated people to present information in a standardised form to a registrar, which facilitated legal proof of death and enabled the production of more accurate mortality figures. Secondly, the Attendance and Remuneration of Medical Witnesses at Coroner's Inquests Act. This act formalised payment systems to coroners and meant they could authorise a physician to perform a post-mortem.

Leaney (1989) argues that cremationists aimed that through changing the treatment of the remains of deceased people they sought to crucially change attitudes to death itself. Unsurprisingly, there was opposition to this. The cremation movement was seen as a threat by those Christians who thought that by undermining beliefs about the resurrection it was in fact an attack on the

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Christian religion, on moral order and the current political organisation (Leaney 1989). It was perceived as a bringing with it a social revolution that would challenge social and political conservatism and lead to a decrease in moral standards. Leaney (1989) reports clerics of all denominations objecting to the presentation of cremation in terms influenced by romanticism and naturalism. By the use of euphemisms and the presentation of cremation as removing unpleasantness and horror in relation to death, the cremation movement was perceived to be a force which could destroy the moral order and undermine adherence to the Christian faith which presented itself as a source of hope and salvation in relation to fear and horror of death. Thirty years previously those advocating burial reform had emphasised contact with the dead was 'shocking', 'disgusting' and 'disgraceful' (Leaney 1989). Cremationists developed this argument to advocate for cremation on the grounds of public health as a process which removed the unpleasantness from death and it can be argued that funeral directors who later developed embalming practises sought to treat death similarly (Leaney 1989; Jupp 2006). Cremationists also employed economic arguments, suggesting that cremation would lessen the costs of funerals for the poor (Jupp 2006: xiv). However, Leaney (1989) suggests that those who responded positively to the cremationists' arguments were mainly middle and upper classes, some of whom held distaste towards the concept of the decaying buried corpse. Meanwhile, the working classes, who had more direct contact with dead bodies through laying them out, use of 'coffin furniture' and familiarity with the cemetery did not hold such feelings of abhorrence towards decaying bodies.

Several factors were instrumental in the construction of new private and municipal cemeteries which occurred in the Victorian era, such as urban growth, unsanitary conditions in churchyards and the threat of a cholera outbreak. It can also be argued that a growing secularisation and hostility to the church being the only place of burial gave momentum to the desire to create places of burial outside the jurisdiction of the church (Jupp 2006; Houlbrooke 1989). Commercial cemeteries opened in the 1820's. In 1847 the Cemeteries Clauses Act was established, making the establishment of private cemeteries easier and ensuring they were sanitary. The 1852 Burial Act forbade burials in urban churchyards. This act led to the establishment of a huge cemetery at Brookwood, Surrey to which the dead and mourners could travel to by rail from Waterloo. This was a privately

run cemetery; however local authorities were also beginning to provide burial space and between 1850-1900, sixty-six cemeteries opened in London. Parliament realised that burial had important public health implications and many more pieces of legislation became law regulating burial.

The Cremation Society is founded

The first meeting of the Cremation Society of England was held on 13th January 1874 at the home of Sir Henry Thompson who as Sarah Tooley anticipated became known as 'the originator and founder of the modern cremation movement in Great Britain' (Tooley 1897: 418). They soon decided to collect subscriptions to fund the establishment of a crematorium. The response of the church authorities was in part, hostile. Some Bishops spoke in favour of cremation such as the Bishop of Manchester suggesting that burning the body would not be problematic in terms of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. The Bishop of Lincoln preached against, attesting to the incompatibility of cremation and Christianity at Westminster Abbey. It is interesting to note that the issue of burial, which touches on the painful emotions connected to grief caused some to challenge those with ecclesiastical authority. Theresa Lewis was one who produced a pamphlet criticising the Bishop's sermon stating 'Every mother who on some dreary winter's day has seen her baby's body buried amongst the dark graves of the village churchyard will tell you that her chief distress is the thought of her little one lying cold and wet, whilst she sits warm by her cottage fire' (Lewis 1874). For a lay woman to oppose in writing a Bishop's sermon in the nineteenth century must have taken considerable determination and an ability to overcome substantial barriers presented by the social expectations of women.

A query was raised and considered by the Cremation Society Council as to the legality of cremation. The Council was advised that there should be no legal problems; however this question was not finally settled until three decades later.

Plans for the first cremation

The Cremation Society had purchased land in Woking and planned to site the first crematorium there. When the crematory had been completed, the Cremation Society decided not to use it until the issue of the legality of cremation was settled. In 1880 a new Home Secretary declared that he agreed with his predecessor that the practise of cremation should not go ahead until an Act of

Parliament was passed to regulate it. Professor Gorini who came to Woking from Italy to supervise the building of a cremator using his design, tested it himself by the cremating a horse (Jupp 2006). The society took the ashes of the horse to show the Home Secretary when meeting him to discuss the new facility.

The first cremations take place

There was a period of six years 1879-1885, whilst the Cremation Society waited to use the crematory for its intended purpose. Four events paved the way for the cremation of human remains. In 1880 Spencer Wells gave a paper on cremation at the British Medical Association and collected over 150 signatures on a petition promoting cremation over burial which was presented to the Home Secretary. Spencer Wells gave many presentations to the cremation movement and was noted for his use of the phrase 'purification not putrefaction' (Parsons 2005: 89). The second series of events was the cremation of Captain Thomas Hanham and his wife and mother in a crematory built in Manston House, Dorset, which were reported in the press. No recourse was made following these, despite the fact that the legality of cremation had yet to be established. In 1882 the concept of the ashes became synonymous with cricket matches between England and Australia when a bail was burned and the ashes, symbolising the demise of English cricket were taken to Australia. Competing for the ashes (a replica of the original) continues between both teams today. The next human cremation in Britain was in 1884 was that of Dr William Price by his son in Wales. Price was tried in court under charges of causing a public nuisance, intentionally disposing of a body and preventing an inquest being held. He was acquitted on all charges. This decision gave the Cremation Society confidence that there were no legal impediments to the practise of cremation. In 1884 politicians in the House of Commons debated the legality of cremation as part of considering the Disposal of the Dead (Regulations) Bill. Although the bill was not passed it was clear that the minority in favour of cremation were strong and influential and that in all likelihood any attempt to make cremation illegal would not be successful. On 26th March 1885 the first human cremation at Woking took place; that of Mrs Jeanette Pickersgill, a member of the Cremation Society. Rather than a coffin, a simple unadorned shell was used. Initially, the body wrapped in a shroud was removed from the coffin and cremated then the ashes placed in an urn in the coffin; however later bodies were cremated complete with the coffin in the furnace.

Challenges arise from cremation

Despite opposition to cremation amongst church authorities, ashes were buried on consecrated ground. Work had been completed on the buildings at Woking to produce a chapel, improved crematory and lodge by 1889. This meant that religious services could now take place in the crematorium. Registers were kept of all cremations. The Cremation Act 1902 was enacted from May 1903 and lead to minor alterations in the documentation.

Although the number of cremations began to increase gradually there were still some vocal critics of the practise. Others supported the use of cremation such as Rev Hamilton, Vicar of Woking who conducted services prior to many of the early cremations in Woking crematorium. No theology of cremation was developed (Davies 2008). Surprisingly, this remains the position today with 'burial theology' being used for cremations with minor liturgical changes (Davies 2008: 143).

Cremation becomes an established practise

From 1885 onwards small numbers of human cremations were carried out at Woking. Support for cremation was growing, albeit gradually. In 1892 Manchester Crematorium opened and by the end of the century four crematoriums were operating in Britain, including one in Glasgow. Catholic opposition to cremation was established; however in 1886 when there was an announcement from Rome that Catholics were forbidden to join cremation societies or promote the practise of burning bodies, described as 'detestable' (Parsons 2005: 227). This remained the position of the Catholic church until 1963; however canon law continues to advocate burial rather than cremation, and that remains must be entombed in a churchyard or cemetery (Code of Canon Law, 1176, Section 3). Cremation is accommodated, but not promoted. Meanwhile, 1887 saw support from Bishops and Archbishops in the Church of England for the practise of cremation, a contrast to earlier attitudes. Lectures and books advocating the merits of cremation continued to be published. Finally, legislation regulating cremating was passed when the Cremation Act 1902 came into force. It gave burial authorities power to offer opportunities for cremation. It took several decades for the number of cremations to exceed burials, this only occurring in 1967. Of course, the practise of cremation leaves relatives the task of disposing of the ashes after the ceremony. The completion of the funeral ceremony does not signify the

completion of the process of dealing with the remains of the deceased when cremation has occurred. This presents challenges for many as the large number of ashes left uncollected with many funeral directors suggests.

The architecture of Crematoria

Grainger (2005) considers that crematoria have presented architectural challenges due to the ambiguity of their status as utilitarian and symbolic, religious and secular. She suggests that as a result of needing to accommodate both religious and secular ceremonies they are spaces that are neither religious nor secular. Davies (1995) argues that crematoria are probably the building most used by a wide range of religious and ideological movements with a range of differing needs. However, as a place of disposal of the dead, they have become a sacred space (Davies 1996). It may be that, bereaved people are able on the whole to deal with the ambiguity and limitations of the crematoria whilst marking the death of their loved one. The building and service are not the context for the entire experience of the funeral – there are also the grounds, those present and any contributions they may have made or make, the viewing of the wreaths and the funeral tea. At a later occasion there may also be a scattering or burial of ashes. Davies (1996) points to evidence that those who have attended a funeral in a crematorium are more likely to perceive the crematorium as sacred, in comparison to those who have not. This suggests that conducting the death rite in the crematorium can give the place a sense of sacredness for those present. Moreover, if the cremated remains are scattered in the garden of remembrance and/or a memorial placed in a book held at the crematorium, these acts can convey sacredness.

Crematoria designs have been criticised by many. Curl (2002: 310) has argued that 'Most crematoria in Britain...are distressingly banal and poorly designed.. the vast majority of crematoria in Britain do not provide surroundings, atmosphere, or architecture appropriate to the solemnity of their purpose'. However, Grainger (2005) argues that as most crematoria were built in the 1950- 1960's post-war era by local authorities, using architects with little experience of the genre and with various constraints regarding their siting, any evaluations should be made in the light of this context. The cremationists aim of providing a democratic way of disposal available to all may be admired. Furthermore, in the late twentieth

century a number of crematoria were built in areas of stunning natural beauty and architects have incorporated the landscape into the design so as to provide a context for grief and mourning that explicitly draws on the beauty of the landscape, for example Bodmin Crematorium, Cornwall (Grainger 2005).

As referred to earlier, Christian liturgies used for cremations are very similar to those used for burials with minor alterations. How funeral liturgies developed over time will now be explored.

Funeral Liturgies Examined – The Book of Common Prayer

To Sheppy, exploring funeral liturgies raises questions around death, the meaning of human existence and the social observance of death and bereavement (Sheppy 2004). Sheppy analyses The Book of Common Prayer (1662) which is sometimes used in the revised form of 1928 or the form within Common Worship (2000) (Sheppy 2004). It includes three sets of rites. Texts for the Visitation of the Sick, the Communion of the Sick and the Burial of the Dead. The rites for the visitation and communion of the sick are not solely for use with the dying, they may be used for those who are unable through illness or infirmity to attend church (Sheppy 2004). In the prayers for the visitation of the sick Cranmer set a strongly penitential tone. The prayers do not include the name of the sick person and the emphasis is on realising our mortality, seeing death as a time of encounter with God which involves judgement. Body-soul anthropology is present and those who are unwell are encouraged to repent from sin and seek God's mercy (Sheppy 2004).

The Order for the Burial of the Dead (1662), like the rites it supplanted does not include prayers for the dead or eucharist celebration. It is sombre in tone and includes a declaration that it is not to be used for those who have ended their own lives, not been baptised or have been excommunicated, prioritising theological correctness over pastoral sensitivity. Where the dead were buried in relation to the church changed as cemeteries began to be used, along with church graveyards. Where such a service may take place changed in the twentieth century to include crematoria and chapels of rest (Sheppy 2004). These kinds of developments led to the rites needing to be adapted to different contexts. Crematoriums are not religious buildings and the body is not seen to be buried or burned because of the screen (Rowell 1976). Both these factors pose a challenge

to those conducting a religious service. In recent years a funeral service has included a eulogy or biography of the deceased, which as Sheppy points out, is not what the Reformers had in mind when they created the liturgy with its emphasis on Christ rescuing his followers from sin and death through his resurrection (Sheppy 2004). The rites overall are intended to remind the living of their mortality and the need for repentance, along with expressing a sense that death is the threshold to eternal life with God. They are intended for people of faith, known in the local church community. In terms of being a rite of passage, Sheppy suggests the rites have a strong sense of separation with the emphasis on the finality of death. There is a sense of transition, for the deceased it is to meet their maker and undergo judgement; for the living it is being challenged to repent and recommit themselves to living well. The sense of incorporation comes as prayers focus on the deceased receiving the kingdom. 'Come, ye blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world' Matthew 25: 34 (Sheppy 2004: 33). Sheppy describes the 1662 liturgy as the 'Anglican liturgical bedrock' as it has survived nearly four centuries, all be it in revised forms (Sheppy 2004: 34). It is the foundation for the liturgies used commonly today from within Common Worship (2000).

Twentieth century changes to funeral liturgy

A new Anglican burial rite was published in the Prayer Book revision of 1927-1928. Prayers for the dead and funeral eucharists met the needs of those who suffered losses as a result of the First World War, in a way that other forms of liturgy were not seen to do. The 1928 revised Prayer Book included many additional prayers, including some ancient prayers such as 'Grant unto him perpetual rest: And let perpetual light shine upon him' (Rowell 1976: 98). A burial rite for the burial of a child was added and words that could be used at a burial on unconsecrated ground and at a cremation. Prohibitions continued on the use of the rite for people who had ended their own lives, excommunicates and extended to those who died 'in the act of committing any grievous crime' (Rowell 1976: 97). In later revisions of these texts prayers for the dead became optional as theological opinion was divided on the appropriateness of praying for the deceased. In 1971 the Bishop's Conference approved use of the revised Funeral Rite. It includes four sections (five if the body is to be brought to the church at an earlier point). These

are the Funeral Mass, the Final Commendation and Farewell, The Procession to the Grave, and the service at the graveside.

Common Worship

Common Worship (2000) provides the following liturgies: Ministry at the Time of Death, Before the Funeral, The Funeral (with separate order for the funeral of a child) and After the Funeral. The collection was created in response to criticism of the 1662 rites as being impersonal and remote (Sheppy 2004). Within Common Worship there are many options that can be chosen or left out, allowing for a greater diversity in what can be offered, including provision for a memorial service. Sheppy believes the variety of texts offered indicates a willingness to minister to a wide range of people and situations with pastoral sensitivity (Sheppy 2004). The collection draws on material from across the Anglican Communion including historical material and makes it available for use at the time of dying and afterwards. The rite of ministry at the time of death allows for anointing with oil and the laying on of hands and celebration of communion. The texts for before the funeral include those for pastoral visitation, a service for those who are not able to be present at the funeral, a reception of the body into church, a vigil and a short preparation at home the morning of the funeral (Sheppy 2004). Sheppy highlights that the reception into church and funeral vigil particularly emphasise death is common to all and involves an encounter with God (Sheppy 2004). The funeral rite itself may or may not include the Eucharist but is expected to include a sermon 'a sermon is preached' (Common Worship 2000). In the words of Sheppy 'the sermon is not a celebration of the life of the deceased; it is a celebration of Christ, risen from the dead' (Sheppy 2004: 39). The commendation and committal do not emphasise body-soul dualism. Although no prayers for the dead are authorised, Catholic officiants may choose to include such prayers. The rites do not forbid such prayers being included.

As well as a short rite that can be conducted at the home of mourners, a rite for the burial of ashes is included. Common Worship has a strong forward-looking focus. In the words of Sheppy it is 'suffused with the vision of heaven' (Sheppy 2004: 1). Although some signs of body-soul anthropology are present, there is an emphasis on the resurrection of the body. It combines pastoral sensitivity, the

poetry of some of the historical texts with a strong sense of passage into the future (Sheppy 2004).

The rite for the funeral of a child has particular scripture verses that can be used which have references to children, to Christ's care for children and his own childhood. The texts seek to respond to this particular kind of bereavement by acknowledging the loss of the future that had been hoped for. They include the use of the child's name which is known to be an important aspect of assisting grieving parents (Sheppy 2004). This also applies in the case of a stillborn child and the rite may be used for a stillborn baby and by some for an aborted foetus, although other officiants may not be willing to do this. Clear questions are raised regarding when human life begins. These questions remain as science allows us to become increasingly able to care for very premature babies so that they live to full term and beyond.

Cook and Walter (2005) compare contemporary funerals with historical funerals using the Order for the Burial of the Dead in the Book Common Prayer 1662. During funerals using this liturgy, the priest held considerable authority, spoke as the representative of the divine and the service was standardised; there were very few choices to be made reflecting the wishes of the deceased or family (Cook and Walter 2005: 383). A hierarchical relationship was evident with the church, embodied by the priest, being a source of authority and holding power to make all decisions related to the funeral. In contrast, contemporary ceremonies which involve the dying or the bereaved family in making decisions on the content of the ceremony demonstrate a lessening of the authority of the officiant. At contemporary funerals authority is held by the writers of modern texts and the congregation. The officiant speaks only by the authority of the family (Cook and Walter 205: 382).

Officiants at both contemporary secular and religious funerals display a lessening of authority of their role (Cook and Walter 2002: 374). In comparing secular contemporary funerals with those conducted by priests which use Christian liturgy, Cook and Walter refer to the latter as a 'more complicated case' (2005: 382). They suggest that contemporary church funeral liturgies such as those contained in Common Worship (2000) include many choices and opportunities to reflect the deceased or family. The authority of the church is softened but not

absent (Cook and Walter 2005: 383). It may be helpful for bereaved relatives to know that choices around liturgy mean a ceremony is being crafted particularly for their loved one.

Scottish Episcopal Church Funeral Rites

The Revised Funeral Rites 1987 of the Scottish Episcopal Church have drawn on funeral rites throughout the Anglican Communion and the guidance that accompany them describes how choices have to made about texts according to the pastoral needs of the bereaved (Sheppy 2004). Where the Priest deems that there are no suitable options within the rites, they are encouraged to devise some themselves. The rites include: Prayers with relatives at the time of bereavement, The reception of the coffin in church before the funeral service and the Funeral service itself. Once the Priest has gathered people with opening scripture verses and collects, the funeral involves the Liturgy of the Word, the Commendation and the Committal. The Liturgy of the word involves psalms, readings and a sermon. Prayers for the mourners and the prayer of faith are said and additional prayers pertaining to the circumstances of the death may be added. Prayers offered in sorrow, guilt or regret can be included as can prayers asking for the sins of the deceased to be pardoned (Sheppy 2004). There is therefore an acknowledgement that death in the Christian tradition is believed to involve judgement. The deceased is then commended to God with a prayer and a hymn or anthem. The Committal always involves the Prayer for the mourners and the Prayer of Faith. The Prayer for the Mourners explicitly looks to the resurrection of Jesus as the source of hope, has a sense of transition for the bereaved and through references to the communion of saints, echo in some way the theory of 'continuing bonds' between the deceased and the bereaved. There are different versions of the committal prayers according to whether it is a burial or cremation (Scottish Episcopal Church 1987).

It is noted by Sheppy (2004) that the committee creating these rites sought advice from Colin Murray Parkes, the leading Psychiatrist on grief and bereavement and this awareness has led to helpful emphases in the rites. There is much in the prayers particularly that acknowledges the pain of grief and a selection of prayers to choose from, including related to whether the death was of an older person, a younger person, one who had gone through a difficult death, or where there is

sorrow, guilt or regret. The rites were ahead of other modern Anglican rites in expressing a strong sense of the passage of the dead and the bereaved, which had not been present in the Book of Common Prayer 1662. Other Anglicans followed this lead (Sheppy 2004). There is little emphasis on the Holy Spirit as life giver throughout the funeral rites. The commendation refers to the 'Spirit who renews' (Scottish Episcopal Church 1987). The overall sense of the rites is of one in which the intention to provide comfort and consolation to the bereaved is an integral part of the purpose. The accompanying notes state 'the truth of the human feelings must be acknowledged in order that the theological truth can become an effective communication' (SEC 1987: 2). Weight is given to the feelings of the bereaved and they are not seen as something to be considered of less importance than the theology of the liturgy.

Sheppy (2004) argues that in the face of the totality of death and the pain of grief the Christian may find hope and a new beginning through the Paschal Mystery. He exhorts Priests to tell the story of the deceased within the story of Christ. The elements of the rite of passage of separation, transition and incorporation are set within the context of the Cross, Descent and Resurrection of Jesus (Sheppy 2004). The funeral marks a death, yet also the beginning of new life. 'There is more than a dignified farewell; there is committal to God' (Sheppy 2004: 181). To Sheppy (2004), Christ is central to the Christian funeral. It is through Christ that the journey the deceased is understood and the death, descent and resurrection of Christ are the source of hope for the bereaved in contemplating the death of their loved one and their own mortality.

The pastoral benefits of funeral liturgies

Sheppy poses the question, 'Who is the funeral for?' (Sheppy 2003: 10). He notes that the focus may often be on the bereaved, whilst the Liturgical Commission of the Church of England, in its description of the purpose of the funeral puts the main focus of attention on the deceased (Sheppy 2003). According to the commission, the funeral reminds those present of the eternal unity of all Christian people, the doctrine of the communion of saints. This underlines that there is a social dimension to death, which not only includes legal and practical tasks. To Sheppy, this social dimension reveals the inter-relatedness of human beings. The question he raises following this is 'What is the pastoral agenda when we attempt

to address these individuals and groups in our liturgies?' (Sheppy 2003: 11). This question addresses a complex area, as even if the deceased held a faith commitment and requested a Christian funeral, the bereaved may hold a wide variety of positions including atheism and agnosticism and meeting the needs of all within one ceremony may present many challenges. However, that the question is asked at all is significant. The role of clergy and of the church is in part pastoral, to reveal the pastoral heart of God for all God has created. How clergy respond to the bereaved in the context of the funeral ritual, whatever the faith position of those in the congregation is intended to reveal something of God's character and God's compassionate response to the suffering.

Commenting on the funeral rite as pastoral Liturgy, Rowell suggests that the burial liturgy needs to provide a way of talking about death that is realistic, marking that there is a separation now between the departed and the living along with offering a Christian assurance of the sustaining power of God, the giver of life (Rowell 1976). He believes an emphasis on the commendation of the departed to God, and on the forgiveness and love of God is important for those who are grieving and may experience guilt and anger as well as sorrow (Rowell 1976). Mourners typically hold a wide range of emotions and a well crafted ritual can hold these and allow them to be brought to God for transformation. Additionally, Rowell promotes the burial liturgy reflecting the reality of death and life, suggesting that death and life are never completely separate. Sheppy (2003) comments that both Catholic and Protestant funeral liturgies concur not only in emphasising that there is an encounter with death happening, but also an encounter with God. A Christian funeral enables an encounter with the divine that brings with it the possibility of transformation, for the deceased and the bereaved.

A variety of funeral officiants

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries there has been a small and steady growth in the number of funerals in which the church is not involved (Bailey 2012). These are funerals led by a humanist, civil or independent officiant. The growing number of independent funeral officiants, those of the British Humanist Society and the Institute of Civil Funerals have increased the variety of forms of funerals available. In addition, a small but increasing number of people seek advice and manage the death of their loved one themselves with minimal or no

services from a funeral director (Davies 2008). Frequently, such funerals may be developed with a life rather than a death motif, often described as a 'celebration of life' (Davies 2008). Walter (1997) and Bailey (2012) argue that the distinction between funerals led by clergy and those by other officiants are blurred. Bailey (Bailey 2012) contends that many funerals led by humanist, civic or independent officiants may include some religious elements at the family's request such as the Lord's Prayer and that funerals led by clergy increasingly have at their centre, a eulogy and so are influenced by funerals which are seeking to be 'life-centred'. Possible reasons why the bereaved may choose not to have a funeral led by a church representative but request religious elements in the funeral may include the bereaved seeking the familiarity of a cultural form of meaning making, the low number of non-religious officiants compared to religious officiants and the options being limited by funeral directors who may suggest officiants who are experienced and who have been delegated the responsibility of taking funerals by a religious body (Bailey 2012). The personal focus on the deceased, the amount of choice the bereaved have in choosing elements within the funeral and diminishing church attendance has led to a recent significant rise in the popularity of funerals led by humanist or civil officiants. The expectations of some seeking a Christian funeral in Scotland appear to have been influenced by non-religious funerals and it appears that this has strengthened the focus within Christian funerals on the bereaved rather than the deceased.

In the United Kingdom, who is approached to conduct the funeral is influenced by the context of the death. Kelly conducted research with twenty-five adults about thirteen funerals of babies taken by hospital chaplains. Parents were aware that support was available from the hospital chaplain and perceived them to be 'culturally, the most appropriate person' to conduct the funeral (Kelly 2008: 119). It is now widely known that along with the choice of being buried or cremated, there are a variety of funeral officiants available. It is often the funeral director acting as broker, who puts bereaved relatives in touch with an officiant of their choice.

Funerals in the context of the COVID-19 global pandemic

At the time of writing, there is limited research on the impact of restrictions on funerals due to the global pandemic which began in 2020. For some people

funerals had to be planned through online meetings and very limited numbers of people were able to attend some funerals, with no gathering afterwards for refreshments allowed. Studies that have been produced suggest that despite these difficult conditions, which many bereaved may have preferred not to be there, restrictions did not mean poor outcomes for the bereaved. Rather than the size or type of funeral, how meaningful it was and how connected it helped the bereaved to feel were found to be indicators of how highly a funeral was rated (Burrell and Selman 2020). This is a surprising finding as earlier studies indicate the importance of the congregation within the funeral; however it appears to be in part an illustration of the skills of funeral directors and officiants to adapt to changing circumstances and in part a demonstration of resilience amongst the bereaved who changed their expectations of what was possible for a good funeral in the context of a pandemic.

Conclusion

Death rituals have been enacted throughout the history of Christianity framed within the doctrine of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Early Christians drew on their Jewish heritage and buried their dead and from at least as early as Augustine's times there was a focus on a heavenly afterlife. Funeral rites in Medieval England focused strongly on practises which were believed to aid the progress of the deceased's soul through purgatory. The main way of assisting the soul was through the bereaved arranging intercessory masses. Life expectancy was considerably lower than it is today with the largest number of deaths being those of infants. The Reformation brought large scale change to funeral rites as the doctrine of purgatory was rejected by Protestant theologians. The focus of funerals moved from the deceased to the bereaved. Some aspects of the funeral continued unchanged such as the funeral tea or dinner. It was during the Victorian era, a time of lavish funerals, that municipal and private cemeteries were opened for the first time and cremations began to occur in Britain following the founding of the Cremation Society in 1874. The number of cremations gradually increased until 1967 when it overtook the number of burials and it has continued increasing since then. The funeral liturgies from The Book of Common Prayer, Common Worship and the Funeral Rites 1987 of the Scottish Episcopal Church have different emphases influenced by the culture and theology of the time, with pastoral sensitivity increasing in importance latterly. Although secularisation has

led to a minority of funerals being conducted by non-religious officiants, it is argued that funerals have been less secularised than society in general (Bailey 2012). In Britain, death rituals are still largely conducted within a religious framework or include religious elements. The previous three chapters have examined the literature related to funerals as ritual, the experience of grief and bereavement and the history of funerals in Britain. These chapters have set the multi-disciplinary context for the qualitative study that follows and the next chapter will introduce the methodology that was used in the research study.

Chapter iv) Methodology

How the research question was developed

In this chapter, how the research study came about and the methodology used will be explored. The question of how to prepare and lead a good funeral is one that has arisen in the course of my ministerial training within the Scottish Episcopal Church. Alongside this, through personal experience and many years work as a psychotherapist working with people who have experienced difficult bereavements, I have grown in awareness of the painful nature of bereavement and the grief process. Whilst reflecting on my sense of vocation to psychotherapy and priesthood, an important area of intersection was being alongside those who are suffering distress. Within parish ministry this may most often be experienced when working with the bereaved. An important aspect of involvement with the bereaved within church ministry is officiating at funerals. This study was therefore developed which could draw on my personal experience of bereavement, my professional experience within psychotherapy and my preparing to lead funerals within a ministry role. Through the study, I sought to gain insight into how to officiate at good quality funerals once my ministerial training has been completed.

As Swinton and Mowat (2016: 56) emphasise, researcher reflexivity is crucial in qualitative research throughout the development and completion of the research. My own experiences suggested that a bereaved family member being actively involved in the preparation of the funeral and participating in the ceremony itself could result in the ceremony holding great meaning for them and help produce a fitting, personalised funeral. I had experienced male officiants behaving in what appeared to be paternalistic ways towards female family members who wanted to participate in ceremonies, not permitting them to speak on the grounds that they would not be emotionally robust enough to manage this. Such treatment amounts to disenfranchising grievers (Doka 2002). This led to a desire that the voices of family members be heard within this research and

not silenced by the voices of officiants. My own experiences of being involved in the funeral of a family member who died through suicide gave me the impression that that there were many strengths to being open about this fact within the ceremony. This enabled all to grieve the reality of the situation openly and the family be afforded extra support by the community appreciating that this was a particularly difficult bereavement. I wanted to explore the different nuances of being open or not being open about the fact the deceased had died through suicide within the funeral ceremony.

Within the Christian community I had experienced what appeared to be prejudice against humanist officiants, such as dismissive attitudes of all humanist officiants' capabilities based on attendance at one or two funerals which had been judged as poorly led. My suspicion was that the reaction to the growing popularity of humanist ceremonies may have led to a sense of feeling threatened which developed into an unfairly critical attitude towards what was seen as 'the competition'. I therefore desired to include interviews with humanist officiants within this study to learn about the skills they brought to the task of leading funeral ceremonies.

I have developed an appreciation of the importance of funerals for bereaved individuals and in preparing to become a funeral officiant, held a desire to understand what is most helpful for the bereaved within a contemporary funeral. It was hoped that the research could produce insights that could be used in the training of ministers within the context of the Scottish Episcopal Church. These motivations led to the honing of a research question that sought to ascertain elements that combine to produce a contemporary funeral of high quality. It is important that the research question relates to the purpose for carrying out the research (Ward 2005: 37). In order for the study to be accessible to participants and those training to officiate at funerals the language of the research question chosen was deliberately simple, 'what makes a good funeral?'

The multi-disciplinary nature of the study

In terms of the nature of the study, it was deemed important that the study adopt a multi-disciplinary approach to include exploring the funeral as ritual from an anthropological perspective, the process of bereavement from a psychological perspective and the development of the funeral from a historical perspective. These disciplines all contributed to a study that is grounded overall within the field of practical theology. It was expected that the varying perspectives of anthropology, psychology and history would allow cross-fertilisation of ideas across the disciplines and allow a wider understanding of the funeral to emerge through the analysis of the interviews (Ward 2005: 19). These approaches reflect my own different strands of vocation, training to become a priest, whilst also being a psychotherapist, bringing to both disciplines an academic background in religious studies, social work and psychotherapy. These areas are important in understanding the funeral from a wide range of perspectives, including its purpose and historical development. They provided the background to this qualitative study which involved research interviews with officiants and the bereaved as discussed below. As Swinton and Mowat (2016: 69) seek to demonstrate, it is possible for practical theology and qualitative research to be effectively combined with each enhancing the other and faithfulness to both disciplines being practised. When choosing methodology for a research study conducted within the field of practical theology, care needs to be taken to ensure complementarity between theology and the research paradigms the methodology was developed within.

How the method of the study was decided upon

In recent decades the landscape of who conducts funerals in the United Kingdom has changed considerably with the arrival of civil and humanist officiants. It was therefore important that any study that explored contemporary funerals listened to the experiences of a broad range of officiants, not purely clergy. As De Roest (2019: 158) argues, conducting research with participants in ways in which their voices are heard is

important. My experience of previous research with clients who use counselling services suggested that those who receive services have a valuable perspective when that service is being examined and its impact considered (Edwards and Loeb 2011). Therefore, it was deemed important that the study be one in which not only officiants, but also bereaved families were able to contribute their views. These factors contributed to the kind of participants which were sought. The participants were to be officiants, including clergy within the Scottish Episcopal Church, humanist and civil officiants and bereaved people who had organised a funeral for a family member in the last two years.

The research question appeared to be one which could be most fruitfully explored by a qualitative study that enables a rich, in-depth examination of the experiences of officiants and bereaved individuals (Richter 2005: 15). The decision to employ a form of semi-structured interviews of 45-90 minutes for participants was taken to enable participants to relate their experiences in a way which resulted in rich data that would enable in depth analysis including unexpected insights into the subject area. For officiants, semi-structured interviews enabled participants, many of whom were involved in a wide range of tasks and forms of service, to focus on their role in preparing and leading funerals in particular, whilst giving opportunity for them to offer personal insights into the process they are engaged with. For bereaved individuals, semi-structured interviews provided a context in which they could speak about the experience of the funeral and memories of their loved one, whilst being treated sensitively by an interviewer employing empathy, genuineness and active listening, with no pressure to disclose any information they did not wish to speak about. The sample size of twenty interviews, involving ten officiants and ten bereaved individuals was chosen as this is an appropriate sample size for a qualitative study and the purposes of this study in particular (Richter 2005: 21; Kvale 1996: 101).

This qualitative study involving a small number of in-depth interviews aimed to allow rich explorations of participants' perceptions to take place

(Kvale 1996: 95). The qualitative methodology enabled an in-depth examination of the research question through the understanding of those closely involved in funerals. There is very little existing qualitative research in this area. It was decided not to interview funeral directors as existing studies have already conducted studies with funeral directors. Moreover, my aim, in seeking to understand how to lead a funeral well and what was most helpful and unhelpful for bereaved participants was driven by a desire to equip myself for the task of officiating at funerals and the role of the funeral director is very different to that of officiant.

The methodological framework and form of analysis

The study is situated within practical theology and draws on insights from related disciplines, placing them in critical dialogue with Christian theology and funeral practise. The method of mutual critical correlation (Swinton and Mowat 2006, 2019: 83) provided the methodological framework for this study. This method involves bringing together insights from Christian theology and practise, in the light of the historical tradition, with insights from the social sciences, placing them in critical dialogue in order to address current questions. As Swinton and Mowat (2019: 83) argue, Christian theology takes precedence over the social sciences in that it does not gain its significance from it, but the other way round. However, theology is developed within historical, cultural contexts and needs to be open to critical challenge and constructive criticism from other disciplines to retain its vitality. This perspective perceives theology to be 'emergent and dialectical rather than simply revealed and applied' (Swinton and Mowat 2019: 78). The form of analysis was informed by thematic analysis which provides a rigorous way of coding data by themes (Nowell et al 2017).

Throughout the process of developing the research question and carrying out the study, a research journal was kept. This practise enables researchers to examine their own biases, be aware of their own values, and preconceptions (Ward 2005: 32). Critical questions can be developed

through such journal keeping which can then be reflected upon and discussed in supervision (Ward 2005: 32). Regular supervision provided a space to consider the development of the study, oversee the conduct of data gathering, explore possible findings as they emerged and link them to existing research in relevant areas.

The limitations of this research

This study involved a small sample of twenty interview participants. Although such an amount is appropriate for a qualitative study it should be noted that this means the findings cannot be generalised. Rather they provide rich, in-depth exploration of the research question and can be viewed alongside other research involving larger samples. In recruiting the sample there were travel constraints which limited who could be interviewed face to face. It was difficult to source contact details of civil officiants and this resulted in only one civil officiant being interviewed although it would been preferable to have several interviewed. No bereaved individuals were interviewed who had arranged a funeral for a child or where suicide had occurred. These are arguably amongst the most difficult forms of bereavement and it was a limitation that no direct comments on funerals in these circumstances were obtained from families, although most officiants made references to such funerals. The bereaved interviewees included two males and eight females and it would have been preferable to have a higher proportion of males interviewed as gender influences experiences and perceptions of grief within societies (Doka 2002: 284). It is typical that studies involving bereaved individuals have largely researched grief as experienced by females and therefore it would be of great value to involve male bereaved participants in this study. The fact that less males than females volunteered to be interviewed for this study is perhaps significant in itself and may reflect a bias within society which involves it being more socially acceptable for females to speak about loss with others and express emotion publicly in relation to grief than for males to do this.

Prospective reflexivity

Reflexivity requires a high level of self-awareness which necessitates a level of self-acceptance and self-monitoring. It involves a level of self-criticalness as the researcher maintains awareness of her impact on the research study and the research study on her. An important aspect of this study was my own prospective reflexivity, being aware of and reflecting on the impact I was having on the study, both in the choice of subject and as it progressed (Attia and Edge 2016). Within qualitative research there is an emphasis on the reflexiveness of the researcher, and not to include material regarding my own process and experience within the study it could be argued, would involve missing out information relevant to the results (Etherington 2005: 48). It is significant that this study was developed in the context of ministry training with the Scottish Episcopal Church, by a researcher with experience of providing psychotherapy to bereaved adults and children, who has personal experiences of difficult bereavements. Each of these factors has inevitably influenced the process of this study and an awareness of these influences is important in ensuring a rigorous approach to the development of the research question and conduct of the study. Reflexivity can enable the researcher to practise ethically as decisions are made in the course of the research (Guillemin and Gillan 2014: 261).

I have used the terms participant and researcher in this thesis; however within the paradigm which I have been working from, both the participant and the researcher 'participate' in the study in the sense that the participant is a co-creator with the researcher, of the narrative that emerges from the interview. De Roest (2019: 129) stresses that most research within the field of Practical theology has not involved collaboration with those involved in practise and there are strong benefits of doing so. Within qualitative research, the process of the interview is influenced by both people, and enables the creation of a conversation which is co-constructed by both. The conversation and therefore the findings would be different if the interviewer had been another person

(Swinton and Mowat 2016: 58). The metaphor of the researcher as 'traveller' is fitting (Kvale 1996: 4). One who goes on a journey, through a landscape, converses with people, and brings home a tale to be told. It is a journey in which the experiences of the traveller are filtered through the subjective lens of their cultural, personal and philosophical background. The participants stories are constructed within the conversation of the interviews, and the process of analysis which brings an understanding of them which is inevitably influenced by the researcher (Richter 2005: 21).

Ethics

Questions of responsibility and the ethical implications of a research study are particularly important in the field of practical theology (Ward 2005: 17). When planning this study, ethical approval was sought and granted from the University of Durham, Theology and Religious Studies Ethics Committee (Appendix 13). Participants were aware they could withdraw from the study at any point. They were also aware they could complain to the University of Durham, the Episcopal Church or the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy through which I am an Accredited Counsellor and Psychotherapist. Information sheets were given to participants detailing the nature of the study, confidentiality, the interview process, and their right to withdraw at any point. Written consent was obtained before each interview.

The risks of carrying out this study were fully explored. Risk included that bereaved people may have become distressed when speaking about the funeral of a loved one. I am an experienced, qualified counsellor (British Association of Psychotherapy Accredited) and employed sensitivity in the questions that were asked, how they were asked, offered breaks during the interview and reminded interviewees that they do not need to proceed if they did not want to. I provided written information on agencies who could offer free emotional support over the telephone after the interview.

There were also risks related to my safety if conducting interviews in interviewees' homes. If there were particular concerns over the safety of a particular interview it was agreed that the interviewee would be asked to come to the local library where a private room could be hired or meet in a quiet cafe. I carried a phone when meeting interviewees. Contact details of interviewees and the location of interviews was left in a locked cabinet that could be accessed by another individual if I did not return after the interview.

How participants were recruited

Participants can be recruited in a variety of ways including targeting individuals and snowballing (Ward 2005: 31). For this study it was appropriate that groups of individuals were targeted and given the opportunity to participate. Officiants responsible for conducting funerals who reside in South East Scotland including ministers of the Scottish Episcopal Church, Chaplains, Humanist and Civil Celebrants were contacted by email and asked if they would like to participate in the study (Appendix 2). Ten officiants were quickly recruited by this method and care was taken to ensure a range of types of officiants were interviewed. Those officiants interviewed included three Humanist celebrants, one civil celebrant, three chaplains from a range of working contexts in Healthcare, a University and Workplace Chaplaincy, three Scottish Episcopal Church priests working as rectors in charge of churches. More civil celebrants were approached to be involved in interviews but no others were willing. Five male officiants and five female officiants were interviewed with ages ranging from 44 years to 74 years. Officiants spoke about funerals they had conducted within Scotland and England.

Bereaved individuals who had arranged funerals for loved ones within the last two years were sought in a variety of ways including advertising in local Episcopal Churches (Appendix 3), on Humanist society website and Facebook pages (Appendix 1). Local funeral directors were asked to pass advertisements about the study onto bereaved families who had arranged

a funeral (Appendix 3). Some interviewees heard about the study through word of mouth from myself or officiants who had been interviews and asked to participate. A wide range of participants was able to be recruited. Ten bereaved individuals were interviewed included three widows, three daughters, two sons, one niece and one mother. Two males and eight females were interviewed with ages ranging from 47 years to 74 years. Individuals discussed funerals arranged in Scotland and England.

How interviews were conducted

Information sheets were handed out and explained verbally to participants detailing the nature of the study, confidentiality, the interview process, their right to withdraw at any point, their right to complain and the organisations they could address a complaint to if they were not happy with the conduct of the interviewer (see Appendices 6 and 7). Written consent was obtained before interviews for them to go ahead (Appendix 4). Information on counselling and support services which could offer support to bereaved families who participated in interviews was offered to participants (Appendix 8). Interviews took place in locations chosen by participants which included their homes, cafes, and were generally in person although two took place over the phone due to face-to-face meetings being difficult to organise. Risk assessments were conducted when interviews were not taking place in a public place (Appendix 5). Questions were developed and discussion within research supervision, based on the research question itself and sought to enable all interviews to speak about the preparation for the ceremony and the ceremonies themselves (Appendices 9, 10, 11**).** Interviews began with asking for some biographical information to provide context and moved on to open ended questions to enable participants to speak personally about their experiences. Issues that remain unaddressed in the literature related to funerals such as do funeral help with grief were included through asking participants about their experiences in relation to this. Interviews were recorded and transcribed in the days following the interview.

How analysis was conducted

Analysis was carried out by hand. Immersion in the data was prioritised as this is fundamental to thematic analysis (Nowell et al 2017). Multiple meanings of data were considered, codes developed, themes identified and links between themes made (Braun and Clarke 2006: 18). Stages of data analysis were archived so an audit trail was available if needed to confirm the trustworthiness of the analysis (Nowell et al 2017). Regular discussions about possible themes and different ways of making sense of the data took place within supervision and this process supported a rigorous examination of the data to take place. The data was viewed through the context of the multi-disciplinary study of the literature. This form of analysis is compatible with this study which is within the discipline of Practical theology and aims to produce findings which can be used in the training of officiants or equipping of bereaved people who seek a good funeral for their deceased loved one.

Retrospective reflexivity

An important aspect of the reflexivity within qualitative research is retrospective reflectivity, that is the impact the study has on the researcher (Attia and Edge 2016). During the process of this research, I became increasingly aware that the main tool the officiant uses when preparing and conducting funeral ceremonies is herself. Within many years practicing psychotherapy, it had been my experience that the main tool I was using was myself. To realise this connection between the two spheres of activity has led to a deepening sense of vocation to the roles of psychotherapist and priest, a growing appreciation of the similarities between them, although of course there remain many differences. This awareness leads to the increased possibility of cross-fertilisation of ideas between my two areas of work, a greater appreciation of their complementarity and of the potential value of areas of dissonance for such areas may lead to a self-criticalness and rigour in reflectiveness which may prove fruitful.

Additional personal learning gained through this study

My hope when beginning the research was to become equipped to lead fitting, good quality funerals as an officiant in future. Completing the study has given me a confidence in the elements that are important for a funeral officiant to be skilled in, although it has also raised more questions, such as can a fitting, good quality funeral, aid the bereaved in their grief process? This study has also highlighted the importance of ceremonial expertise, especially when leading large, particularly difficult or particularly complex funerals such as involving several multi-media elements or when different partners of the deceased are attending. This expertise can only be gained through experience and the value of reflecting on experiences of leading funerals with an experienced, skilled supervisor is suggested to maximise the learning from experiences of leading funerals in the early stages.

I was aware of an increasing sense of the privilege of hearing the stories of the bereaved and officiants who participated in this research and of the privilege of serving the dying, deceased and bereaved through preparing and officiating and funerals. Through gaining a more thorough understanding of the role of humanist and civil officiants, I have a greater confidence concerning when it may be appropriate to encourage bereaved people to seek the services of a humanist or civil officiant. In some contexts, humanist officiants and Christian officiants work together on events such as civic events that include elements to support the bereaved. My experiences of working with a variety of officiants within this research leads me to envisage that fruitful partnerships with a variety of officiants could be developed which could serve the bereaved.

At various points this research led me to consider the experience of disenfranchised grievers and this has prompted a greater commitment to seeking to ensure that all who experience grief in relation to a deceased person I am taking the funeral for, are enabled to participate in a way which acknowledges their grief and empowers them to be as actively involved in the funeral as they are able to be. Such an approach can involve challenging misperceptions such as that children would find a funeral too difficult to participate in and taking account of how they may be enabled to participate through creative preparation and providing support within the ceremony.

Summary of findings

The following chapters will explore the findings of this research into what makes a good funeral in the context of the literature reviewed in the earlier chapters. The study suggests that the construction of a good contemporary funeral is a generative process. Generativity Theory (Epstein 1985) describes how previously learned behaviours and ideas become interconnected in new ways producing novel results. Each bereavement and each funeral ceremony are unique. Each process involves the family, the officiant and the funeral director, bringing their, often considerable experience, to contribute to the creation of an event in which the congregation and the deceased are transported to the next stage on their journeys (van Gennep 1960). Within Christian theology, God is the ultimate source of new life and the transformations wrought by funerals may be perceived as the transformational work of God.

The marks of a good funeral, according to the findings of this study are *compassionate care, tailored rituals, ceremonial expertise* and the *containment of death*. These aspects combined to produce funerals that those interviewed, both officiants and bereaved individuals rated highly. Furthermore, a distinctive quality of Christian funerals was identified, *Christian hope*. Rather than a generalised form of hope, this is hope, deeply rooted in Christian theology and the Christian tradition. These aspects of funerals have arisen from analysis of research interviews. They will be explored in detail in the chapters that follow. As interviews were confidential all names used in quotations within this thesis are pseudonyms and details of officiants workplaces are not provided.

Chapter v) Compassionate care

Introduction

The first finding of this research study was that a good funeral involves compassionate care and this will be the focus of this chapter. To varying degrees, people who are bereaved are typically experiencing emotional pain. They need relief, alleviation of their suffering, succour and consolation. The concept of compassionate care has been prominent in work of healthcare professionals, particularly nurses and a considerable amount of analysis has been conducted on what this may mean (Bivins et al 2017). It may include cognitive, volitional, affective, altruistic and moral elements (Bivins et al 2017: 1023). However, as Bivins et al intimate (2017: 1023) it is not confined to the actions of nurses. It illustrates that responding to the needs of those who are suffering with compassion care is a highly skilled process when the practitioner needs to be very focused on the needs of those in their care. Elements of compassionate care are provided by the actions of a funeral officiant who responds to the needs of the bereaved and it may be argued the deceased, or at times, the dying. Compassion can underpin their work preparing for the funeral and within the ceremony itself.

Furthermore, through these active expressions of compassion, the bereaved may experience not only the officiant's own compassion, but also be put in touch with the life force present within society, the energies of which are expressed within death rituals (Davies 2015: 5). This brings them into contact with the vitality of these forces embedded within society which come to the fore in public rituals and have the capacity to bring life in the midst of death (Davies 2015: 3). This aspect of funerals is one which contributes to their healing functions (Jacobs 1992).

Compassion is important within the Christian faith and was evident in Jesus's treatment of marginalised and suffering people throughout the gospels (Matthew 14:14, Mark 1: 41, Mark 6: 34, Luke 7: 13, John 6: 5). Within the Abrahamic faiths, God is understood to be compassionate and Christians endeavouring to reflect the love of God may prioritise compassion for those who are suffering (Isaiah 49: 13, Psalm 116: 5) (Nouwen et al 2006). Through

experiencing compassion from the officiant and community of faith, the bereaved may believe that God feels compassionately towards them.

Characteristics of compassionate care evident through this research study are explored below.

Privilege and the development of intimacy

In reflecting upon the process of being alongside the bereaved and taking funeral ceremonies five officiants described their role as a privileged one. For some clergy, this part of their work was one they most appreciated and found satisfaction in. For some humanist, civil officiants and chaplains there was a sense of finding the role satisfying and of taking care to serve the bereaved in a way which honoured them and the deceased. Along with the fact that the funeral ceremony is an important occasion that means a lot to the bereaved if it is well conducted, the degree of satisfaction officiants found in their role may relate to the reality that many bereaved open up quickly to them. This openness from the vulnerable bereaved allows for an intimacy in the relationship between the officiant and the bereaved of a kind that would take a lot longer to develop if they were not meeting in the context of a death. This intimacy may also occur between the dying and the officiant when meeting to plan their funeral. At times the relationship between the officiant and the dying person whom they have met purely to plan the funeral, becomes a friendship. This indicates the closeness that can develop in relationships formed in this context.

> 'So you meet them in a time when in a way you can get quite close to them quite quickly. You meet them in a very difficult time for them so they open up to you' Colin, Rector.

> I wouldn't do it if I didn't care' (visibly moved) …… a chap called me round about August because he was dying. He had lung cancer… and they thought he would be dead by Christmas but in the beginning of December he phoned me up and said 'I've got good news, I'm going to have a lung removed'…So three years later he died but we had become friends over that period.
> Duncan, Humanist officiant.

Several officials including clergy and humanist officiants had experience of relationships growing between themselves and families where they had taken several funerals and at times weddings for the same family. For clergy this occurred with families who were not in their congregation. Family members also related this happening. This suggests that although there are many situations where officiants are taking the funeral of someone they did not know, for some families they became the officiant of choice who were called upon on successive occasions. Such repeated use of the same officiant in effect creates a pastoral relationship between the officiant and the family and affords the officiant the satisfaction of this continuing form of relationship.

> there are some where I'm doing repeat funerals now, another funeral into the same family because I've done others. There's a particular family in ….. that I've done four funerals for but the first one I didn't know them at all. But they now consider me their minister' Margaret, Rector.

> well we knew … would do it, the celebrant (humanist), because we knew her. She was my friend and she'd married us and she'd married my son and everything. So we knew she would be the celebrant, that was very definite………She came down the day he was dying and sat with us. Norma, Wife of the deceased.

Through the taking of funerals new supportive relationships are generated. This phenomenon of relationships growing through bereavement is the opposite to the experience many bereaved people have within society when many may avoid them due to the bereavement and opportunities to socialise may decrease.

Listening well

Eight officiants spoke of the importance of listening well to the bereaved family members. To some degree, officiants were required to have a level of counselling skills to be able to listen actively and retain what they heard.

> You're being very attentive because you want to know how to do the funeral, so you do listen very well, because you need to. Elaine, Chaplain.

This applied in the meetings to plan the funeral and is particularly important currently because of the importance of personalisation in funerals. Officiants are arranging funerals that are often bespoke to a large degree therefore listening to the wishes of the family is important in creating a ceremony that they will be satisfied with. It is important that officiants gather accurate information on the deceased to facilitate the creation of a unique ceremony. Some officiants spoke of gaining information on the culture of the family through the visit, such as whether they had books on display or the clothes the family members were wearing. They sought to develop a sense of a family's culture in order to create a ceremony that felt like theirs.

The demands of listening should not be underestimated, especially in situations which may not be conducive to it. One officiant spoke of the television remaining on during visits to plan the funeral which made her task harder.

> It's really common to do funeral visits with the telly on. The telly is on all the time because people have the telly on all the time. They turn the telly down because I've arrived, but the telly's still on and I don't ask for it to be turned off.
> Margaret, Rector.

Having empathy

Six officiants spoke of the importance of having empathy for the bereaved. The empathy involved having a sense of the meaning of each unique loss, what losing this deceased meant to this bereaved family. Empathy in this context indicates a personalised response, appreciating the uniqueness of both the person of the deceased and the nature of the loss the bereaved is experiencing.

> Having a sense of what it is to have lost this person.
> Elaine, Chaplain.

> It's about the value of human life and compassion and empathy.
> Duncan, Humanist officiant.

Empathy meant understanding the significance of the relationship the bereaved had with the deceased and the impact of this loss on them. Being empathic can be linked to officiants getting into role. They are being given a privileged window into

the inner feelings of the bereaved and part of their role is to acknowledge and handle these feelings with care. This is a delicate task as the bereaved are vulnerable and so getting into role with regard to handling their feelings requires restraint with regard to responses which would be hurtful to the bereaved and acceptance towards what is revealed by mourners.

On discussing the experience of bereavement, Davies (2017: 77) stresses the importance of how the deceased is connected to the identity of the bereaved. Augustine (Augustine 2008: IX. Xii (33)) reveals this and gives an early example of reflexivity with regards to grief when he reflects on how he has grieved for his mother stating 'I was glad to weep before you about her and for her, about myself and for myself'. He reflects on his grief and the impact it has had on him.

The impact of empathy from a contemporary officiant can be that the bereaved become more aware of their feelings and more able to allow their emotions to surface, before and during the ceremony, which some officiants believed could be helpful for them. Their reflexivity increases. The bereaved family are given permission to feel their feelings and the message conveyed is that it is safe and good to do so.

> A good funeral? I think if people can feel their emotions and if that means they are very tearful that's good.
> James, Chaplain.

The therapeutic value of empathy has been well established within the fields of counselling and psychology (Mearns et al 2013: 99). The value of those providing pastoral care communicating empathy to people who have experienced traumatic bereavement has been established (Capretto 2015: 339). This may be expressed in a variety of ways including within silent presence (Capretto 2015: 339. The death of a loved one can leave the bereaved feeling isolated and bereft. Certainly, in ritual terms before the funeral, the bereaved are in some sense separate from society and the funeral makes possible a transition to once again being part of the community of the living for the bereaved (Van Gennep 1960). The thought that they are not alone, that an individual is there to support them through this experience and has grasped how they are feeling, can lead to a lessening of a sense of isolation. Their inmost feelings are known, accepted and understood which has clear therapeutic value (Mearns et al 2013: 99).

Showing sensitivity

Alongside empathy, being sensitive to the bereaved was highlighted by six officiants. There was a recognition that when working with newly bereaved people, officiants needed to operate in a way that involved great sensitivity.

> It's a situation when your pastoral sensitivity needs to be at its best, allowing for the fact that you're human, you won't get it completely right but you're trying to do the best you can.
> Trevor, Rector.

The need for sensitivity was present through the period of planning and throughout the ceremony itself. The power the officiant holds to impact on the bereaved was evident.

> If everybody's come out of a service feeling as if it's been inclusive and sensitive then there's less chance of fall outs when people have had five or six whiskies.
> Sarah, Civil Officiant.

Actions which appeared to show a lack of sensitivity were taken very seriously by officiants. These experiences although seemingly dealt with at the time by apologising remained in the memory of the officiant. An officiant remembered a time when she had made a mistake, calling one mourner by another's name.

> And there was a current girlfriend who was about become the next wife….I called one of them by the other ones name in the ceremony….That was horrendous….I felt awful so I immediately apologised and corrected the name.
> Sheila, Humanist Officiant.

One officiant who spoke about taking the funerals of babies and children which involve one of the most difficult forms of bereavement, spoke about lack of care remaining in the memory of the bereaved after the ceremony.

> if people are careful then that makes all the difference…There are times when I've arrived a bit too late and I feel terrible because the family don't need anything like that…There needs to be dignity and respect and great care.

Lydia, Chaplain.

It is apparent that many bereaved families, especially those who are experiencing a particularly difficult bereavement are in a heightened state of awareness. Their attention is fully focused on their experiences because they hold great meaning for them. Good and bad memories created through the planning of the funeral and the ceremony itself, remain with them as they grieve.

Comfort for the bereaved

The aspect of comfort for the bereaved was the most commonly cited purpose of the funeral mentioned by seven officiants including civil, humanist officiants, chaplains and rectors. Several officiants suggested that the family members themselves or the congregation were those who provided the comfort to those who were experiencing the pain of grief.

> Comfort for the family. As quite often in family situations they are an opportunity for the family to draw together more closely.
> Trevor, Rector.

Officiants were clearly aware of how painful the loss of a loved one can be for the bereaved and held a desire that the ceremony respond to this. For the bereaved, comfort included a sense that they and the deceased were cared about, there was empathy for their pain and the community offered solidarity with the bereaved through their presence at the funeral. The experience of bereavement may leave individuals feeling isolated from society and the experience of comfort builds a bridge between them and society. It reconnects them at a time when they are hurting and in need of solace. As they say goodbyes to their loved one through the funeral ceremony, an event which some dread, there is comfort provided by a community expressing care and understanding. The presence of a supportive community makes it more possible for them to cope with the emotional demands of the funeral.

> I usually say 'This is going to be difficult but there are lots of lovely friends here. Lots of people are here. And we're here for you'.
> Margaret, rector.

There was comfort for the bereaved in knowing that other members of the family had found the funeral helpful in their grief. Some officiants reported that at such

times when all are vulnerable, family members may have an increased sensitivity towards one another.

> It was very very comforting. It was comforting I think for me, knowing that we managed it for …(the deceased's) mum. She was happy with the funeral. We managed it for the boys. And for me, I was very well supported by friends of the family. Norma, wife of the deceased.

It was notable that the chaplain who spoke of conducting funerals for babies and children, which research indicates involves some of the most difficult experiences of grief (Klass 1993, Parkes 1998), did not speak of the purpose of the funeral as providing comfort. There was rather an acknowledgement of the degree of pain involved both at this point in the bereavement and in future.

> they have got to get through it…...this is their child and it's so unbearable.....it's a very hard journey and it's only just beginning.
> Lydia, chaplain.

To speak of comfort implies some degree of relief from pain. For families who lose a baby or child, rather than comfort, the focus is on taking from the funeral whatever will help with the painful journey that lies ahead. Romanoff (1998: 698) argues that deaths such as the death of a child or death through suicide, challenge core generally accepted structures of how the world operates. They are challenging for mourners as they do not have socially recognised statuses to aid transition or formal social recognition of the circumstances of the death. Successful resolution of bereavement, Romanoff (1998: 709) suggests, involves elements of transformation, transition, and connection which are not fully supported when these social aspects are lacking. This illustrates circumstances in which connecting with the vitality of the life forces of society may be impeded for the bereaved (Davies 2015: 3).

Particularly difficult bereavements such as the death of a child or death through suicide can involve many years of grieving following the loss (Romanoff 1998: 709). Rather than comfort, one of the main purposes of the ceremony may be to provide resources for the journey to come which is likely to be painful and difficult. Romanoff (1998: 710) provides the image of a mourner planting a seedling in memory of the deceased, acknowledging the

loss, watering and nourishing the sapling, then later, sitting in the shade of the tree. Taking a long view of the aspects of resolution of bereavement, namely transformation, transition and connection may benefit the deceased. Compassion may need to be offered over a longer period (Kelly 2008: 146). One of the officiants interviewed who has taken many funerals for children spoke of the provision of annual memorial services for those families whose children have died. It was striking however; that the main source of support for families who had lost children, rather than professional services, was other families in the same situation through organisations such as Compassionate Friends (www.tcf.org.uk). The empathy and sensitivity of the officiant is important though it may not bring consolation or succour to the bereaved in these circumstances. It may be obvious that although the officiant is kind and attempts to understand the meaning of the loss, if they have not experienced it, they cannot fully understand. Those who may be able to offer understanding are those who have experienced a similar loss. Other families appreciate the need for compassion to be expressed in the long term to those who lose children, as the grief is often intense and long lasting. For clergy or Chaplains trained within the Christian tradition, the concept of God who suffers with us as revealed ultimately through the death of Jesus can be significant as they walk with those who suffer painful losses. There is less focus on the victory of Jesus over death through resurrection and more on mirroring the compassion of God who suffers with those who suffer (Isaiah 63: 9). Incarnating the compassion of God through serving the grieving with compassion may involve being a silent supportive presence at times when words would be unhelpful.

For rectors interviewed, comfort was one element within the purpose of the ceremony that included other aspects such as entrusting the deceased to God and saying earthly goodbyes.

> I would say that the purpose of the service is to say goodbye to the person, to say our earthly good-byes to the person, to comfort one another, especially of course, those who are particularly feeling the loss of the person, to pray for the person, and to entrust them to God. I would see those as the purpose of the service. And to celebrate their life.

Colin, Rector.

Waiting by the bedside

Those who are involved in planning and possibly participating in the funeral are likely to be those who have accompanied their loved one through a process of deteriorating health and dying. Six participants in this study had been alongside their relative as they neared death. This process was one which four found very emotionally demanding. By the time their relative reached the point of death, the carers were exhausted and their own health suffered.

> my job had been going into the hospital at nine o'clock and looking after
> him and the last few days I was with him twenty-four hours.
> Dawn, wife of deceased.

> I'd be there all day then I'd come back and have something to eat and
> sleep then she'd go again and I'd be called at two in the morning. So I had
> a major asthma attack and pneumonia when I got back.
> Karen, daughter of the deceased.

Caring for a dying relative left some participants feeling isolated and unsupported whilst others experienced a high level of support from family and friends.

> I felt very cut off.
> Beatrice, wife of the deceased.

> I mean my son he came and stayed when all this was taking place he came
> and stayed. We knew this was going to happen.
> Nina, Daughter of the deceased.

These experiences are the precursor to the planning of the funeral and the funeral itself and underline that before the process of preparing for the funeral begins, the bereaved may be vulnerable, emotionally exhausted and isolated. Moreover, they reveal that unless the death is sudden and unexpected, before the death the relatives become highly focused on their loved one who is nearing death. They become the subject of their full attention. This sense of the focus being on the dying may be seen to continue into a funeral that is marked by personalisation.

As Worden (2009:10) argued, grieving is a process and for some, whose relatives had dementia, for instance, it seemed that grieving began before the death of the individual when there was a marked loss of faculties. This is often referred to as anticipatory grief and can occur in other situations such as during treatment for terminal cancer (Worden 2009: 108). The theories that grief work was important for the successful resolution of grief and that grief involved a series of marked stages, have been strongly critiqued in recent years and a theory suggesting that the bereaved develop continuing bonds with the deceased has grown in influence (Freud (1957), Bowlby (1980), Parkes (1986), Kubler-Ross (1969), Klass (1996)). All of these theories however; share a characteristic of recognising that grief involves a process and spans a longer time frame than one event, be it the death or the funeral. That grief is a process stems from the understanding of emotion as a process (Folkman, S & Lazarus, R. S 1985).

Waiting for the funeral

Several officiants emphasised that the period between the death and the funeral is difficult.

> people aren't quite themselves in that limbo period between the death
> and a service. It's a limbo time isn't it?
> Sarah, Civil Officiant.

> within that very hard first week when people are numb and really hurting.
> Trevor, rector.

Very little research has taken place on the experiences of the bereaved during this liminal period in recent years. A study of parents who had experienced the death of a child reveals how vulnerable bereaved parents may be at this point (Janzen et al 2004). The responses of professionals to them during this liminal period if helpful, assisted them in coping with the trauma of the event and beginning the grieving process. Unhelpful responses by professionals including funeral directors, chaplains and clergy, hindered parents and contributed to a prolonged and complicated grieving process. Although a lot of focus may rest on the events of the death and the funeral, the time in between is demanding in itself for the bereaved and what occurs may have a profound impact on their grieving.

Hertz (1960) explored the significance of this period in examining rituals of the south pacific at the beginning of the nineteenth century. His work demonstrated belief in a period in which a person was not alive but was not yet fully dead. The process began with the burial and decomposition of the wet parts, the flesh of an individual and this marked the beginning of mourning. However, until their bones were dry and the remains were removed and buried in a second final resting place, their soul was not believed to be at rest and mourning continued until this was assured (Hertz 1960: 47).

The deceased are experiencing the impact of shock, a sense of loss and are in a liminal state, which is a chaotic place of transfer. In terms of ritual process, following the death, they await the rite of passage which will transport both them and the deceased through the limen or doorway and onto the next stage, for the deceased to the world of the dead, for the bereaved to the world of the living to be reunited with the rest of society (van Gennep 1960, Sheppy 2003).

When discussing this period, one officiant related the experience of the bereaved to the poem 'Death is nothing at all' by Holland (1987) which is often requested by family members. The poem gives voice to the sense that many bereaved people have during the period immediately following the death, that the deceased is still close to them in some way. The officiant suggested this poem is strongly disliked by many clergy who feel it is untrue with its suggestion that the deceased is just 'in the next room' and 'death is nothing'.

> Loads of people of people have liminal experiences. They go into the kitchen and there's a sense of them. So I now, I forgive that poem because I think that that poem is actually describing their liminal experience of death as they move into bereavement and does it matter that it's not true because that's how it's feeling.
> Margaret, rector.

This view echoes the introduction to the funeral rites of the Scottish Episcopal Church (1987) which emphasise the truth of the feelings of the bereaved and the importance of those being acknowledged within the funeral ceremony.

To hide or acknowledge suicide

Officiants raised the issue of those funerals which were more difficult to take than others. Those they particularly referred to were children's funerals as discussed elsewhere and when the deceased had ended their own life.

Three officiants suggested taking the funeral when suicide has occurred was more complex. One issue highlighted as crucial in these circumstances was whether reference will be made to the fact that the deceased died through ending their own life or whether this will not be mentioned and in effect hidden. No officiants thought the exact nature of the death need be gone into but most officiants thought it was important to make reference to the fact that the deceased had ended their own life in some way. Some officiants felt that not making reference to this was unhealthy. Several officiants stated that it was very much the family's decision whether this was openly referred to or not. Officiants took a great deal of care when working with families in deciding how to refer to the death.

> the priest didn't mention the fact that it was suicide to a congregation of over a thousand people. I came away feeling dreadful and wished that that had been somehow held and acknowledged and God's consolation brought to it rather than it being hushed up. I didn't feel it helped to hush it up.
> Elaine, Chaplain.

> I'm always honest but I was very honest with the family and I simply asked the family 'How do you want me to talk about his death?
> Sheila, Humanist Officiant

After the interview which spoke of the suicide of the deceased not being mentioned in the funeral, I reflected in my research journal that I felt dismayed hearing of this occurring and that some bereaved people had been denied comfort through the truth about the death being hidden. I wondered if the choice not to mention that the deceased ended their own life was the family's or the officiant's. It may be argued that the funeral cannot complete the biographical narrative of the deceased (Schafer 2007) if no reference is made to their ending their own life. The suffering experienced by the deceased may not be appreciated to its fullest extent if the action they took in response to it is not spoken of. Equally, the funeral may not bring the desired comfort for family members if the

scale of the tragedy they are experiencing is not openly acknowledged. One officiant suggested it was an 'added burden' for them if family members decided they did not want it publicly acknowledged that the deceased died through suicide. As Wertheimer (2000: 17) argues, for those bereaved by suicide there are aspects of the bereavement that are particularly complex. Feelings of anger and guilt amongst the bereaved are common and may be intense and long lasting. Violence may have been an aspect of the death. There will have been Police involvement and an inquest. Details of the death and the findings of the inquest may be reported in the press. There will have been no opportunity for the family to say farewell to the deceased or be with them as they died. The family need to live with the knowledge that the death was self-chosen. All these factors combine to produce a more complex process for the bereaved.

Most officiants interviewed believed that it was most helpful to the bereaved if the fact that the deceased had died through ending their own life was not hidden during the ceremony; however they thought that the final decision on whether to acknowledge this within the ceremony lay with the family. The motive behind being open about the deceased having ended their own life was to promote the provision of support for all the bereaved, especially the family of the deceased. Streets (1996: 183) emphasises that how funerals are conducted affects how we grieve. It may be that remaining silent about the nature of the death within the funeral makes it more difficult for those who knew the deceased to acknowledge the difficult circumstances surrounding the death with the bereaved family in future and therefore all may lose out on valuable support.

One rector felt it important that compassion be conveyed by them as the representative of the church, in the light of a history of the church condemning suicide and those who took this step (Rubey and Clark 1987). There was a sense that family members may be unsure if they were going to experience empathy and compassion and may be unsure how their loved one will be treated by the representatives of the church, therefore the rector chose to be proactively compassionate.

> I think the church has got a lot of I suppose atonement to do in a way for
> its attitude towards people who have committed suicide in the past.

> Because I think the church has been condemnatory when it should have
> been supportive, caring and compassionate…I try to make the church's
> compassion clear.
> Colin, Rector.

During the late nineteenth century the question of how people who had ended their lives should be buried exercised the Church of England (Anderson 1987: 269). Individual priests decided whether a Christian burial using the Burial Office would be provided. Many in society appeared to view suicide as a crime and a sin (Anderson 1987: 422). In 1661 a rubric stated that the Burial Office must not be used for 'any that die unbaptised, or excommunicate, or have violently laid hands on themselves'. How this was interpreted was influenced by the legal process of the coroners court. If the verdict of the inquest into the death was that the person was 'of insane mind' it was judged that they could not be held responsible for their actions and therefore a Christian burial should not be withheld. In the early nineteenth century it appears that an inquest verdict indicating insanity often led to a Christian burial being offered. However, there were those who argued that priests needed to form their own opinion rather than hold unequivocally to the verdict of the inquest (Anderson 1987:271). It appears that a Christian burial was not guaranteed for those who ended their lives and the family needed to await the judgement of the local priest on the matter.

Missing people

It was noticeable during interviews with family members and officiants, that most of the funerals spoken about involved some relatives or friends being absent. In several cases this was for practical reasons such as their being on holiday at the time. However, there were several examples of those who were not permitted to go to the funeral and who had not been given access to the deceased as their health deteriorated and they died. To Doka (2002: 5), they are disenfranchised grievers, whose grief is not recognised nor given opportunities to be responded to ritually or socially. Within this research, elderly people who were too frail to attend alone and had no one to assist them, relatives with dementia and children were all absent from the funerals spoken about and had not been able to see the deceased in the period leading up to their death.

> And I was talking to the, well she was the nanny, she's now the
> housekeeper and she said 'Well you know, they (the children) weren't
> allowed to grieve'.
>
> Beatrice, wife of the deceased.

An officiant spoke of acting as an advocate for children when a funeral director voiced an opinion that other children should not attend the funeral of a child. The death of a child is known to be one of the most difficult bereavements (Klass 1993, Parkes 1998). A study by Janzen et al (2004) emphasised the importance of funeral directors and other professionals respecting the views of parents and facilitating access to the deceased child's body to aid the beginning of the grieving process. Several officiants in this study referred to childrens' funerals as particularly difficult occasions. This funeral director's response suggests a heightened level of anxiety about the other children in the family resulting in an overprotective attitude that sought to prevent children from attending the funeral. It highlights that officiants may be influential in supporting the family to ensure that those who may be disenfranchised are included in events to mark the death of their loved one.

> Sometimes a funeral director who doesn't have much experience working
> with the death of a child because thankfully it's rare, might think it's not
> appropriate and sometimes I have to say, 'Actually this is what the family
> has chosen and it's important it happens' because children need to say
> goodbye, they know something's happened.
>
> Lydia, chaplain.

Black (1998) cites research evidence that children have reduced anxiety following a bereavement if they have been forewarned, benefit from seeing the body of the deceased and from attending the funeral. She notes that it can be difficult for children to be exposed to very raw expressions of grief at a funeral and it is important for them to be supported through the process. It may be that a reluctance to allow children to view a body or attend a funeral is more related to the anxiety of accompanying adults, rather than the needs of a bereaved child.

As highlighted earlier, theorists agree that grief is a process. Disenfranchising bereaved children or adults may result in them not being supported socially or ritually for the emotional journey that involves processing grief over a period of time (Doka 2002).

Difficult family relationships also led to people being missing as related in an interview with a family member. One research participant's father was abusive to her and her mother for many years and she believed his failure to tell many people about the funeral was directly related to his behaviour.

> There weren't as many people there as I would like to have seen but we found out afterwards, Dad didn't tell people….I think he did it because he was frightened people would challenge him and take him to task.
> Karen, speaking of the funeral of her mother.

Other interviews in this study confirmed that funerals can be occasions when family secrets are exposed which can lead the role of the officiant to become more complex in relation to managing the impact of this on the bereaved and smooth running of the ceremony.

That funeral liturgies pay attention to the particular experience of the bereaved is supported by the inclusion within Common Worship (2000) of a funeral liturgy for those unable to attend the funeral. There is a recognition that there may be missing people and their needs are catered for by the provision of prayers and the opportunity to share memories of the deceased in a liturgical context. For those who cannot attend alternative ways of marking the death of the deceased can be helpful. This approach recognises that rituals are important ways of marking transitions and the value of offering alternatives for family members who cannot attend the funeral. The reality for others who knew the deceased is that they mark the loss of the deceased in some other way if they cannot attend the funeral. In a society with a large focus on individualism, there might be an expectation that for the grieving who cannot or not wish to attend the funeral, the alternative would be an individual marking of their loss; however it is noticeable that workplaces, clubs and societies or schools may mark the death of someone connected with them in ways that responds to the needs of large groups. This enables those present

to connect with the life force of society in a way that individual actions may not (Davies 2015: 3)

Conclusion

For those who are planning a funeral for a family member who has died, this task may follow a long period of caring for their relative whilst they were unwell or may be a sudden event for which they have been unable to prepare. Whatever the circumstances of the death, grief makes the bereaved very vulnerable and the task of planning the funeral may appear extremely difficult and emotionally demanding to them. The compassionate care of an officiant involves considerable skill and can be very important. This care may be expressed by the officiant actively listening, expressing empathy and showing sensitivity towards them. The openness of the bereaved to officiants whilst they are in this vulnerable state can lead officiants to feel their role is a privileged one that involves the development of intimacy relatively quickly. How the officiant responds may bring comfort and the main purpose of the ceremony itself may be perceived as to bring comfort, although this is typically not the reality for mourners in the most difficult bereavements such as the death of a child. Complex areas such as whether the fact the deceased ended their own life should be spoken of need to be carefully negotiated by officiants with the family. It is regarded as the family's choice whether to speak of this or not; however hiding the nature of the death was seen as problematic as it may mean the family is denied valuable support based on the particularly difficult nature of the death. On many occasions there may be people who miss the funeral for a variety of reasons and their marking the death in other ways, preferably with others can be important. For Christian officiants expressing compassion can hold particular resonance as it is believed to reflect the compassion shown by Jesus and the character of God. Following this examination of compassionate care, the second finding to be explored in the next chapter is tailored rituals.

Introduction

The second finding was that tailored rituals are a mark of a good funeral and this will be explored in detail in this chapter. Ritual may be defined as 'behaviour in which key values are expressed in symbols (Davies 1997: 39). Within rituals, symbols are used in a manner which is believed to benefit individuals or society as a whole. Rituals which are practised in the context of a funeral serve many purposes including the disposal of the remains of the deceased. Funeral rituals bring order in a time of chaos, structure in which strong emotions can be experienced and a public acknowledgement of the loss of a member of society (Myerhof 1982). They provide a gathering of community to support the bereaved in facing the death and mark the beginning of a new stage in the lives of those who attend, one in which the deceased will not be present in living form. As Turner (1990) understood, death rituals involve major changes in the relationships within the community, particularly between the bereaved and the deceased. Rituals can acknowledge and facilitate these changes. For those who envisage a life beyond death, funeral rituals mark the deceased joining the community of those who have died; however that is perceived.

With a contemporary emphasis on the subjective experience of the bereaved, tailoring funerals has become important in meeting the expectations and needs of the bereaved as they adjust to the change that the death of their loved one means for them, particularly with regard to their relationship with them. It may be argued that personalising funerals involves attending to the humanity of the deceased in all their uniqueness. Theologically, this may reflect the humanity of Jesus in all his uniqueness. Grounding funerals in the life the deceased lived, so that a strong sense of the deceased is evident in the funeral can be supported theologically by appreciating the incarnational nature of the Christian faith in which Jesus took on human form and lived a particular human life. The Christian funeral can reflect both the divinity and humanity of Jesus through including a personal focus on the life of the deceased within the wider framework of the life, death and resurrection of

Jesus. There can be a significant theological coherence to both aspects of Jesus being represented within the ceremony.

Creating bespoke funerals

Interviews with ten officiants, including clergy, humanist and civil officiants and ten family members who had recently organised a funeral, revealed that personalisation within the funeral was a central element in its construction. Clergy, humanist and civil officiants all related creating bespoke funerals.

> I try not to come to hymns and readings until we've got something of the story because I think that what we sing and read needs to be consonant with what we're saying about the person's story and their values. Margaret, rector.

Vandendorpe (2000) examined contemporary funerals in Belgium and found that they included a large number of personal elements such as music chosen by the family and photographs of the deceased. Officiants interviewed for this study offered the opportunity for families to choose elements in the ceremony. The process of creating the funeral was largely one of co-construction (Kelly 2008) to a greater or lesser degree. One rector used the same framework for each ceremony and offered the family the chance to choose readings from a small selection, along with their choice of hymns and other music. Another priest, employed as a university chaplain described constructing ceremonies with those who were close to the deceased based on the person of the deceased and their life.

> the family were a mixture of Quaker and, Quaker and what, Greek Orthodox I think. And so we, I think we used the old library in their school..we realised that, you know, what we should do was make it quite like a Quaker meeting, you know, that's what friends thought. So we'll have the silence with people saying what they might want to say about the student. Elaine, chaplain.

Five officiants, including clergy, humanist and civil officiants aimed to work with families to construct a ceremony that the family recognised and owned.

> The more they invest in it, the more it will speak for them.
> Trevor, rector.

For all officiants, when planning a funeral, the goal was to co-create one the family and often the deceased, would be happy with. Co-creating is a process with an end in mind – to produce a funeral ceremony that is unique and personalised to the deceased and family's wishes. In terms of the officiant's sense of self, the presence of a creative element may provide a sense of generativity. They are dealing with the death of (usually) one individual and the loss and grief of the family; however within death and grief are found new life, growth and a generative process.

> We talk with them about what they would like or what matters to them, what they're thinking. Whether they have got any ideas already or whether they are struggling because they have never been to a funeral or never had to plan one before.
> Lydia, chaplain.

This creative process fits with Kelly's work on co-constructing ceremonies (Kelly 2008: 127). In co-constructing a funeral for a child with bereaved parents, Kelly suggests church representatives have several aspects to their role including being conduits to the divine, event co-ordinators, creators and managers of sacred space, professional wordsmiths, an embodiment and enactment of the divine story (2008: 127-131). It may be argued that these elements are present to a lesser or greater degree in different ceremonies. Moreover, chaplains, who may be priests within a religious denomination, such as those interviewed for this study, may place less emphasis on the aspect of the divine and instead focus on how to enable the bereaved family to mark the death in a way that is meaningful for them.

Interviews with family members revealed that in five cases, the funeral was planned using the expressed wishes of the deceased, some of whom had gone into great detail when planning their funeral. This included the content for the funeral ceremony and at times included the deceased's wishes for the funeral tea.

> He had it all written out. He'd chosen his coffin, he had the music on CD ready. He even had a printed copy of the music he wanted played at his wake and wee paragraphs about dedicating a song to various people.
> Norma, wife of the deceased.

Even if the deceased had not planned the detail of the funeral, family members often had a sense of the kind of event the deceased wanted and used this when planning the funeral.

> He thought it should be like a big party.
>
> Beatrice, wife of the deceased.

For some, including a man who had died of cancer aged twenty-four, the funeral had not been spoken about before death. Family members constructed a funeral with the humanist officiant based on the person of the deceased. Such a funeral encapsulated several aspects of personalisation including family making choices, customising the funeral so that was unique and the symbolic representation of the deceased (Bailey 2012).

> We didn't want an order of service. We just had a wee business card with a photo of my son on one side and some words that he would always say on the other, 'cold beans' and things and everybody got one of those. We just wanted it to be very much him.
>
> Kate, Mother of the deceased.

Five family members reported that the deceased would have enjoyed the ceremony. For families, there was a strong association between the funeral being what the deceased expressly wanted or would have liked and the funeral being viewed positively. It was this aspect in particular that led the bereaved to believe that the funeral had been a good one.

> I think really that's the sort of thing he would have liked and I think knowing that was what made it so good and still makes it good.
>
> Ella, daughter of the deceased.

Often agreeing the script was an important part of the co-construction. All of the humanist officiants interviewed, along with the civil officiant related agreeing the script with the person who was dying, or sending the script to the family before the ceremony for comments and corrections.

> I put it into a script and send it back to the family and I'll say, have a look at that. How do you think it reads? Do you want any changes made?
>
> Stewart, Humanist officiant.

Family members spoke of seeing scripts before the ceremony and the value of this to them. This included reassurance that the words which were to be used were fitting and accurate and the benefit of seeing them in a less emotionally charged environment than the ceremony itself.

> It was great. I saw the script beforehand. The words were appropriate to the situation which was not easy. Norma, wife of the deceased.

Family members interviewed revealed that in some cases a meeting with the dying person was followed after their death by many contacts with different family members. This demonstrates that in some funerals many people are involved in the construction of the ceremony. In the view of some officiants, the process of being involved in planning a personalised funeral was therapeutic for families at a particularly difficult time, between the death and the funeral.

> that thinking through of what they might like to do and how they might like to shape things can actually be really cathartic in that critical time when it's all so hard and raw and difficult. Trevor, rector.

It may be argued that funerals have involved co-construction for many years remembering a time several decades ago when a priest would meet with the bereaved family and agree arrangements for a ceremony using a traditional liturgy; however in contemporary funerals co-construction means something different. There is a much greater scope for choices to be made by the bereaved family and for the ceremony to be personalised. It is not only practised during a humanist ceremony that may have a clear focus on celebrating the life of the deceased, co-construction is also commonplace in Christian ceremonies.

Theologians' criticism of personalising funerals to a large extent suggests that doctrines of judgement, mercy and new life beyond death through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus are obscured (Ipgrave in Mosher et al eds 2014: 222). However, Kelly argues that through co-creating funerals with the grieving family in a way which embodies the life and teaching of Christ, 'the Lord was implicitly a large part of the funeral' (Kelly 2008: 160). Kelly refers to serving families at the point of particularly painful bereavements such as the death of a baby and arguably for those who find a bereavement a hugely

painful or devasting experience the emphasis on creating a ceremony that meets the bereaved at their point of great need reflects the compassionate response of Jesus in the gospels to those outside the religious establishment in which he focuses on their need rather than spiritual teaching (Luke 5: 12-16, 17-26, Luke 7: 36-50, Luke 8: 26-39, Luke 15: 11-32).

Along with many other aspects of the funeral ceremony, in contemporary funerals the setting is a choice.

> My father (the deceased) knew which crematorium he wanted.
> Richard, Son of the deceased.

There were three factors which were referred to by several officiants as significant when choosing a venue. They were a personal connection with the deceased, practical considerations and aesthetic reasons. These factors may be used in combination when decisions were being made.

Venues with a personal connection with the deceased were often chosen, whether this be churches or other venues relating to the deceased's personal or professional life. For people of Christian faith, being able to have the funeral in church was seen as the appropriate setting to mark the completion of their faith journey, with the congregation constituting family for some people. Stories help us to make sense and meaning of our lives and for the life story of the deceased to reach its conclusion in a place which fitted them can be consoling and significant for the bereaved (Harris in Marshall and Mosher eds. 2014:86).

> I know that for people who have been Christian's, church members, holding the celebration in church is very important.
> Trevor, rector.

Humanist officiants spoke of challenges in finding appropriate venues. Some possible venues such as hotels were not happy to have a coffin passing through the building so may be willing to host a memorial ceremony but not the funeral ceremony itself. Some churches e.g. Unitarian, were able to be used by humanist officiants for humanist funeral ceremonies. Meanwhile, in other churches clergy or others such as elders in the Church of Scotland were not willing to give permission for a humanist ceremony to take place. The decision of whether to allow a humanist funeral ceremony to occur in a church appeared to be

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contentious for some clergy. A refusal to allow this, particularly if the circumstances of the death were very difficult led to the church being perceived as insensitive.

> I've done a few in churches.. some ministers say no…. The worst example was a baby.. And the parents were pretty distressed…..And people said is it any wonder that churches are losing numbers..
> Duncan, Humanist officiant.

For a humanist officiant to use a religious venue such as a church may be regarded by some as cultural appropriation, although this term is more commonly used to refer to those of the dominant culture using elements from a minority culture. In this case, the Christian church may be perceived as the dominant culture within funerals and humanist ceremonies, a minority culture. It may be argued that for a building which was built for the glory and worship of God to be used for an important public ceremony which denies the existence of a divine being is in some way a violation of the sacred space. However, for churches to be willing to allow the use of the worship space for a humanist ceremony which although not acknowledging the existence and presence of God, is meeting the needs of the community at their most vulnerable may be regarded as an act of service in itself. Many churches allow their sanctuary to be used for musical concerts or other art or leisure activities which arguably serves the local community regardless of their religious faith or otherwise. To not to be willing to serve potentially the same members of the community when they are bereaved may be perceived as insensitive and legalistic.

For the bereaved family choosing a venue, practical reasons may be paramount such as the distance for mourners to travel, the size of the venue and the amount of parking available. Aesthetics were believed to be important to create the appropriate atmosphere and care was taken when several choices were available such as when selecting a room at a university for the funeral of a student or staff member. Difficulties arose when those organising the funeral chose venues that were not accessible for all mourners, such as no entrances or toilets suitable for those using wheelchairs. Such a choice has the potential to disenfranchise mourners by making it very difficult for some to participate in events (Doka 2002).

It was so difficult.. there were steps everywhere…I was in a wheelchair. They had to lift me up. And I couldn't go to the toilet, which is my nightmare.

Ivy, Niece of the deceased.

Traditionally, funerals occurred in church with burial following in the graveyard. This ensured that the ceremony was contained in terms of space and refreshments could be served in the house of the bereaved family which was often nearby. This provided a liturgically complete experience. Most family members interviewed for this study spoke about funerals that were spread across at least two locations with some distance to travel between them. Different parts of the funeral occurring in different venues constitutes building blocks of the ritual event being added together to constitute a whole. Several officiants spoke of the practical difficulties in travelling from one venue to another whilst others focused on the hiatus created by the move to a different venue which interrupted the process of the ritual. Some people may miss a part of the funeral if they cannot travel in a timely fashion to the next venue. The need to travel broke the flow and atmosphere of the event and could mean the whole day was taken up with the funeral which exhausted some family members.

because the two things are so far apart you have the two service things.. it just felt like there was an entire day spent on it. It was a long, long day and it was exhausting.

Karen, daughter of the deceased.

When you've got the service in church and you're going to the crematorium there's always that hiatus bit. You know, the sort of thing, in some places that could be a journey of fifty minutes. That's very difficult for people.

James, chaplain.

Negotiating faith content

Five officiants spoke of the need to negotiate with families around areas of faith content. Humanist officiants related families requesting hymns and not realising they would constitute an act of worship, whilst clergy discussed family including content that contrasted with the rest of the liturgy. One humanist officiant

described how humanists have different perspectives on whether to include material that may include some religious content. He agreed to some hymns being included in ceremonies as they appeared to be highly culturally significant to the deceased rather than a reflection of faith. This suggests some officiants take a nuanced view on content that may appear initially at odds with humanist values rather than rejecting all requests.

> it's a debate within humanism. For instance, a lot of people who've been in the Navy tend to like 'Will your anchor hold?'... There's a bit of me and a bit of the humanist society that thinks perhaps you should differentiate between hymns as acts of worship and hymns as cultural baggage that is carried around and is kind of meaningful so I'm inclined to do the odd blind eye as it were if I feel it's not the worship or the words that's important but it's the history and the culture.
> Duncan, Humanist officiant.

As clergy are representatives of the church and need to take into account the views of the institution on the content of funerals they take, so humanist officiants must take into account the views of the humanist association on the content of funerals they take. There are strong parallels here. There needs to be congruence between the ideology of the institution and the ceremony. There were times; however when families' determination to have hymns or prayers included in a humanist ceremony led to the officiants suggesting the families seek a different officiant. Civil officiants, for instance, are willing to include religious and secular content.

> a civil celebrant is not a religious person so we will just go with any faith and respect it. So it's about the person who's passed but it's also about the people in the room, the people who are left and they've got to leave that event, that building or that space, all feeling as if it's been recognised. All feeling inclusive, as if they've been included in some way in that process.
> Sarah, Civil officiant

Walter (1997) and Bailey (2012) argue that the distinction between funerals led by clergy and those by other officiants are blurred. Bailey (Bailey 2012) contends that many funerals led by humanist, civic or independent officiants may include some

religious elements at the family's request such as the Lord's Prayer and that funerals led by clergy increasingly have at their centre, a eulogy and so are influenced by funerals which are seeking to be 'life-centred'.

Possible reasons why a family with no connection current with the church may seek a Christian funeral may include the bereaved seeking the familiarity of a cultural form of meaning making, the low number of non-religious officiants compared to religious officiants and the options being limited by funeral directors who may suggest officiants who are experienced and who have been delegated the responsibility of taking funerals by a religious body (Bailey 2012). This study evidences many different ways of combining religious and non-religious elements and there were indications of funerals led by a wide variety of officiants having a life-centred focus.

Several officiants recognised the importance of integrity. For family and the officiant to be happy with the ceremony it had to have integrity for all. Just as there needed to be congruence between the ceremony and the officiants role as representing their institution, congruence was needed between the ceremony, the deceased and the family. At times this involved reflecting that the mourners included people of a particular faith and those with no faith. Officiants sought to create a ceremony where all would feel comfortable and their beliefs or lack of them had been respected.

> Yes, and I think the concept that sits most in my mind and that people respond to when I say it is that we need to get the integrity of it right. So, what we do, what we choose must not lack integrity. So, it must not feel like it's lacking integrity for the person who died or for the mourners. Elaine, chaplain.

The importance of the ceremony having integrity for the officiant was underlined by a rector who spoke of taking the funeral of an atheist who was related to a member of the congregation of their church. Although his role had been confined to one similar to a master of ceremonies, he was aware of a lack of integrity within this and regarded it as a mistake that he had agreed to take the ceremony.

> In order to have integrity it has to be an expression of the Christian hope and trust and all of that….I just thought this is not right. It's not me for one thing. It doesn't sit with my integrity. Trevor, rector.

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Choosing officiants

Another aspect associated with the personalisation of the funeral was the family being able to choose an officiant. At times this meant an officiant who had known the deceased. Four family members believed that it made a difference that the officiant had known the deceased; however for those who did not know the deceased, that the officiant was able to get a good sense of the individual was significant. Within these funerals, personalisation in terms of the accurate representation of the deceased in the fullest sense, including their character and likes and dislikes as well as biography was significant to the family.

> I mean he knew what she was like. And so, he didn't, I suppose. She hated fuss and anything that went over the top, that kind of thing. So, he just didn't do anything like that.
> Nina, daughter of the deceased.

> She really grasped the essence of him…She just got him. I think that was really important. Dawn, wife of the deceased.

Humanist and civil officiants reported taking funerals largely for people they did not know, as did priests working as chaplains, whilst rectors largely took funerals for people within their congregations. The different skills needed for these contrasting processes will be explored later on.

Personalisation as a motivator to becoming a humanist officiant

For several humanist officiants interviewed, the element of personalisation held great significance. It was a central motivator in choosing to train to lead funerals. Each had a desire to offer personal funerals that focused on the life of the deceased. Some had experienced funerals that lacked a personal element and this created a spur to want to offer something different.

> One of the things that brought me into this work was my father's funeral….they did not mention my father's name…I was still angry all those years later.
> Sheila, Humanist officiant.

my interest was sparked by attending funerals where there were humanist officiants which caught my eye and my ear because I was quite taken with how personal the funerals were. Stuart, Humanist officiant.

There were clear links between the individuals desire to conduct a ritual that held meaning for the deceased and bereaved because it was so personal and their decision to embark on training as a humanist officiant. Walter (2005) construes this work, mediator death-work, which occurs when the professional takes information about the dead and presents it in a polished form in a public rite. The form of transmission being 'the dead → the mediator → public rite' (Walter 2005: 383). The transmission of accurate information on the deceased was a central element in the work of the humanist officiants and this gave their role meaning.

Funerals that help with grief

Seven out of ten participants thought that the funeral had helped with their grief in a variety of ways. For some it was the evident care shown by all those who attended the funeral that was helpful. The comment below is from a participant who described themselves as 'very cut off' before the funeral. That a much larger than expected number of people attended and expressed care towards the deceased and the bereaved family made a considerable difference to the participant.

> It definitely helped knowing there were so many caring people around.
> Beatrice, wife of the deceased.

For others, the funeral gave the bereaved a sense of comfort. It would seem there is a meeting between the aims of the funeral officiants who, in this study all spoke of one of the main purposes of the funeral being comfort for the bereaved and the families need for healing from the pain of bereavement.

> The funeral was very very comforting.
> Norma, wife of deceased.

> a large part of the purpose is to bring comfort, I do believe that. I think that consolation is a large part of a funeral.
> Elaine, chaplain.

Several family members reported that knowing that the funeral was as good as it was and particularly that they had done their best helped their grief.

> It was helpful that I felt I'd done the right thing.
> Dawn, wife of deceased.

> Yes, just knowing it was as good as it was and you know, it really was, it was beautiful and afterwards when we were talking about it to people that either hadn't been.
> Ella, daughter of the deceased.

This quotation highlights that a memory is created when a funeral is good that will be spoken about afterwards. This funeral facilitated a positive memory being created which could be relayed to others and became part of the social exchanges that confirmed the reality of the death for the bereaved. Although research participants in several studies have suggested they found being involved in funeral planning or a funeral itself, helpful, no existing studies have found a significant correlation between participation in funerals and grief adjustment as measured on an objective index (Mitima-Verloop et al 2021; Doka 1984; Bolton & Camp 1987). Gamino et al (2000) conducted a qualitative study which found an association between perceiving the funeral as comforting and having less difficulties in grief adjustment; however other research which might have been expected to confirm this finding did not find this (Mitima-Verloop et al 2021). A recent large scale quantitative study found that evaluating the funeral positively was linked to positive affect in the months following, although not to the severity of grief reactions (Mitima-Verloop et al 2021). That participants in this study felt the funeral helped with their grief needs to be viewed within the context of existing research studies. How funeral may help with grief an area which warrants further research.

Some family members expressed how, although the funeral helped with their grief in some respects, it did not help them accept the reality of the death.

> It helped my grief to know we did our best for our son………………In terms of coming to terms with his death, no it didn't help, I'm still searching for him.

Kate, mother of the deceased.

Others felt the funeral did help but that there was a limit to this. Theories which emphasise that grief is a process are relevant in understanding the view taken by these participants (Parkes 1986, Worden 1991).

I think often it's something that takes time and the funeral is one element of that.
Robert, son of the deceased.

It was perhaps significant that participants suggested that the public recognition given to an individual's life was an important factor in the funeral helping their grief.

I think the thing which really helps is the recognition of somebody's life.
Robert, son of the deceased.

Bailey (2012) argues that the congregation who attend the funeral are an important element. It is the congregation who are witness to the public recognition of the life that was lived. Funerals serve to enable public meaning-making of the death (Possick et al 2007).

One rector and a chaplain expressed the view that it was important for the coffin to be visible to mourners to aid them in accepting the reality of the death and so progressing in grief. Having the coffin covered by a pall was disliked by some officiants as it made it less visible. Holding memorial ceremonies for most mourners after the body had already been disposed of was seen to rob mourners of the opportunity to 'say good bye' to the deceased and believed to limit the benefit of the ceremony. Only some parts of the ritual of the ceremony were available to all, other parts were confined to family members only. Some of the purposes of the funeral such as saying goodbye, paying last respects, commending the deceased to God and disposing of the remains may not be possible in as full a way within a memorial service compared to a funeral ceremony which includes the presence of the remains of the deceased. Other aspects such as completing the biographical narrative of the deceased are possible through memorial ceremonies.

I'm very unhappy about the move to, oh let's have a quick private cremation, then straight afterwards a memorial service. I think that's

about convenience and I think it doesn't help us with our grieving. I think it's important that the ashes or the body of the person are present. Lydia, chaplain.

The tendency to arrange a private cremation and a memorial service for a wider group without the presence of the remains of the deceased is perhaps an indication of a discomfort with death and its trappings, a desire to protect others from what may be seen as the ordeal of facing the reality of the sight of the coffin. Harris suggests 'we almost pretend that they have not died by committing them elsewhere in private' (Harris in Mosher et al ed 2014: 80). The value of making the reality of the death clear was recognised as helpful for the bereaved. Grief generally involves an element of shock, disbelief and struggling to accept the reality that that the deceased is no longer living (Worden 1991:16). The funeral provides a context in which the death is publicly acknowledged and confirms to the bereaved that the deceased is not coming back. It may still be that in the period following the funeral, the death feels unreal to the bereaved and they have moments of forgetting that the deceased is no longer alive; however, this does not detract from the part the funeral can play in enabling the reality of the situation to be made clear. In relation to this, the importance of the deceased's remains being present at the ceremony was emphasised by several officiants in the light of what appears to be an increasing trend to hold a cremation for immediate family members and a larger memorial service later for the wider community who knew the deceased. This was perceived by some officiants to be psychologically unhealthy. There was a contrast between the perspective of officiants who saw the value of having the coffin present and some family members who dreaded seeing it, although both perspectives were arguably stemming from the same reasoning, that the presence of the coffin makes the death real. It was therefore important that officiants enabled the bereaved to discuss their fears about this and suggest that although seeing the coffin was a real concern of theirs, in fact it may be helpful in terms of their progressing through grief to see the coffin within the ceremony. The pain of the bereavement is faced rather than denied in a ceremony facilitated by an officiant who appreciates the need for comfort for the family whilst they honestly face the reality of

their loss. Kelly (2008: 137) describes officiants who enable bereaved families to face the reality of their loss and grieve as 'sustainers of grief'. They are a source of succour to the bereaved in facing the death of the deceased.

Officiants who viewed the coffin as a visible sign of the reality of the death of the deceased at times emphasised the importance of the coffin being visible rather than covered and the sense of finality conveyed by the burial of the coffin.

> The coffin was under a heavy pall or cover, so you couldn't actually see the coffin. I think that's very unhealthy. It is like trying to brush death under the carpet…. because people are actually coming to terms with death and hiding things I don't think helps.
> Colin, rector.

As the container of the remains of the deceased, the coffin remains a powerful visible reminder of the death of the deceased and of death in general, signalling to those gathered for the ceremony that they will die at some point. It reveals to all that they will die.

> All funerals are about our own life and death. How we grieve and cope with loss throughout life is reflected in and influenced by the way we bury our dead. (Streets 1996: 183).

As acknowledged by Streets (1996: 183) ways of grieving are reflected in the funeral and how funerals are conducted affects how we grieve. Davies (2008: 25) highlights that for many who knew the deceased such as workmates, friends and neighbours, the coffin 'stands for the deceased person'. This raises the question of aspects of their grief that may be untouched by a memorial event where the remains of the deceased are not present. This may inhibit their capacity to grieve (Worden 1991:16).

Creating memories

Carswell (2011) explored memory as an important aspect in the construction of contemporary funerals in terms of the process by which memories are selected for inclusion in the funeral. Research conducted for this study adds another

dimension to the aspect of memory in funeral construction, namely, the creation of good memories.

> That did make a difference because you can look back on it and think that was a celebration for him.
>
> Kate, mother of the deceased.

Three families referred explicitly to the funeral creating good memories. Conscious of the loss of the deceased, it appears that the bereaved seek to maintain a continuing bond with their loved one by creating a good memory to add to those they already have. It is in effect, a good memory associated with the deceased that will be created, though the deceased has died. The continuing bonds theory of grief is one which suggests that the bereaved keep the deceased with them in loving memory through creating an inner representation of them (Klass et al 1996). The funeral provides an opportunity to begin this process.

Personally meaningful rituals

Interviews for this study included evidence of personally meaningful rituals.

> he would blow bubbles down his nose and the parents came up with the idea of blowing bubbles and they started and then everybody was asked to blow a bubble. And we played, 'I'm forever blowing bubbles''.
>
> Duncan, Humanist officiant describing the funeral of a baby.

Garces-Foley and Holcomb (2006: 207), writing about contemporary funerals in the United States emphasise that personalisation may involve personally meaningful rituals, relatives making choices about funeral content and a focus on the deceased person. This is illustrated by the use of bubbles at the baby's funeral referred to above in which a unique ritual was enacted that linked explicitly to the baby who had died.

Those officiants who spoke about creating rituals in this study suggested that it was helpful for those attending the funeral to have something to *do together*, especially if they were not singing hymns or songs, which fulfil this function in religious funerals. It could be challenging to come up with good ideas regarding what to do together.

It is good to have something that you're altogether doing, other than you've all turned up at the venue. It helps for there to be a collective act somehow….the one..we had in the common room, we went out and planted a rosebush and everyone put soil.

Elaine, chaplain.

One of the rituals created within the funeral discussed by a family member who was interviewed involved the congregation being able to sign the coffin and write messages on it during the ceremony. This may be regarded as a democratisation of the range of rituals involving the coffin and demonstrates the increased power of the bereaved family to make ritual choices (Cook and Walter 2005: 383). It raises issues of kinship. In some contexts, close family members only would be invited to participate in a ritual involving the coffin such as when soil is thrown onto the coffin newly placed in the grave by family members. The family who invited all to sign the coffin enlarged the group of people who could participate in a coffin ritual from the immediate family only to any mourner present. This funeral was for a young adult and it could be that for him friends were regarded as important as kin relations and that in facilitating those who knew him in coping with a difficult bereavement, allowing all to participate enabled all to face the reality of his death in a creative, personalised manner. In the view of Meintel (2014: 87), there is a strong link between participants seeking healing and ritual innovation. Rituals are created that focus on the subjective experience of participants so that they may experience the transformation involved in healing.

A similar ritual was also described by a humanist officiant, along with the coffin rituals commonly taking place in the midst of the children's funerals taken by one of the chaplains. Other family members described placing objects in the coffin that held significance for them in their relationship with the deceased. Additionally, at funerals with a small congregation, one rector encouraged family members to place their hands on the coffin during the committal. The therapeutic value of all attending the funeral being given the opportunity to be involved in a ritual involving the coffin extends the impact of the coffin in the midst of the bereaved community.

sometimes I get people to gather round it if it's a small gathering. They put their hand on the coffin when we do the commendation prayer.. But we were standing round the pall which was much less effective, although they said they still appreciated it.

Colin, rector.

The development of coffin rituals within the ceremony has been linked to the use of crematoria by some commentators. Davies (2008: 146) argues, some bereaved have expressed negative associations of crematoria giving a 'conveyor belt' feel to a ceremony; an impression which may have been gained through the practise of the congregation being aware that another ceremony follows theirs and they will leave through a different door as the next congregation wait at the entrance to the building. Efforts to offset this have included increasing rituals associated with the coffin such as the congregation gathering around it for the committal (Davies 2008: 146).

The coffin's power as the container for the remains of the deceased facilitates its role at the centre of rituals, often focused on enabling mourners to say goodbye in a way which recognises their relationships with the deceased. Such rituals allow the uniqueness of the relationship between the mourner and the deceased to be acknowledged and marked visibly such as by an object that is placed into the coffin or by writing on the coffin. Interviews suggests that when given permission, mourners do not hold back from engaging directly with the coffin. This practise may be interpreted in a variety of ways. It can be argued that it is congruent with the continuing bonds theory (Klass et al 1996). The deceased depart in a coffin containing signs of their relationships with the living. Their journey continues and they journey with tokens of their relationships present in or on the coffin. It could also be interpreted from an attachment and loss perspective that mourners mark the end of their contact with the deceased through this process (Bowlby 1980).

Democratisation in who is involved in coffin rituals may not always be welcomed by funeral directors whose role includes having custody of the body of the deceased, performing rituals such as carrying the coffin in with great dignity and the placing of the pall over the coffin (Howarth, 1996, p107). There has been a lack of academic analysis of the role of symbolism in the work of funeral directors; however the professional role that has developed for funeral

directors relies heavily on performing rituals with skill. There may a reticence for some of these rituals to be diminished amongst funeral directors for this reduces their involvement in the ceremony. The more elaborate the ritual performance, the more they are needed and the sense of the professionalism of their role is enhanced. There may also be an impact on cost, in that a simpler ritual is likely to be one that funeral directors are paid less to provide (Walter 1990: 84). There may be tension therefore, in the area of democratisation of involvement in rituals if it reduces the role of funeral directors.

Touching the coffin

One officiant who had conducted many funerals for children including babies spoke of the particular place the coffin has in the funeral of a child. In their experience, touching the coffin particularly by the immediate family was commonplace within the funeral. There was no hesitancy or needing to be given permission by the officiant to do this. This relates to the particularly difficult form of bereavement the loss of a child constitutes. The loss is so painful that there may be lots of touching spontaneously happening. For young siblings, there are less likely to be reservations about touching the coffin unless this is conveyed by an adult.

> if it's a child I've had a family carry a child's coffin in. And brothers and sisters are involved. Part of the funeral that I offer will be to come up and to touch the coffin and to lay flowers or to write a letter or read a letter or place something in the coffin and people do it instinctively actually. People, with children and babies, they're there, its' their child, letting go is unbearable so there's lots of touching.
> Lydia, chaplain.

Half of the officiants interviewed reported that they do not touch the coffin but may encourage family to do. This related to a sense that it is the family's right to touch the container holding the remains of their deceased but it was not their place to do this.

> I'm not opposed to touching the coffin. I just don't want to mess about with the coffin just from a practical point of view, because I think when

it's been placed and the curtains arranged, I don't want to upset that. And it's a revered thing as well so it's really for the immediate family to touch the coffin rather than me.

Sarah, civil officiant.

If the deceased died in a nursing home, hospice or hospital then staff attending to them will have touched them before and after death. In most cases the funeral director will have prepared the body for the ceremony, washing and dressing the deceased, so that they were presented in the coffin for viewing by mourners, usually a small number of close relatives. Traditionally, those clergy taking the funeral, may have attended to the deceased as they were dying; however today most officiants will not have been with the deceased as they died. It may be argued that the role now occupied by the officiant is often one where there is more distant relationship with the deceased and therefore the intimacy of touching the coffin seems inappropriate to officiants. Most mourners at a funeral will not have viewed the deceased after death and so the coffin stands in for the deceased, both concealing and revealing them (Davies 2008: 25).

Historically, the practise of touching the dead was associated with ritual impurity, brought stigma and the dead body was perceived as a source of pollution (Howarth 1996). We may query whether a perception of maintaining ritual purity contributes to some officiant's decision not to touch the coffin containing the remains of the deceased. Davies (2008: 25) suggests that numbers of family members choosing to view the deceased before the coffin is closed by the funeral director is diminishing. Within the British population there will be a variety of ways of viewing the coffin, the concept of the ritual impurity of the corpse may be increasing for some whilst others are choosing a form of green or natural burial viewing the corpse as part of the earth to which it is returning.

Three officiants, one rector and two chaplains referred to their practise of touching the coffin and this was intended to express care for the deceased and a way of personalising the committal. For some rectors their practise was to touch the coffin if it arrived in church before funeral the ceremony but not during the ceremony. Other officiants were clearly very conscious of the coffin's presence and sought to express respect for the deceased by turning to the coffin at points in the ceremony and bowing to the coffin at others.

Davies (2008: 24) explores the direction given to clergy in the British Group on Funerals' Guidelines for Best Practise of Clergy at Funerals that the 'coffin is presented to the cross'. The symbol of the cross, which holds deep theological significance associated with suffering, death, forgiveness, sin and love and the coffin, which he describes as a 'partial symbol' are brought together. Davies (2008: 25) suggests that 'the more decorated or individualised the coffin, the less likely that people will want it 'presented to the cross', or the less appropriate will be that symbolic partnership'. The current emphasis on personalisation within funerals and the large proportion of funerals which take place within crematoriums which may have no cross iconography both point to the coffin standing alone without the cross in the context of many contemporary funerals. When presented to the cross, the theological context is visible and for those with some theological understanding, the cross provides a larger Christian context for an individual's death. When a coffin is present without this context, the coffin's power in the minds of those at the funeral may be enlarged, for it is not contained by the larger symbol. The significance of the coffin for the family is likely to be highly individualised.

Celebrating the life

For several officiants, celebrating the life of the deceased was an important aspect of the purpose of the funeral. Five officiants, including rectors, chaplains and humanist officiants spoke of the funeral celebrating the particular life lived by the deceased. For some humanist officiants the entire purpose of the funeral was encapsulated in the celebration of the life.

> The purpose of the funeral? To celebrate the person's life.
> Duncan, Humanist officiant.

The humanist officiants interviewed understood celebrating the life to be telling the story of a life in a way that the person was recognisable to those in the congregation who had known them. This may include narrative, but also musical contributions. At the heart of this is remembering. A celebration of life relates memories or aspects of the individual's life which reveal their unique identity.

A good funeral for me is when people react so I'm telling a story as it's been told to me….. I know that they are remembering that person as they were and that these are good memories for them…It's the celebrating of the person.

Sheila officiant.

the other one was a musician, quite an accomplished folk musician and there were people there with harps and all sorts of things. It was like a concert almost but it was very much a celebration of the life.

Duncan, Humanist officiant.

Three family members also referred to the funeral as a celebration of the life of the deceased. This included both nonreligious and religious funerals.

The priest in the service, he didn't do a lot but he did set the tone. He would say 'We're here for a celebration and this is what he wanted.

Beatrice, wife of the deceased who had a Christian funeral.

Whilst celebrating the life of the deceased may be understood to be the central part of a humanist funeral, it is significant that religious funerals were also seen to include a focus on celebrating the life. This varied in tone from those which were described as 'uplifting', to those that focused on 'celebrating the gifts of the person' in the context of thanksgiving. This concords with the view of Cook and Walter (2005), that contemporary religious and secular funerals have a greater degree of similarity in contrast to religious funerals of several decades ago which used traditional liturgies such as the Book of Common Prayer. It may be argued, that the concept of celebrating the life of the deceased is one which has developed most strongly within contemporary secular funerals, which have then influenced funerals using Christian liturgy.

One chaplain, spoke of discomfort with funerals that emphasise celebration to a large degree and are positive in tone, concerned that they may not leave room for the natural feelings associated with grief.

> Being sad or angry or numb is normal when someone you love dies. The
> idea that we move straight to a celebration or memorial where we are all
> up and happy I just think is psychologically really unhealthy.
> Lydia, chaplain.

This issue was explored by a family member who when interviewed spoke of funerals as occasions for combining laughter and tears, suggesting death and life are very much both part of the focus in a good funeral. Again, with celebrating the life, the emphasis was on the uniqueness of the life lived.

> And someone else was saying the same. 'Funerals are too much a
> celebration of life'. But I think a good funeral, you cry and you laugh. You
> do. Grieve the person's passed away. Have a celebration of life. I mean we
> are all going to die. The thing you might have done differently is actually
> live.
> Norma, wife of the deceased.

Family participation

Officiants suggested that a change in the last two decades had been the increasing amount of family participation in funerals. Along with families participating in the planning of the funeral, eight of the interviews with families involved discussing a funeral ceremony in which family members had participated to varying degrees. Some families had sought an officiant to act as a master of ceremonies whilst many relatives and friends participated. Other families asked the officiant to do the majority of the speaking with one or two family members doing a reading such as a poem. It may be that some officiants or family members are wary of the bereaved participating in the ceremony due to their emotional fragility but for some bereaved, active participation is a real possibility and is helpful for them, resulting in a sense that they gave to their loved one in a personal way through the ceremony. As Worden emphasises there are tasks to bereavement and it is often being active in those tasks that helps an individual to progress through grief (Worden 1991: 16).

Officiants highlighted for families with a high level of education were more likely to speak at the funeral and to make changes to the script the officiant sent them beforehand to check. In contrast, it was unusual for a family from a deprived area

to choose to give a eulogy or to change the script prepared by the officiant. Davies (2002: 46) argued that social class may be reflected through the behaviour of grieving families at funerals such in televised accounts in which women of a lower social class are supported physically by others as though the may collapse whereas women of higher social classes walk unaided. This study adds another aspect to the exploration of the impact of social class on funerals in relation to the participation of family both in preparatory script checking and speaking on the day.

> I covered .... (deprived areas) and met some brilliant families.......They live in hideous high-rise blocks and they are so close and they are so loyal and so devoted to each other. But those families very rarely change a script. Whereas families here who might be educated to a higher level they will sometimes become quite involved in needing to have every word absolutely right.
>
> Sheila, Humanist Officiant.

Family members interviewed in this study who had given a eulogy at the funeral, spoke of a sense of the act holding great meaning, despite concerns beforehand over their ability to manage this emotionally. The meaning of their speaking was intimately connected to their relationship with the deceased. These findings corroborate the suggestion of Parkes (1986: 175) that 'the funeral is usually regarded as a last gift to the dead'.

> I thought I'm not going to be able to do this but I thought I have to do this, this is the last thing I can do for my son.
>
> Kate, Mother of the deceased.

> It's such a determination that I wanted my say and that I wanted to do right by him.
>
> Dawn, Wife of deceased.

There was an acknowledgement that when the eulogy is given by a relative, if done well, it can be a particularly powerful experience for those listening as well as for the speaker. This corroborates the findings of Bailey and Walter (2015). Bailey and Walter (2015: 156) emphasise how mourners rated the eulogy given by a family member highly as it was perceived to be highly authentic in comparison

to a eulogy given by an officiant who did not know the deceased. In addition, eulogies given by mourners were rated highly in terms of performance because it was assumed that there was a need for a level of managing the emotions that accompany grief. Performing in this way was a way of overcoming death and powerful for mourners to experience (Bailey and Walter: 159).

> And she got up and said 'I'm not using the mike' and she walked around and she just talked and even the priest was impressed. And she sat down and she absolutely howled. And my son got up and he said 'how do you follow that? Beatrice, wife of the deceased.

> my sister wanted to say some words and that was a particularly emotionally powerful part for me.
> Robert, Son of the deceased.

Officiants also viewed the participation of families as meaningful.

> I really, think it's a good thing, I think it makes it special and I, it's something that I always ask them, 'Do you want to do anything? Do you want to read? Do you want to do a song?
> Sarah, civil officiant.

An officiant (priest and rector) who had conducted funerals for twenty-five years referred to the increase in family participation as one of the big changes that had occurred in funerals during those years. Six officiants viewed family participation positively and offered to speak in the relative's place if they were not able to do so on the day.

Children's involvement

In recent years, one of the marked changes has been the inclusion of children connected to the deceased in the funeral and they were people who may participate in the ceremony.

> Quite often people will identify the fact that it's really good to involve kids or young people, you know, that might be doing a drawing for Grandma and that going on the coffin or a young member of the family who plays the piano and they'll come and play a piece.
> Trevor, rector.

However, there were also examples of more traditional thinking where it was not deemed appropriate for children to be present at the funeral.

> I was disappointed that two of our grandchildren didn't come but their parents decided they weren't going to let them see him go down-hill so they never came to see him and they weren't allowed to come to the service. Now I think, that was their decision but I didn't agree with it. Beatrice, wife of the deceased.

Kubler-Ross (1970: 158) suggests that sensitivity, acceptance and a willingness to allow the bereaved child to express their feelings are important for children to be able to process their grief effectively. The impact on the children who were not allowed to see their grandfather when his health deteriorated or attend the funeral in the interview referred to above is not known; however, the lack of involvement contrasts strongly with the prevailing trend of adults and children participating in the planning and the funeral itself. The increased inclusion of children in funeral rituals has parallels with the actions of Jesus, who in response to the disciples attempts to keep children away from him, challenged adults to allow the children to come to him, prioritising their needs being met (Matthew 19: 13-15).

The developing biography

A personalised funeral usually meant the eulogy included the life history of the deceased but not always. Some ceremonies included the biography and personalised stories from the life of the deceased.

> I'll do the biography, he was born here, he went to school here and about his career and about his wife and the children and then…you as a son come and put the colour and say what a good Dad he was and how you'll always remember him doing this or telling you that. Duncan, Humanist officiant.

Some of the funerals discussed used objects, stories about the life of the deceased, and personal tributes to build an identity for the deceased, a process described as 'completing the biographical narrative of the deceased' by Schafer (2007: 13) in a study of funerals in New Zealand.

Most participants spoke of the significance of sharing the ceremony and funeral tea with those who attended. Through this they learned of parts of the life of the deceased that they were not familiar with. For some participants the funeral reconnected them with friends or family members whom they had not seen for some years. This involved conversation at the funeral tea, including sharing memories of the deceased and in some cases keeping in touch after the funeral in a renewed way. For those who may have experienced isolation whilst their loved one was unwell and the sense of separateness from society that being bereaved brings, this contact with those who had known the deceased was important.

> one of his colleagues, who was probably the first who knew we were seeing each other .. I lost touch with her… she'd kept in touch with a mutual friend and so came along. She wrote me a lovely letter afterwards…so we've met up a few times.
> Dawn, wife of deceased.

> I spent quite a lot of time afterwards chatting with one of her God daughters who'd travelled… a four or five hour journey to be there. Somebody I was aware of but don't think I'd met. I certainly don't think I'd met for thirty years.
> Robert, son of deceased.

Walter's (1996: 7) work on grief and biography emphasises the importance of the bereaved speaking with those who knew the deceased as an important part of dealing with their grief. The function of speaking is to form a biography of the deceased though which the memory of the dead may have an integrated place in the lives of the bereaved as they go forward. It was evident in this research that the conversations at the funeral tea were important to the bereaved families as a way of memories being shared. Some families sought to capture memories on paper, asking those present to contribute.

> They were writing memories of when they'd done things with my son, gone to his games evenings … Hearing how everybody thought of him….that really meant a lot.
> Kate, mother of the deceased.

The therapeutic value of the funeral tea can be seen through such comments.

When reflecting on the role of the funeral tea in my research journal I considered memories of people saying there could be an awkwardness to some conversations at a funeral tea when a funeral is one of the few occasions when relatives who have little in common meet. This has been my personal experience. It lead me to consider that experiences at the funeral tea may be mixed for many people and that the awkwardness may lead some people to only attend the ceremony and not share in the tea.

Healing through beautiful settings

Officiants believed some settings were of particular therapeutic value to mourners. Those cemeteries which offered a beautiful setting were believed to offer hope through the physical environment. One memorial wood was cited by a family member and a rector as a particularly beautiful setting.

> When you say 'dust to dust, ashes to ashes, earth to earth' and you go back into the ground wrapped in willow….There was something right about it, about the rhythm of life and where we've come from and where we're going to. I think it was a very hopeful environment. Margaret, rector.

> because it was woodland was outside …. It was beautiful, it's absolutely, it's so lovely and …. who we dealt with there was really good. It was just all fabulous…. It was sad but it was a really positive thing, and yes, beautiful service.
> Ella, daughter of the deceased.

This was a context in which the bereaved lingered after the ceremony, appearing to gain benefit from being there. The memorial wood had a policy of allowing only one funeral per day and mourners were told they could spend as long as they liked there such as having a picnic in fine weather. This supported the community of mourners gathering in an unhurried way. As well as the aesthetic beauty, the context symbolised the rhythm of life to those present. There was a palpable level of congruence between the ritual and the setting, exemplified by the words of the committal, 'earth to earth' as the body was placed in the untended ground. The

context emphasised that this process of dying and returning to the earth occurs in all nature. To people of faith, the wood spoke of God being there before and after the earthly life of individuals. There was an association between beauty of the landscape and hope. Davies and Rumble (2012: 146) found that natural burial sites are perceived to be safe, nurturing and peaceful. They afford the bereaved time to think and the idea of the body returning to the earth as a form of gift was seen positively. They provide a context for the bereavement to be construed as life giving. These elements are present whatever form of religious or secular funeral has taken place, indeed a form of spiritualty may be present which encompasses natural burials making these kinds of divisions lose significance.

Whilst there has not been research into the psychological benefits for bereaved people of holding a funeral in a natural outdoor setting or of the therapeutic benefit of visiting natural environments associated with the deceased as part of dealing with grief, there have been studies on the significance of contact with nature for wellbeing. The concept of biophilia is that human health and wellbeing is linked to a relationship with nature (Howell et al, 2011). Research has provided empirical evidence that there is an association between nature connectedness and psychological and social wellbeing (Howell et al 2011). This applies not only to individuals being outdoors in nature but also to the visual impact of green spaces (Grinde and Gindal Patil 2009: 2342). For many years, in poetry, myth and music, gardens have been associated with concepts of wellness through providing rest, recovery and rejuvenation and this suggests their therapeutic value has been long recognised. It is therefore unsurprising in this research, that natural settings whether for the funeral itself, or even if only visible through the crematorium window did, in the view of participants have a therapeutic effect on the bereaved. This included a way of making meaning of the death through the processes of death and new life being visible through the seasons in the outdoor space which was believed to aid the bereaved in accepting the death of their loved one (Worden 1991:16). The natural setting can give hope in the sense of an assurance of life continuing for the bereaved, even if changed, through the reminder that one season will follow another.

No mention was made in the interviews of the clothes officiants wore to conduct ceremonies in natural burial grounds. A priest wearing vestments may appear an

incongruous sight in a memorial wood. Issues of presentation in relation to clothes which fit the context have yet to be explored within research on funerals. The complexity of having the funeral spread over several locations could intensify questions over the kind of clothes which were appropriate for officiants. The issues of coherence between the setting and the officiant are raised in many different venues. Clear coherence exists when a priest conducts a funeral ceremony in a church; however it may be argued that there is a lack of coherence between officiant and architecture when a humanist officiant conducts a funeral ceremony in a church. Humanist or civil officiants not face the same visible signs questioning coherence as a priest wearing vestments standing in a green burial site may. I was surprised to find there has been little consideration in research literature given to the area of dress in conducting funerals. I noted in my research journal a memory of the funeral director in a top hat and dress coat walking in front of my mother's coffin which created a sense of formality and had wondered how this dress would have appeared if she had chosen to be buried in woodland following the church service she planned.

Being buried in a memorial wood generally means there is no marked grave and for some bereaved a shared space does not seem sufficient and an individual marker or named plot is preferred (Hallam and Hockey 2001). This suggests that shifting the way remembrance is practised in a culture does not appeal to all. For some the practise of having an individual grave to take flowers to where the deceased individuals name is visible can be way of dealing with the experiences of grief which acknowledges the uniqueness of the deceased and their relationship with the bereaved.

Conclusion

The increased personalisation of funerals has led to increasingly tailored rituals, including ritual innovation. This study suggests that funerals have become more and more personalised and funeral officiants begin from the premise of each funeral being a unique event, even if the family choose to include some traditional elements (Walter 1997: 167; Cook and Walter 2005: 365; Bailey 2012: 178). Through the funeral ceremony, memories are created which the bereaved carry with them into the next stage of their life without the physical presence of the

deceased and there is therapeutic benefit for the family if they feel that their choices and any involvement in the ceremony contributed to a fitting ceremony for their loved one. A funeral which reflects the unique life of the deceased may be understood to fit with the incarnational nature of the Christian faith.

Funeral venues which reflect the wishes or life of the deceased are chosen. This often means their local church for people within a community of faith but others choose to hold funerals in places connected with the profession or life experiences of the deceased. Congruence between the venue, the deceased and the family of the bereaved appears to bring a sense of rightness of fit that became important in the narrative of the bereaved after the funeral. Some settings, particularly memorial woods were regarded as beautiful and this factor was felt to be important in promoting consolation for the bereaved.

Although the main focus of the funeral may be the deceased and the bereaved family, it was noted that rituals that are effective for the entire congregation are ones that involve them all actively. This involves a democratisation in who is invited to participate in rituals. It is related to a shift in who is seen to hold authority in the context of a funeral, from traditionally being held by a religious leader perceived as holding God given authority, to power being shared by the officiant and the congregation whilst particularly resting with the bereaved family (Cook and Walter 2005: 383). The increased involvement of children within funeral rituals is notable. This trend reflects a change in understanding in relation to the psychological needs of children, an appreciation that they grieve in their own way and room needs to be made for their own grief process (Normand et al 1996: 109).

An important aspect of co-constructing the ceremony can be negotiating faith content which is an issue that may arise for all officiants. Skill is needed in finding content which fits for the deceased, the family, the congregation and the officiant (Kelly 2008: 119). This was described by several officiants as ensuring the funeral had 'integrity' and underlined that for succour to be provided for those present at the ceremony, space needed to be given to their values and beliefs. Funerals are generative in many ways including the bereaved learning more about the deceased. This was one aspect of the funeral that was believed to help the bereaved with their grief.

For most officiants, the coffin played a central role in the funeral ceremony, making real the death to the bereaved. There was concern over a growing trend towards memorial ceremonies to celebrate the life of the deceased without their remains being present. Questions were raised as to the capacity of a memorial event to facilitate accepting the reality of the death, which was seen by some officiants as crucial in the resolution of bereavement. The presence of the coffin may facilitate the transition aspect of the ritual for the bereaved moving from a world in which the deceased lived to one in which they are no longer alive (Romanoff 1998: 705; Van Gennep 1960). This chapter has examined aspects of tailored rituals. The management of these and other elements within the ceremony involves ceremonial expertise. This is the third finding and will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter vii) Ceremonial Expertise

With the development of bespoke funerals involving tailored rituals it may not be surprising that the third finding within this study is ceremonial expertise and this will be examined in this chapter. Many aspects of the role of officiant are demonstrations of ceremonial expertise. This encompasses how officiants prepare for the ceremony, the management of their relationships with the family and funeral directors and how the ceremony is conducted including crucial elements such as the eulogy. There are many reasons why ceremonial expertise is important. It is necessary if officiants are to prepare and lead funerals that meet the expectations of bereaved families. The current emphasis in contemporary funerals for personalisation means officiants need a level of expertise to be able to work with families to create a unique ceremony with tailored rituals in which the deceased is accurately represented. That is not to say that traditional funerals with little personalisation do not require ceremonial expertise as clearly they do; however there are particular skills which are needed to demonstrate ceremonial expertise in a contemporary bespoke funeral. Moreover, the bereaved are vulnerable due to their grief and being in a period of transition and a lack of expertise amongst officiants which leads to mistakes or a funeral that disappoints them for some avoidable reason such as a lack of care taken by the officiant preparing for the ceremony may cause them further distress. When the dying choose to plan their funeral ceremony with an officiant, a lack of expertise may lead to a lack of confidence in the ability of the officiant causing the dying concern at a crucial time when their health is deteriorating. For officiants, who are usually approached by funeral directors to take funerals, a lack of expertise may lead in a lack of work being offered to them. There are recognised training courses for humanist acrend civil officiants which aim to allow participants to develop the necessary skills to prepare and lead a funeral well (www.humanism.org.uk; www.uksoc.com). When training, those who become clergy within the Scottish Episcopal Church are required to learn about how to work with the bereaved and take funerals. The need for officiants and funeral directors to work collaboratively is emphasised and some officiants develop ongoing supportive professional relationships with particular funeral directors that benefit deceased families. An example of a situation in which ceremonial expertise may not be regarded as important is when family members take a leading role in organising and

participating in the ceremony and the officiant has a very limited role such as of master of ceremonies. However, if problems arose with the execution of the ceremony the officiant would generally be expected to use expertise to deal with these as they hold responsibility for ensuring the ceremony goes smoothly.

Officiants developing relationships with Funeral Directors

Five officiants described having good relationships with funeral directors. These were professional mutually respectful relationships. It was understood to be crucial to have good working relationships in order for officiants to be suggested by funeral directors and also for the smooth running of funerals. As Howarth (1996) emphasises, the funeral director has close oversight of all aspects of the funeral, other than the ceremony itself, when they hand authority to the officiant. Having good relationships between funeral directors and officiants was understood to benefit the family. Trust developed over time as officiants and funeral directors gained more and more experience of each other. Funeral directors largely expected officiants to get on with their job in a professional way and as long as they did this on the day, they did not discuss the details of the funeral with officiants. However, there were examples of closer working together of officiants and funeral director, such as when working with families they found difficult.

> One of the things, especially with …(funeral directors) who I have a great relationship with, very often ..(funeral director).. and I will tell each other what's coming. Whoever meets the family first so I can say 'the family is like this and if you could help me do that or vice versa Margaret, rector.

Professionalism

Professionalism is defined as the competence or skill expected of a professional (O.E.D 2021). It usually involves a combination of skills combined to produce work of a high standard. Officiants introduced the word 'professional' into the interviews. It was not a term used in the questions they were asked. Four officiants explicitly referred to their way of working as professional although other officiants referred to it implicitly such as referring to the need for 'liturgical competence' when conducting Christian funerals. A level of professionalism was deemed necessary on the part of officiants included getting into role and performing to a high standard, particularly for the ceremony.

professionalism I think is actually very important. You cannot be sloppy or inattentive, because you may have done scores of funerals, hundreds of funerals, but it's the only one for this family on this occasion, with this person.

Trevor, rector.

This included setting an appropriate tone and being able to manage their own emotional responses to the situation. Unlike many gatherings within a community, a funeral involves a large amount of emotion along with an expectation that the ceremony goes smoothly. Managing this, required skills which were of a professional nature. Officiants had developed techniques that enabled them to manage situations that held a high degree of emotion.

I knew the lady and it was more emotional for me, doing that service, so I read that service over and over and over again. I had my cry and I got to the point where I could read it as if it was somebody I didn't know.

Sarah, civil officiant.

Some situations were particularly demanding of officiants seeking to get into role and strategies were learned by officiants to cope with these. One officiant spoke of struggling to get into role with ex-army families including sons who barked orders at her when planning their father's funeral, over-riding the wishes of their widowed mother. The officiant's strategy was to take authority herself.

'let's be clear, I'm the senior officer here and I'm in charge of this funeral'……. I've said that twice and as soon as I say it people go into line because they're in that mindset' Margaret, Rector.

Getting into role in essence involved being with the mourners in a particular way. It included having tasks to complete when meeting with the family beforehand and on the day of the ceremony such as gathering information on the deceased and delivering the eulogy but it was stepping into a role associated with the ritual performance. Both officiant and funeral director hold particular roles within death rituals and with families where there were difficult dynamics, strategies had to be found to overcome these in order that the ritual performance could be enacted (Turner 1986).

Another aspect of professionalism involved manging the time during the ceremony. Inevitably, having a number of people associated with the deceased participating made this more complicated. Several officiants related how it became difficult when individuals spoke for too long. This was a particular issue in crematoria where a set period of time had been booked for the ceremony which would shortly be followed by another ceremony with another group of mourners.

> There was a colleague trade unionist who was to speak.. I said 'keep it to two or three minutes' and he didn't.
> Duncan, Humanist officiant.

Officiants spoke of their skills developing with experience and some officiants had taken hundreds of funerals which had equipped them to perform at a high level in complex situations. One humanist officiant for instance had conducted over seven hundred funerals at the point of interview and several spoke of how busy they were taking funerals although retired from their previous occupation. For the individual who had conducted many hundred funerals it was apparent that their role as an officiant had taken on great significance for them and was aligned with a deep commitment to promoting access to humanist ceremonies and an alternative to religious marriage and funeral ceremonies. There was evidence of their strongly held beliefs being lived out vocationally in a manner which resembled the commitment of a leader within a religious faith. Both the level of skill required, the amount of work they did and their personal investment in the work suggested that the role they held was significant in terms of their life and identity. Research suggests that work activities and membership of professional communities or associations are often used by individuals in creating a sense of identity and self-value (Dutton, Roberts, & Bednar, 2010: 265). There was a strongly vocational element to the significance the role held for officiants and this brought considerable personal satisfaction. Much has been written on the vocation of priesthood but very little on vocation in relation to humanist or civil officiants who take funerals and other ceremonies. It is an area worthy of greater research.

For the deceased and the bereaved

Five officiants took the view that the funeral is for the deceased and the bereaved. It might have been expected that humanist officiants who do not believe in the concept of heaven would understand the funeral to be purely for those left behind. This was not the case. Along with rectors and chaplains, civil and humanist officiants also perceived the funeral to be for the deceased as well as the bereaved. The attention given by the dying to their funeral plans supported the view of the funeral being about the deceased by some officiants.

> I think it's for the deceased and for those left behind. People talk about their funerals don't they?
> Sarah, civil officiant.

There was a perception that it was honouring of the deceased to conduct their funeral with dignity and as well as possible. At times this was the fulfilment of commitments that had been made to the deceased before death when they discussed their funeral with the chosen officiant. The deceased may be understood to live on in terms of their social presence and influence in the lives of the bereaved through the continuing bind the bereaved have with the deceased (Valentine 2008: 162; Klass et al 2018: 351). A funeral which accurately represents the deceased and adds to their social presence in the life of the bereaved may be understood to be in some sense for the deceased and the bereaved. For those offering Christian funerals, the focus was mainly on the deceased and the immediate family, whilst believing that the ritual was significant for all. The context was one of a belief in eternity and of life continuing after death as explored more fully in the chapter on Christian hope.

Coping with anger

Five officiants spoke of the need to manage situations where anger was present and at times was directed at them.

> That was a very tricky one because she wanted hymns and she was very stuck on the fact that she wanted hymns so actually she started shouting at me …………… She was really very angry.
> Sheila, Humanist officiant on speaking with a bereaved mother.

Kubler-Ross (1970) theorised that anger was one stage of bereavement. That there are discreet, sequential stages to bereavement has been widely criticised as

this has not been evidenced by empirical research (Cleiren 1992: 23). However, the premise that anger is an emotion commonly experienced by many bereaved people is accepted by many (Worden 1991: 22, Stroebe and Stroebe 1987: 8, Parkes 1986: 97). It would benefit officiants to have an understanding of the emotions that can be evoked by grief or by dying so that officiants are able to manage anger being directed at them well without defensiveness. When anger is directed at officiants there is a need for skill in appreciating that the anger may be part of the grief process but in order for the meeting to be constructive it is necessary for the bereaved or dying person to be able to engage effectively with the officiant and make decisions about the funeral. If officiants are able to be present to bereaved or dying people who are angry when planning the funeral this creates a climate in which those feeling anger may experience their feelings being accurately heard which in turn enables them to move on from them. Acknowledging the anger and allowing the person so speak about their feelings may enable the bereaved or dying person to change their focus. In some cases it may be necessary to arrange a further meeting for another time.

One officiant spoke of a meeting with a bereaved mother whose child had died suddenly, during which they expected anger to be present but that was not the case. It may be argued that the theorising of Kubler- Ross (1970) has created an expectation of anger being present within some bereavements; however officiants do not always encounter anger.

> you can kind of make assumptions and think in those situations people would be angry with God. But she was quite interesting because she said 'No, I'm not, I realise how much I need God and I keep talking to God. Colin, rector.

The response of a person to a particular bereavement is highly individual. This underlines the importance of officiants not making assumptions about the emotions of the bereaved; rather it is important to listen well and display empathy which is finely tuned to the experience of each bereaved person. Theories of grief suggest general characteristics of bereavement across the population, but they are limited in that they cannot predict how a particular person will be impacted by bereavement nor how they will respond to their experiences.

In some instances, the bereaved may feel anger towards the deceased. This may be for many reasons including having experienced abusive treatment at the hands of the deceased.

> It turns out, this man (the deceased) was another bully…He'd been really mean… Turned out, they found out he was a multi-millionaire. He'd been a multi-millionaire since he was twenty-one. And he was a miser and they (the bereaved family) were angry… absolutely furious!
> Margaret, rector.

The strong emotions led to an extended discussion of the life the widow had experienced and made planning an appropriate funeral complex and difficult. Coping with anger in such a context involves officiants in complex, difficult negotiations with the bereaved about how to represent the deceased at the funeral.

One family member spoke of the difficult relationship she had with her father as a consequence of the abusive way he treated her and her mother. The meeting with the funeral director and her father to plan her mother's funeral reflected these difficulties.

> I was a long and painful meeting and we had to take several breaks. I went outside and kicked a tree. But the three of us were there. I think my husband was there as peace maker. Karen, daughter of the deceased.

For officiants conducting a meeting where a lot of anger remains towards the deceased, having other family members present and taking breaks during the process of the meeting may be helpful in order for the meeting to achieve its aims. A level of maturity is needed from officiants and an ability to not take anger personally if it is directed at them in the midst of planning the funeral. When learning about such occasions through research interviews I was struck by the similarities with psychotherapy sessions when anger may be expressed by clients and at times directed at myself as their therapist. One difference is that the meeting to plan a funeral needs to achieve that task whereas in a therapy session the entire time may be spent exploring feelings and difficult relationships.

Nevertheless, I began to appreciate that experience of managing difficult interpersonal dynamics may be useful when leading funerals.

Managing difficult family dynamics

As illustrated above, the officiant's role can include managing difficult family dynamics and several officiants referred to this as some of the most complex aspects of their role. These challenges spread across all officiants whether rectors, chaplains, civil or humanist officiants. The combination of existing relationship difficulties and a death in the family led to complex dynamics. One officiant described how a death brings to light difficult relationships within families whilst another used the image of a minefield to describe the journey though funeral planning discussions with some families.

> I think it's really difficult. I think that death for the family, for the bereaved, death is like taking a photograph or x-ray of all their family relationships and it's all there to see. All the disarray. All the people not talking to each other, power dynamics, it's all there.
> Margaret, rector.

> Making your way through family dynamics can be difficult…You know, somebody did this in 1964 and they haven't spoken for thirty years and you've got to really work your way through that minefield of, of family things without somehow stepping on any mines.
> Sarah, civil officiant.

One particular aspect of difficult dynamics was the existence of a secret within the family that may be revealed publicly, sometimes at the funeral itself by the appearance of an estranged son or daughter appearing at the ceremony for instance. At times the family secret may be shared with the officiant at the planning meeting; however at other occasions officiants described a family member phoning them privately with information that influenced how they led the ceremony but was not publicly referred to.

> I've only had one difficult family meeting where is it was quite obvious that some of the family didn't want something mentioned…. about the mother's past. She'd obviously had a child out of wedlock which in

Catholic (name of country) in the nineteen fifties was a big thing. Stewart, Humanist officiant.

Then I got this phone-call from the daughter of the chap who had died to say 'please don't say that my father was a wonderful husband'. You know, the usual kind of thing that you might say 'loving husband of' because basically he'd been a terrible husband, long term infidelity by this man who appeared to be a pillar of the community.
Trevor, rector.

Rituals both reveal and conceal and this is demonstrated in these examples (Grimes 2007: 152). A funeral is not the only ritual occasion when both revealing and concealing may happen in the context of family and community. A best man's speech at a wedding may be another example where information is deliberately revealed and concealed to fit the purpose of the occasion, often using humour. In both cases, many of those present may be aware of the information which has been concealed; however within the context of the social rites all present conspire to conceal certain facts. Those who are not able to keep the social rules of the situation may speak the hidden information such as children or people with limited mental faculties such as people with dementia. It may be considered if the risks of those who may reveal information others conspire to keep hidden may be a reason why some are denied access to the funeral and so disenfranchised (Doka 2002). For the officiant, ceremonial expertise involves managing complex meetings with family members well so that what the funeral will include is clearly agreed and remaining focused on the task despite revelations on the day of the ceremony itself.

Addressing the whole congregation

Six officiants were aware of speaking to the entire congregation whilst taking a funeral. Research by Bailey and Walter (2015) highlights the importance of the congregation at the ceremony. To Bailey and Walter (2015: 2), the whole congregation 'conquer death', through 'congregating' and 'speaking'. Being aware of the different faith stances which were likely to be represented involved clergy choosing words carefully when inviting the congregation to join in prayers and

humanist officiants leaving a time of silence in which those who wished to could pray.

> I try to be deferential to the congregation So I'd always say, 'I invite you to say this next psalm with me if you're comfortable to do that'. So, I'm wanting to acknowledge that there are people present who might have no faith or another faith or be somewhere different' Margaret, rector.

> I will use a different introduction if I know that there are people of faith there and if I know that people have been fighting about their faith…I will very definitely make it very clear that humanists respect everybody's' beliefs. I will definitely build in a time for silent prayer. Sheila, Humanist officiant.

To Cook and Walter (2015: 383), changes in who holds authority within the funeral ceremony and an acknowledgement of the variety of faith stances represented in many contemporary funerals leads to God being bracketed, indicating that for some, God is very significant, for others not present at all, whilst for others 'God flashes on and off'. An appreciation of the variety of faith stances likely to be represented was often discussed during the planning for the funeral and this led to officiants having confidence within the ceremony that the diversity within the congregation had been prepared for.

Addressing the whole congregation also acknowledged that often the congregation involved people who had known the deceased in many differing capacities. Through acknowledging the wide range of people present, the picture of the deceased that is created during the ceremony is enlarged and given colour and texture. Some officiants sought to make eye contact with various people to acknowledge the context they had known the deceased in which may be considered a professional skill.

> I will be very careful to include absolutely everybody… if it's somebody who's been married, I tell the story of how they met their partner, if they're still with their partner and then I will look at that person as I'm telling that part of the story… Sometimes if they are police of fire people, they are in uniform so it's easier to identify people.

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Sheila, Humanist officiant.

The complexities of acknowledging a succession of relationships that the deceased had is clear and may not always happen if those providing the officiant with information on the deceased withheld some aspects of their past. However, when a full and accurate representation of the deceased's life was achieved, the funeral could be said to have addressed the whole congregation, all of whom were grieving.

> (his previous partner)...was a big part of his life...not that it was easy for me but she (the humanist officiant) managed to, she did all of it justice.
> Norma, wife of the deceased speaking about the inclusion of material on her husband's previous partner in the eulogy.

Giving the eulogy

All officiants spoke of the need for them to be able to write and deliver eulogies that families were happy with. The significance of the eulogy should not be underestimated. Bailey and Walter (2015: 149) refer to the eulogy as 'fast becoming the core of the modern life centred funeral'. They highlight accuracy, authenticity and performance as aspects of the eulogy that were used by those attending to evaluate it (Bailey and Walter 2015: 155). Officiants interviewed for this study were aware of the importance of the task of composing and delivering the eulogy. Most officiants spoke of spending considerable periods of time crafting a eulogy that brought together the stories and information provided by the family whilst one rector lamented a lack of time to spend on eulogies.

> I've written it all down and I don't tend to deviate because, I suppose because I've really crafted it actually and I don't want to deviate. And I don't want to waffle, that wouldn't be helpful.
> Elaine, chaplain.

For some officiants, researching and composing the eulogy was part of the role they found a lot of satisfaction in. The value of it was clear to several officiants. The significance of the narrative of the client's life emphasises the power of narrative as a frame in which human being understand themselves and the lives of

others. 'Storying one's experience and constructing narratives can help create order and contain emotions, allowing a search for meaning' (Pearce 2011: 35). For those experiencing grief and in the very early stages of adjusting to living without the deceased, narrative responds to their need to find meaning in their current experiences and cope emotionally with the funeral. Narrative also has the ability to make present what is absent (Buck and Pipyrou 2014) which explains why narrative may be so powerful in the context of a funeral. For some family members, the ability of the officiant to narrate the life of the deceased in such a way that the deceased seemed to be present.

Eulogies enabled memories to be brought to the surface and shared publicly. This was an important part of the ritual.

> I often do a tribute for them if they want me to. I think I'm partly mirroring back to them what they've said to me, especially if I don't know the person. But I think there's a value in that because I've encouraged them to think about what they want to say, what they want to appreciate. Colin, rector.

Mirroring is well established within psychoanalytic therapy and other forms of counselling. The counsellor mirrors verbally and often with posture what the client is saying. This serves to reinforce a positive sense of self. It is affirming. It increases self-acceptance within the client. Moreover, as VanHeiden (2010) highlights, mirroring is not necessarily a purely linear process but more complex than that. The sense of efficacy of the counsellor is increased through the client responding to mirroring and both are impacted by the environment and other aspects of their lives. Within a funeral context, the process of mirroring is part of the relationship between the officiant and the family. As described elsewhere, this relationship may grow as the officiant is invited to conduct more events for the family, provides follow up pastoral care and at times comes to be viewed as someone who has an ongoing relationship with the family such as being seen as their minister or friend.

As explored in the chapter on tailored rituals, at some ceremonies a friend or family member may prepare and deliver the eulogy. All officiants referred to their offering to deliver the eulogy if the mourner was unable to on the day and of the

complexity of delivering a talk prepared by someone else with very little notice. Considerable skill was needed to do this well.

Family members spoke of the eulogy being a way in which those present learned more about the deceased. This was evidence of a creative element, an extending of the bereaved community's knowledge of the deceased. Along with a spoken tribute, audio-visual elements such as video footage of children who had died were at times included or photographs of the deceased visible for those attending the ceremony.

> We had a slide show playing all the time. And everybody said that was lovely. Because his family saw him when he was young, but they maybe hadn't seen so much of him when he moved to ...(city) so they saw up to date photos of him...and his friends said they loved it because they saw him when he was growing up.
>
> Kate, Mother of the deceased.

The creative element is significant. It suggests the funeral may be an event that enables growth and new life. The expectation may be that the funeral is overwhelmingly about death; however the creative element emphasises it may be imbued with a sense of new life. This sense of new life is at the heart of Christian theology, this is the source of hope, springing from the resurrection of Christ, the belief that death is not the final end and that life continues in heaven (John 14: 3). Within humanist funerals, the focus is generally on the life that has been lived without a belief in heaven; however it can be argued that that life may continue in its lasting impact in the lives of mourners. In differing ways, within secular and religious funerals, there can be a sense of new life in the midst of death.

Bailey and Walter (2015: 2) argue that funerals symbolically conquer death, not only through words, as argued by Davies (1997), but also through those who all had different relationships with the deceased 'congregating' and 'speaking', an aspect they call 'relationships against death'. This study corroborated these findings.

Conclusion

This research suggests that important in creating a good funeral are the officiant working in a manner which demonstrates a level of professionalism. An important element that has encouraged the development of professionalism amongst funeral officiants is the way in which funeral directors have developed their own professional identity. This has a bearing on standards expected by family members (McCarthy 2016: 307). Developing good relationships with funeral directors was seen as important for providing good funeral ceremonies. For ordained clergy, being a representative of an institution such as the church gives a recognised vocational identity for them to step into although some may not associate this with professionalism (Pietkiewicz 2016: 380).

Most officiants believed the funeral ceremony was for both the deceased and the bereaved. For humanist officiants without a belief in eternal life or any concept of heaven, the importance of the ceremony reflecting the wishes and life of the deceased remained important. Their memory was honoured through this and the emphasis on bespoke funerals in contemporary practise ensured the deceased remained a central figure in the funeral. For priests and chaplains taking a Christian funeral, the funeral was conducted within the context of belief in the resurrection of Jesus and the hope of eternal life with God. Sensitivity to all those present is important, including any within the family of the deceased who did not hold this faith. Such a respect for the perspectives of all and serious attempt to co-create a ceremony where all would feel comfortable reflects a level of professionalism and experience that would be unlikely to be achieved without training and reflection on the task.

Some funerals require particular expertise, such as very large funerals, ones using many forms of contributions including multi-media elements. These are the demands of a professional role and the level of skill required is considerable. The role of officiant may involve coping with anger expressed by the bereaved sensitively and managing difficult family dynamics at a time when all the bereaved are vulnerable and under considerable stress. It is important for officiants not to make assumptions about the bereaved and the relationships they had with the bereaved. Family secrets may be revealed at

the time of preparation of the funeral and add complexity to agreeing with the family what to include in the ceremony.

The crafting and delivering of the eulogy are typically the tasks of the officiant and involve considerable professional skill and ceremonial expertise. Some family members choose to prepare and deliver the eulogy themselves which may make the eulogy particularly powerful for the congregation. The officiant will usually deliver the eulogy themselves if the family member is unable to do so on the day. The officiant retains overall responsibility for the spoken parts of the eulogy going well and forming one coherent piece. The involvement of members of the congregation or family in the ceremony creates the added pressure of managing the time as participants may use more time than has been agreed. The ability to manage the time well is a professional skill in itself that all funeral officiants are required to develop for funerals to go well. Following this exploration of ceremonial expertise, the next chapter will go on to focus on death containment which the funeral can provide for the bereaved.

Chapter viii) Death containment

Introduction

The fourth finding in this study was death containment and we will now turn to explore this within this chapter. In interviews for this study it was perhaps surprising that the subject of death was rarely explicitly raised by interviewees. There was little mention of death in discussions about funeral ceremonies, their preparation and the individuals whose lives had ended. It may be that participants were avoiding speaking about death; however that seems unlikely as participants spoke very openly about issues directly related to death. It is possible that the subject of death had been discussed elsewhere with others verbally or by other means such as in digital communication; however as the interviews for this study were so closely related to the subject of death it seems likely that if it had been relevant, participants would have explicitly spoken about death even if it had already been discussed elsewhere. We may consider then another possibility which is that the funeral provides a way of containing death. Death has the potential to be a major focus and overwhelming for the bereaved. It is a major transition and the death of a loved one, likely to be a major event in the life of the bereaved family, yet through the funeral, some therapeutic containment may be taking place so that it can be faced and understood to have been, in some way, overcome.

The concept of therapeutic containment was developed by Freud (1917/1973) in relation to Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy and further developed by Bion (1962). It involves the therapist providing a safe space for the client to explore feelings that they have been unable to process before due to them involving such a high level of distress that they threaten to be overwhelming and deeply traumatic. These unresolved feelings, often from childhood experiences can lead to the client unconsciously transferring feelings onto the therapist such as hostility or affection, a process known as transference. This may be followed by the therapist reacting to these feelings, for instance by experiencing anger, a process known as counter-transference. The aim is for a therapeutic

relationship of boundaried containment to make it possible for the client's feelings to be processed and made conscious sense of.

Despite extensive reading on the subject, I have not seen the concept of containment applied to death rites before. Through this study, the idea of containment is applied to the funeral ritual for its capacity to enable the death of an individual to be faced without it becoming overwhelming and traumatic for those attending. I noted in my research journal how providing therapeutic containment is very much part of my role as a psychotherapist when working with bereaved people and began to wonder if part of my role when taking funerals may in some ways involve a similar process of supporting containment for the bereaved.

Mark the death

The funeral marks the death of the deceased, making the reality of death clear for the bereaved. This was emphasised by five officiants, including civil and humanist officiants, rectors and chaplains. It was perceived to be helpful for the bereaved in coming to terms with the death.

> I think the purpose of the service is … to recognise that somebody has passed and to mark it.
> Sarah, civil officiant.

> That awful moment when they see the coffin. I know that's coming. So I don't have to say 'they are not coming back'. Because you know, the rituals do a whole lot for you.
> Margaret, rector.

Three officiants spoke of the value of making the death clear so the bereaved could move on.

> People say 'I can't believe this. I'm dreading the funeral'. I often say 'Well you might find it helps you just to move onto some kind of next stage, it will reinforce the sense of finality'.
> James, chaplain.

This illustrates the power of ritual to transport individuals from one state to another, through an experience of transition (van Gennep 1960). For some, the funeral not only created the opportunity to move on, but also illustrated a way of how to go forward. A humanist officiant spoke of how the focus on the deceased within the funeral may show a way to proceed with grief, by speaking and thinking of the deceased.

> I think it does mark a watershed of moving on from that terrible raw experience and that if it's possible that the funeral, the celebration of the person's life actually helps people to remember the good and be reassured that it's good to think about the person, and talk about them and remember them, then it hopefully helps people move onto the next stage. Duncan, Humanist officiant.

Saying goodbye

Some rectors spoke of the funeral as an opportunity for the bereaved to say their final goodbyes to the deceased, whilst a humanist officiant and a chaplain referred to the funeral as the final departure. There was a sense in which the separation between the dead and the living was made tangible through the funeral ritual (van Gennep 1960). There can be a sense of immediacy and intimacy in the moments of saying goodbye.

> I decided I wanted to leave the (crematorium) curtains open…. And I did actually step back in, actually….I just had that moment of just the two of us.
> Dawn, wife of the deceased.

For the bereaved, the task is in part about letting go. However, the process of letting go through this public act often involved an honouring of the person in all their individuality and for some bereaved this had the effect of giving them a strong sense of the deceased during the ceremony, as if they were still alive.

> I was shaking hands afterwards and he said 'Thank you for bringing my mother back to life for a few minutes (interviewee tearful).
> Duncan, Humanist officiant reports feedback after a funeral.

This experience resonates with Davies (1997: 1) theory on words against death. In the midst of the event marking the death of an individual there is a sense in which they come alive through telling stories about their life and honouring the person known to the gathered congregation. This reflects an experience reported by Valentine (2008: 172) when conducting interviews with bereaved people. Through speaking about the idiosyncrasies of the deceased and telling their story in a very personal way, the dead inhabit the interview space. There was a sense in which the deceased are present, which mirrors the experience of some bereaved families and this occurred through a particular focus on the uniqueness of the deceased. Additionally, that the dead can be somehow brought to life through the ceremony, points a way forward in which a continuing bond may be said to develop between the deceased and the bereaved in terms of their future relationship (Klass et al 2018).

Many bereaved are also saying goodbye to a role that was closely associated with the deceased such as those whose spouse has died saying goodbye to being married and the beginning a new life of widowhood. For many this many involve a loss of social status and opportunities. When exploring what bereavement meant to Aberdonians, Williams described that along with the incalculable loss of a loved person there were also social losses that came with the change in circumstances. This was felt particularly by widows who had a sense of losing 'married society' (Williams 1990: 133). Some friendships with couples could no longer be sustained in the same way. Widowhood held a form of stigma and some previous activities were no longer continued due to this such as holidays, evenings out and shopping in the city centre (Williams 1990: 133). This suggests that for some the loss of a spouse may involve a loss of confidence in social settings and a withdrawal from situations that require new forms of inter-relating which can compound feelings of loneliness.

The chance for the bereaved to say goodbye extends to all who knew the deceased and attend the ceremony and is not restricted to those who were closest to the deceased. There is a sense in which speaking about the deceased in a personal way at the ceremony enables them to be in some way present to be said goodbye to. Officiants spoke of the value of the ceremony

including stories which captured who the deceased were in an intimate way recognisable to those who knew them.

> so I'm telling a story as it's been told to me…when people react to that I know that they are remembering that person as they were.
> Sheila, Humanist officiant.

This level of personalisation, often combined with having the remains of the deceased present creates a context in which there may be said to be an encounter between the bereaved and deceased, facilitated by the officiant. Valentine (2008: 168) describes the paradox of the absence and presence of the deceased that the bereaved may experience through organising and attending the funeral. It also in part explains the power of a eulogy given by a family member as those in the congregation are given a glimpse into a personal encounter between the family member and the bereaved in which they make their goodbyes. The concept of encounter may seem surprising in this context but it indicates a level of mutuality in the experience. The bereaved may be given direction, inspiration and comfort through remembering the deceased in a personalised way at the funeral, whilst at the same time they give to the deceased through honouring their memory, providing a fitting end to their earthly life. Along with this, within a Christian ceremony, there is a placing of the deceased into the hands of the eternal God to abide in heaven (Sheppy 2003: 79). Several officiants in this study stressed that the funeral is for the deceased and the bereaved. There is a mutuality to the funeral; it is for both parties.

Although the deceased is not a member of the living community as they once were, previous research studies have highlighted that in a social sense their existence may continue through those who knew them (Valentine 2008: 168). The bereaved may have an enlarged sense of the social world previously inhabited by the deceased through learning about their relationships and involvement with many others through the funeral event. This creates new areas of memory and insight into the life lived by the deceased. This can provide the bereaved family with a broader sense of the deceased person, as they experience the presence of the deceased with them through a continuing

bond (Klass et al 2018). There is a mutuality to this enlargement. It increases the bereaved families understanding of the impact of the deceased in the lives of others and reveals more of the story of the deceased's life which honours them and increases the legacy of memory they create in the lives of others.

The presence of the coffin facilitating grief

During interviews for this study, the value of making the reality of the death clear was recognised as helpful for the bereaved by several officiants. Grief generally involves an element of shock, disbelief and struggling to accept the reality that that the deceased is no longer living (Worden 1991:16). The funeral provides a context in which the death is publicly acknowledged and confirms to the bereaved that the deceased is not coming back. It may still be that in the period following the funeral, the death feels unreal to the bereaved and they have moments of forgetting that the deceased is no longer alive; however, this does not detract from the part the funeral can play in enabling the reality of the situation to be made clear. Officiants in this study who viewed the coffin as a visible sign of the reality of the death of the deceased at times emphasised the importance of the coffin being visible rather than covered and the sense of finality conveyed by the burial of the coffin. Having the coffin covered by a pall was disliked by some officiants as it made it less visible.

> The coffin was under a heavy pall or cover, so you couldn't actually see the coffin. I think that's very unhealthy. It is like trying to brush death under the carpet…. because people are actually coming to terms with death and hiding things I don't think helps.
> Colin, rector.

There was a contrast between the perspective of officiants who saw the value of having the coffin present and some family members who dreaded seeing it, although both perspectives were arguably stemming from the same reasoning, that the presence of the coffin makes the death real. It was therefore important that officiants enabled the bereaved to discuss their fears about this and suggest that although seeing the coffin was a real concern of theirs, in fact it may be helpful in terms of their progressing through grief to see the

coffin within the ceremony. The research literature describes how the pain of the bereavement is faced rather than denied in a ceremony facilitated by an officiant who appreciates the need for comfort for the family whilst they honestly face the reality of their loss. Kelly (2008: 137) describes officiants who enable bereaved families to face the reality of their loss and grieve as 'sustainers of grief'. They are a source of succour to the bereaved in facing the death of the deceased.

As the container of the remains of the deceased, the coffin remains a powerful visible reminder of the death of the deceased and of death in general, signalling to those gathered for the ceremony that they will die at some point. It reveals to all that they will die.

> All funerals are about our own life and death. How we grieve and cope with loss throughout life is reflected in and influenced by the way we bury our dead (Streets 1996: 183).

As acknowledged by Streets (1996: 183), ways of grieving are reflected in the funeral and how funerals are conducted affects how we grieve. The contemporary tendency to arrange a private cremation and a memorial service for a wider group without the presence of the remains of the deceased is perhaps an indication of a discomfort with death and its trappings, a desire to protect others from what may be seen as the ordeal of facing the reality of the sight of the coffin. Harris suggests 'we almost pretend that they have not died by committing them elsewhere in private' (Harris in Mosher et al ed 2014: 80). It appears unlikely that the first cremationists envisaged this happening when they developed cremation as am alternative to burial within the context of a funeral.

In interviews with officiants for this study, holding memorial ceremonies for most mourners after the body had already been disposed of was seen to rob mourners of the opportunity to 'say good bye' to the deceased and believed to limit the benefit of the ceremony. Only some parts of the ritual of the ceremony were available to all, other parts were confined to family members only.

> I'm very unhappy about the move to, oh let's have a quick private cremation, then straight afterwards a memorial service. I think that's

about convenience and I think it doesn't help us with our grieving. I think
it's important that the ashes or the body of the person are present. Lydia,
chaplain.

Some of the purposes of the funeral such as saying goodbye, paying last respects,
commending the deceased to God and disposing of the remains may not be
fulfilled within a memorial service in which remains of the deceased are absent.
Other aspects such as completing the biographical narrative of the deceased are
possible through memorial ceremonies.

Davies (2008: 25) highlights that for many who knew the deceased such as
workmates, friends and neighbours, the coffin 'stands for the deceased
person'. This raises the question of aspects of their grief that may be
untouched by a memorial event where the remains of the deceased are not
present. In doing this, the wider group of bereaved people may not be given
the opportunity to face the reality of the death through seeing the container
for the deceased's remains. This may inhibit their capacity to grieve (Worden
1991:16). It may be argued that the presence of the coffin provides
containment of death which facilitates grieving through providing a clear focus
for the bereaved involving a container in which the bereaved has been
attended to respectfully in their death state and prepared for the next stage
such as burial or cremation.

The finality of burial

Five officiants within this study commented that burial feels real and final and this
was associated with enabling the bereaved to accept the reality of the death. This
included clergy and humanist officiants. Other aspects of a burial were seen by
some officiants to be helpful for the bereaved, even if difficult emotionally at the
time. This included a sense that nothing is hidden at a burial and the ritual of
throwing soil on the coffin. Living people are not placed in a box in the earth. The
practise of lowering the coffin containing the remains of the deceased into the
ground and the ritual of the bereaved throwing soil onto the coffin reveals the
reality that the individual has died. For the bereaved, as they, in the view of
Stroebe and Schut (1999: 197) oscillate between believing the death has occurred
and struggling to accept this reality, the finality of burial may be helpful in

confirming what has happened. Burial facilitates containment of death through providing a clear end to dealing with the remains of the deceased. A process is gone through in which the bereaved may participate through throwing soil on the coffin that ceremonially contains what may threaten to be an overwhelming and deeply traumatic fact for the deceased, that their loved one has died and is not coming back.

The context for the interviews in this study was South East Scotland. All officiants conducted a mixture of funerals involving cremation, funerals with burials and memorial ceremonies. Scotland has a strong tradition of graveside funerals (Raeburn 2012) and most officiants had experience of funerals conducted completely at the graveside as did some family members. Memories which are accompanied by experiences of all the senses, such as the feel of the wind on the skin or the sound of the rain, can often be readily evoked and this remembering may aid the bereaved in accepting the reality of the death. The powerful sensory aspects of being present at a burial were highlighted by some officiants in this study.

> It's quite dramatic the difference you know a burial to, that felt a bit more real and in the raw if you know what I mean? Something about the earth being right there and a cold wind whipping about and everybody huddled around the grave.
> Stuart, Humanist officiant.

At times there were practical challenges with having the whole ceremony outdoors. Officiants spoke of shortening graveside funerals if the weather was poor, the demands put on their voice when ensuring they were heard by a crowd outdoors and of the challenges for mourners when the weather was poor. For older mourners or those with poor mobility, the prospect of standing for the entire ceremony may be difficult or impossible. This may result in the ceremony being short or a form of temporary seating being organised so some mourners are not disenfranchised.

Conclusion

This study suggests that funeral ceremonies provide a form of therapeutic containment of death and may prevent it being overwhelming for mourners.

Funerals mark the death and provide the bereaved with an opportunity to say goodbye to the deceased, supported by the presence of other mourners.

The coffin has a pivotal role in confirming the reality of the death. It facilitates containment of death through physically containing the remains of the deceased in a way which means they can undergo the funeral ritual and be the focus of attention without becoming overwhelming for the bereaved, although some bereaved may find the powerful emotions they experience at the sight of the coffin challenging. Some officiants regarded it as important for the coffin to be visible during the funeral ceremony and not covered. Burial was regarded as helpful in its capacity to convey a sense of finality through an evocative outdoor sensory experience which again provides containment of death. The current trend to hold private small funerals ceremonies for those closest to the deceased, followed by memorial events for larger groups without the earthly remains of the deceased raises questions about the potential of these events to convey the reality of the death. For the deceased's remains not to be present at all may well inhibit mourners within the larger group from being able to accept that the individual has died. This trend may also increase the sense that death is taboo, to be hidden away and not spoken of. The ritual of a funeral ceremony enables individuals and communities to face a death directly, mark it and begin to move onto the next stage of their lives (Turner 1969). If aspects of death are hidden, the power of the ritual performance may be limited and its capacity to help the bereaved in their grief curtailed.

A high level of personalisation within the ceremony can result in a sense of the deceased being brought back to life through the ceremony. As the bereaved face a future without the deceased, their role and social status may have changed and the ceremony can publicly mark this change. A Christian funeral will explicitly view the deceased's death within the context of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus which provides a form of containment through asserting that death is not the end, but rather a gateway to the nearer presence of God (1 Corinthians 15: 55). This is explored further in the following chapter on Christian hope.

Chapter ix) Christian hope and the Christian funeral

This study involved an examination of funerals taken by Christian, humanist and civil officiants. Whilst not setting out to contrast these forms of funerals, it was notable that the aspect of hope was particularly prominent within Christian funerals. Before completing this study, I had not realised that the aspect of hope was so prominent in Christian funerals and that this is not the case in all funerals. Those interviewed about humanist funerals did not refer to hope explicitly. This does not mean that the humanist funerals spoken about lacked any sense of hope, but the focus was different, they were celebrations of the life that had been lived by the deceased. Christian funerals looked beyond the life of the deceased to a larger narrative. Within this narrative, the element of Christian hope stood out, particularly with regard to eternal life with God beginning in this life and continuing beyond it.

The central importance of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus

The context of the Christian funeral was one offering a perspective of eternity. This perspective of eternity develops from a focus on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

> I hope the funeral gives some sense of eternity…And that might have
> quite a Christian sense to it the more Christian people are.
> Margaret, rector.

Within a Christian funeral, the life and death of the deceased is viewed in relation to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Death is believed to have been overcome. It is not the case that death is idealised or seen as without pain or grief for the bereaved. The death of Jesus was one which he surrendered to, although gospel accounts suggest the amount of suffering he experienced was immense. Knowing that his death approaches, Jesus became deeply distressed (Mark 14: 33). He was afraid of death. Cullman (1955) details the horror of the death of Jesus, including Jesus' sense of being forsaken by his heavenly father, emphasising it was

not a beautiful experience. There is hope in the midst of the horror of death. The grief Jesus' death caused to his friends, and particularly his mother is significant. There is no romanticising of loss. However, the early church saw Jesus's death in the light of his resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus in bodily form, though not exactly as he was before death, is understood to reveal that death has been overcome. The death and resurrection of Christ transform death into form of transition to heaven and eternity with God. Indeed, the liturgy for the Scottish Episcopal Church Funeral Rites (1970) begins with the following verse which sets the context for the ceremony.

> Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. (John 11.25f)

Death as transition to another life

In Christianity, along with Judaism and Islam, death is associated with a new life with God, the source of all life. This is a key aspect of the hope that is particular to a Christian ceremony. Van Gennep, a classical anthropological source discerned three phases that rites of passage are conducted to achieve. The first phase are rites of separation or pre-liminal, the second of transition rites or liminal, and the third phase, rites of incorporation or post-liminal (van Gennep 1960). In a Christian ceremony, according to Sheppy (2003: 79) the funeral marks the transition into eternal life with God. The third phase is emphasised, that the deceased joins the company of heaven, to spend eternity with God. Rather than the death being seen as the end point, after which no life continues, the belief is espoused that life will continue in a different form. This different form is presented positively. The deceased is believed to have moved from an earthly existence to a heavenly one. Christians believe eternal life with God begins in this life and continues after death when they move into the nearer presence of God.

you're kind of thinking about the Christian hope and thinking the person isn't there anymore, the person is with God.

Colin, rector.

Clearly, the picture becomes more complex when different beliefs exist within a family, such as the deceased holding a Christian faith and family members not sharing this. In such cases, as explored elsewhere, the ceremony needs to have integrity for both the deceased and the bereaved and this can be achieved by including elements that reflect the beliefs of both parties. Some clergy interviewed voiced discomfort with being asked to conduct a Christian funeral for people whom they knew did not hold Christian beliefs and had not chosen such a ceremony for themselves and in such instances a delicate process of working out the kind of officiant who may be best placed to offer an appropriate funeral can be valuable. Along with having integrity for the bereaved and the deceased, funerals also need to have integrity for the officiants, whether they be Humanist, Christian or Civil Officiants.

when you haven't got the integrity of it worked out and then that would feel awkward…I think probably things are worked out in the planning, in the preparation.

Elaine, chaplain.

The bereaved still need to say goodbye for the deceased will not be part of their lives as they once were. They still need to grieve for the loss they have experienced and this may undoubtably involve considerable emotional pain and psychological adjustment, especially when the death has been a particularly difficult bereavement. The element of Christian hope asserts that death is not the ultimate end but a transition to future life; however this does not mean that a bereavement is any less painful for someone who believes this than for someone who does not. For some bereaved family members with a Christian faith saying goodbye to a loved one who did not have a faith can be particularly hard as unanswerable questions may arise about whether the deceased is now in heaven.

Sensitivity is needed in responding to the bereaved who raise such issues with officiants as they are already very vulnerable due to their bereavement. The Christian funeral places the death of an individual in the context of eternity and combines offering hope with elements such as comfort and consolation and in doing so seeks to provide for the bereaved as well as the deceased.

Joining the heavenly community

The concept of the deceased continuing in a form of community is part of the belief in the heaven. The doctrine of the communion of saints involves a community of believers which spans heaven and earth.

> so you know, praying, invoking the communion of saints, that sense that heaven and earth are joined, you know, one family in heaven and on earth. I do think we're very bound up together.
> Trevor, rector.

Through this, the believer is offered a sense of the deceased's continuing existence after death and of continuing bonds between the living and the dead (Kelly 2008: 141). The Apostles Creed, the old baptismal creed of the church of Rome, which is seen as essential within Anglican and the vast majority of other Christian denominations today, proclaims the doctrine of the communion of saints (sanctorum communio), 'that ultimate fellowship with the holy persons of all ages, as well as with the whole company of heaven, which is anticipated and partly realized in the fellowship of the Catholic Church on earth.' (Kelly 1960: 391). The General Introduction to the Roman Catholic Order of Christian Funerals encapsulates the belief that 'death is not the end nor does it break the bonds forged in life' (Catholic Bishops Conference 2006). The concept of continuing bonds between the living and the dead has become important in theories of grief, through the work of Klass et al (1996) who theorised that a bond may be maintained between the deceased and the bereaved following death and this can be part of an adaptive reaction and not viewed as problematic. Within a

Christian funeral the belief that the deceased has joined the heavenly community and that this community is somehow united with believers on earth can provide a framework for a continuing bond between the deceased and the bereaved.

> we can affirm, that post the funeral, post the death, our loved ones are held in God's love and that sense we're not separated from them and that we can still remember them with love… doing it (praying for the deceased) at the Eucharist when we are united with everyone in heaven on earth is quite appropriate.
> James, rector.

The belief in the uniting of people on earth and in heaven is reinforced during regular celebrations of the eucharist with prayers that proclaim the prayers of the church on earth are joined with the prayers of ''angels and archangels and . . . all the company of heaven.'' (Scottish Episcopal Church 1982). For those within the faith community who have regularly attended celebrations of the Eucharist, arguably, they have been offered an understanding of death as the gateway to heaven and to a continuance of life within a community that spans heaven and earth.

It may be argued that the links between the ancient theology of the communion of saints and current secular grief theories of continuing bonds are an example of ancient theological concepts and practises being rediscovered in secular contexts. The practise of contemplation, the value of gratitude and forgiveness are other such examples. Although these concepts are understood in secularised forms today, their occurrence points to the value of certain ancient theological doctrines and ways of living in contemporary society.

The third phrase of the ritual, one of incorporation, is less likely to be present in ceremonies conducted by humanist officiants (van Gennep 1960). The focus is generally the life lived by the deceased with no expectation of their continuing to live in a heavenly realm. Humanism does not include a belief in the afterlife and generally an agnostic or atheistic

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stance is held (www.humanists.international.com). In some funerals conducted by civil officiants a belief in heaven and in the deceased being reunited with loved ones who have died previously may be espoused if this is held by the family or reflects the wishes of the deceased; however this is something that occurs on an individual basis, whereas with Christian funerals, the liturgy always speaks of eternal life for the Christian (Scottish Episcopal Church 1987, Church of England 2000). A Christian funeral, particularly of a regular church attender or someone who had a long association with the church before failing health limited their attendance, may well include a Eucharist within the ceremony reinforcing the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus and unity with the heavenly community which the deceased is believed to have joined. A funeral conducted by a civil officiant would not include a Eucharist which can only be presided over by an ordained minister.

Christian hope - a particular form of hope

The element of Christian hope is a particular form of hope that is founded on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

> I'm a Christian minister and I only think there's hope because Christ rose from the dead. Margaret,rector.

In Corinthians 13:13 St Paul speaks of the trilogy of faith, hope and love. The bringing of these three aspects together highlights how inextricably linked they are. Hope comes to the believer through their faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus to save them from slavery to sin and free them from the fear of death (Williams 2017). As unique people, created in the image of God, each are free to choose how to live. As believers choose to live lives conformed to the will of God, these lives reach their ultimate fulfilment in spending eternity with the God of love. God, who is understood to be a community of love comprising of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It is not the case that a humanist funeral will be experienced as lacking a sense of hope or as hopeless for the bereaved. Some within the Christian community may be critical of humanist ceremonies suggesting they lack hope. That is not what is being argued here. Within a humanist ceremony the focus is largely the life that was lived by the deceased. A perspective will be offered which does not include a belief in an afterlife and so hope may take a different form. This may involve hope surrounding the legacy the deceased leaves in the lives of others. There may be a sense conveyed that speaking about the deceased will benefit the bereaved which can give hope as they face the future without them.

> the celebration of the person's life actually helps people to remember the good and be reassured that it's good to think about the person, and talk about them.
>
> Duncan, Humanist officiant

There is a diversity of views on the concept of hope amongst humanists and some within humanism find hope an unnecessary concept (Baggini 2012). Baggini (2012) suggests a significant difference between humanism and Christianity to be that Christians hope for a 'posthumous existence'. Clearly there are differences in how hope is understood within Christianity and humanism; however the area of hope is not confined to thoughts about heaven. It is broader in scope and concerns thoughts about the living as well as the dead. The Affirmations of Humanism compiled by the Council for Secular Humanism includes the statement that humanists believe in 'hope rather than despair' (Kurtz 2021). A C Grayling (2015: 3), considering challenges within the world today discusses moving 'from our dilemmas to a better world relying on our best hopes'. He illustrates that for some within humanism, hopes are important in seeking an improved world. Both humanists and Christians may endeavour to live with hope for the development of a fairer, more peaceful world for instance. For humanists this is understood to be possible purely through the actions of human beings whereas Christians perceive the world through a theological lens

and believe God is at work in and through humans to bring transformation in the world.

Officiants embodying hope

Kelly (2007: 119) suggests that Chaplains conducting funerals for babies embody the compassion of Christ. Their humanity is not hidden behind a veil of professionalism, rather this is part of what they bring to their role in being alongside those who are suffering. Within a Christian funeral, the role of the officiant may be seen as being an embodiment of the message of hope.

> there's a sense of representing hope.
> Lydia, chaplain.

An understanding of this experience using embodiment theory may consider the body to be a vehicle for experience, viewing the body as dynamic and expressing the identity of the officiant in this context (Csordas & Harwood 1994: 1). Through representing the risen Christ, priests explicitly offer Christian hope of life after death through their body.

In the context of particularly difficult deaths, such as the death of children, an ordained minister may co-create a ceremony that does not explicitly speak of the Christian hope, in order to fit the bereaved family's needs at this raw, enormously painful time. However, through their presence, compassion and sensitivity, ministers may feel they embody Christian hope for the bereaved. These situations are exceptional and call for an increased level of sensitivity and skill form the officiant due to the nature of the bereavement.

Christian hope as trust in God

Although there is a clear focus on Christian hope in a Christian funeral, when considering what happens after death a large element of mystery remains. It is not the case that a contemporary Christian funeral will provide the bereaved with detail of what may happen after death. The

hope that is offered is fundamentally a faith in God. A trust that God's commitment to people remains true beyond death. There is an encouragement to believe that God will create the conditions for life to continue for people, though how this will happen is not known (www.rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org).

Pastoral care may be offered before the death and beyond the funeral, with the possibility of being part of a community of faith in which faith in God may be nurtured.

> And obviously follow up (visits after the funeral) as well. It wasn't easy. I could visit but I think they were finding it difficult coming to terms with everything. I probably visited several times.
>
> James, speaking on parish ministry in the Church of England.

The church community in which the dying and the bereaved may participate in. Christian hope is part of a larger narrative and kept alive by a wider community than the bereaved family. By choosing a Christian ceremony they are connecting to this wider framework, to a trust that is held across a wider group, to an offer of pastoral care that begins before and could continue after the funeral. This is different to what is available generally to those who choose a humanist ceremony or to those who receive the services of a chaplain whether the chaplain is an ordained minister or not. Usually the services of a humanist officiant, civil officiant or chaplain will be more limited in scope and focus on preparation for the ceremony and conducting the ceremony itself, although there are exceptions to this. Chaplains interviewed spoke of willingness to provide some care after funerals if contacted by the bereaved, although they had very limited time available for this.

Life after death as resurrection

Although belief in heaven is assumed within the gospels (Matthew 6: 10), the New Testament does not focus on heaven as a place believers will go to

after their death but rather on the coming of a form of heaven on earth through the arrival of God's Kingdom which was spoken of by Jesus (Matthew 18: 3, 19: 3 and many other verses). 2 Peter 3: 13 suggests that there will be a form of cosmic renewal through God renewing the earth. Revelation 21 speaks of a new heaven and new earth and ends with the new Jerusalem coming to earth so God may abide with God's people. N. T. Wright (in Marshall, D & Mosher L 2014:5) suggests that early believers were not greatly interested in what may happen after death. They believed that as Jesus was in the tomb and then was raised, so with them there would be a period of rest followed by resurrection. The resurrection would mean a newly embodied life in a recreated world but this would not happen immediately after death but after a period of rest. The exception being those who were living at a point when Jesus returned to earth, which would involve a transformation without death to live in the renewed world (1 Corinthians 15: 51-52). There is a clear focus on resurrection and a newly created earth rather than a heavenly realm the deceased enter after death. The Nicene Creed, the ecumenical statement of belief includes a declaration of belief in the resurrection. ''We look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.'' The Apostles' Creed, the old baptismal creed which summarises the teaching of the church, expresses faith in ''the communion of saints, the remission of sins, the resurrection of the flesh, and eternal life.'' (Rowell in Marshall, D & Mosher L 2014:61). The Christian hope includes a belief in the resurrection, not purely of Jesus but also of all believers.

> (officiant faces the coffin) finally at the committal 'in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life'
> Trevor, rector.

This belief in resurrection is espoused in contemporary Christian funerals. How resurrection happens is not detailed, rather there is an encouragement to trust that God raised Jesus and can be trusted to create

the environment to raise others. There is no expectation that those who have died will need their decaying earthly remains, rather a resurrected life is a new life, complete with a new body. The aspect of cosmic renewal sets the belief in an individual's resurrection in a wider context, a larger narrative that itself holds a larger hope involving an end to suffering, the arrival of justice and healing on a wider scale. However, it may be argued that the dominant cultural narrative associated with death within contemporary Christian communities involves heaven as a place believers go to after death to enjoy God's presence and in which there is no suffering.

Personalising the response to the bereaved

As this research has confirmed, the bereaved have a very individualised response to the death of their family member. For some interviewed, death was seen as relief from suffering for the deceased who had experienced years of pain and loss. A return to God, a source of love and hope, appeared preferable compared to their earthly trials. In this context the promise of new life beginning for the deceased was a source of hope and comfort. It was the fulfilment of the longing for the end of suffering of their loved one and indeed at times had been longed for before death by the deceased. For other bereaved interviewees, such as parents whose children had died before them, the sense of loss and pain of separation from their offspring meant they experienced the concept of Christian hope very differently and great sensitivity was needed by officiants in responding to their needs. In such instances, for officiants to make no assumptions about the bereaved's feelings towards God, or their concept of hope or heaven is important. For other bereaved family members there may be feelings of ambivalence towards the concept of their deceased gaining new life, such as in instances where the deceased had perpetrated abuse within the family.

the other big secret that I'm encountering a lot here is spousal abuse. The bullying of women by husbands.... With that one I just did the post funeral visit and the wife was deliriously happy. And she said 'It's like a weight's been lifted off me. I feel I've come alive again'. Margaret, rector.

Within these circumstances, the officiant holding together the concepts of judgement and mercy of God, alongside a belief in the deceased returning to God may be helpful for the deceased. Romans 8: 38 proclaims 'I am convinced that neither death, nor life....nor anything in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord'. For those whose relationship with the deceased was positive this may be a source of consolation or at least something they would welcome for the deceased. In cases where the relationship with the deceased was difficult and at times abusive, the bereaved may feel ambivalent towards the love of God continuing for the deceased despite their behaviour. On these occasions, the officiant needs to take account of the feelings of the bereaved whilst representing the church's teaching on the love and mercy of God. The nature of the relationship the bereaved had with the deceased is central in their grief and an important factor in how the bereaved respond to the concept of Christian hope at this point.

A service for the unfamiliar

As discussed earlier, many who attend a Christian funeral, proclaiming Christian hope may not be familiar with the teaching of the church. This raises challenges for officiants. One interviewee described the liturgy as a 'foreign country' for many in the congregation at funerals. Officiants need to in some sense fulfil the role of guide within this unknown land. Through kindness and not making assumptions about those attending, officiants may gain the trust of those who find the Christian funeral an unfamiliar environment. Within a ritual context, it is not the words alone that communicate, but also the building or outdoor environment, the ritual actions, the atmosphere, music and stories that are told about the bereaved. Some bereaved may take comfort from the words used, even if

unfamiliar, discerning in them hope and a sense of the deceased being loved and honoured. For others, other aspects of the service may speak more powerfully. It may be that the Christian hope may be communicated more effectively through the form of stories which are widely accessible in contrast to liturgy which can be impenetrable to those who cannot read, or for whom the concepts are so unfamiliar that they are unintelligible. What may be important, as a civil officiant who was interviewed for this study suggested, is that all in the congregation have a sense of being included within the ceremony, being enabled to participate whilst not put in the position where they feel uncomfortable. This takes sensitivity and skill on the part of the officiant. The Christian hope can be offered but is not imposed.

There is skill in offering the Christian hope within a personalised ceremony. One that combines meeting the family's expectations for the individual who has died to be recognisable through the service, with the belief in the centrality of Jesus Christ, the one who is the source of the hope within a Christian service. With experience, officiants learned to co-construct funerals with the bereaved to create personalised ceremonies which reflected the deceased and responded to the needs of the bereaved within the context of the Christian hope. This was a process that they had grown into. It is likely that the development of humanist ceremonies with a large personal emphasis has influenced the views of those who may choose a Christian ceremony but expect a high degree of personal elements.

Burial and Christian hope

 As discussed earlier, for the bereaved, seeing the burial of the deceased's remains can give a sense of finality and may prove helpful in their accepting the reality of the death. This aspect of the perceived benefit of a burial remained the same whether the ceremony was conducted by a humanist, civil or Christian officiant. However, the Christian belief in heaven meant the burial may be conceptualised differently to a burial

within a humanist ceremony. Whilst the burial was being experienced, belief in heaven may be being spoken of in prayer, or sung of in songs.

> seeing the coffin being buried and at the same time singing songs like 'The sky not the grave is my home'. You're kind of looking at what's happening and it's there and it's real…But alongside that you're kind of thinking about the Christian hope.
> Colin, rector.

There is a paradox here of the value of accepting the reality of the burial, that the individual's earthly remains are being placed in the ground whilst yet believing alongside this, that they are alive with God. This may bring consolation to the grieving bereaved. Whilst the burial is taking place, there is an emphasis on the continuing existence of the deceased with God. The prayers used link the belief in the resurrection of the dead to the resurrection of Jesus and describe the belief that the deceased will be raised as a 'sure and certain hope' (Scottish Episcopal Church 1970). The prayers endeavour to build confidence in the belief that the dead will be resurrected and the foundation of this belief is the resurrection of Jesus.

Saying goodbye but not forever

Several officiants emphasised the purpose of the funeral as the opportunity for the bereaved to say goodbye to the deceased and this applies to the wider congregation who attend, not purely those closest to the bereaved. This was seen as important by clergy and humanist officiants. However, belief in heaven may involve a hope of seeing the deceased again in heaven. There are biblical accounts of figures who have died remaining identifiably themselves, such as Moses and Elijah in accounts of the transfiguration (Matthew 17: 1-9), and accounts of the resurrected Jesus himself. In addition to this heaven there is a belief in a heavenly community. Little detail is given, except that it is different to earthly communities such as Jesus' comment that people will not be married after death (Matthew 22:23-45). However, belief in heaven can involve a hope of seeing a loved one again. This is another aspect of the

distinctiveness of a Christian ceremony, which can alter the sense of the finality of the goodbye. It may be perceived as a goodbye to the deceased within the context of their earthly existence, with the hope of seeing them again after death. There is a hope of reunion and this may feature on the words of gravestones or commonly in the beliefs of the bereaved following for instance the remaining member within a couple dying. Comments may include references to a belief that the couple are now reunited in heaven.

The Christian belief in life after death may be spoken about when pastoral care is being offered by the clergy and may generally be welcomed. However, for those who hold a Christian faith but whose deceased family member did not believe, there may be uncertainty and difficult questions raised by this doctrine to which there are no easy answers. As before, great care needs to be taken when working with those who have had intensely painful bereavements for whom comments about being reunited may not ease the pain of coming to terms with the separation from the deceased. A sensitive, empathic approach is needed which recognises the pain of the loss and the vulnerability of the bereaved at this point.

> they sometimes ask 'Do you believe there is something after death? Where is my child now?' And rather than come in with an answer that is inadequate, I talk with them about what they hope for. What their fears are, what their worries are… I don't have any of the answers. I can only be with them in the pain and if they want me to say what I believe I can share that with them but I wouldn't ever say unless they ask.
> Lydia, chaplain.

Hymnody

One issue raised by humanist officiants who were interviewed for this study was that some bereaved people requested Christian hymns be used at a humanist funeral. Generally, they did not agree to this, explaining that hymns are a form of worship and humanism does not include a belief in a supernatural realm. One humanist officiant made an exception with particular hymns that had important cultural connections with the family,

such as nautical hymns for sailors. However, those organising Christian ceremonies encouraged the bereaved to consider hymns they would like during the funeral. They were an integral part of the ceremony and some hymns were chosen repeatedly such as 'The Lord's my shepherd', based on Psalm 23. There was benefit for the bereaved in choosing hymns as it enabled them to be involved in co-creating a personalised ceremony. For those families who choose hymns but are not used to singing corporately, there may be challenges in singing during the ceremony; however the quality of the musical accompaniment can alleviate this and add to the sense the service being offered is of high quality and so honouring to the deceased.

Hymns perform several functions within ceremonies. They convey Christian hope in the love and faithfulness of God and belief in heaven. They give the congregation something to do together, to sing in unison.

> if you're singing a hymn, you're likely to do that near the beginning,
> so almost from the start people are doing something together and that's
> really helpful.
> Elaine, chaplain.

This enables all who wish to, to actively participate in the ceremony in a way that uses their body as well as mind. It provides an embodied experience and enables them to make a contribution which can indicate support for the bereaved family. Many of the hymns have aesthetic beauty in themselves and can add to the beauty of the ceremony, making the experience memorable and therapeutic for the bereaved. For some bereaved the choice of hymns may hold a certain poignancy such as a hymn that was used at the marriage of the deceased being also used at their funeral. There may be many feelings present across a congregation present at a funeral such as sadness, anger, celebration. Hymns, along with poetry including the Psalms are able to respond to these feelings and give them expression within the context of the Christian hope.

Visual representations

Many buildings used for funerals include symbols which reflect Christian hope. This applies not only to churches but also many crematoria.

> (locally) all the crematoria have a chapel feel about them because they are really well run by really good people. There's a Christian feel about the design of the buildings so there are crosses, there are candles, there are things like that.
>
> Trevor, rector.

Symbols have a variety of meanings; however there are common meanings associated with several Christian symbols. The cross is often taken to represent Jesus's victory over death and the promise of new life for all believers. Candles are associated with Jesus who stated, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life' (John 8:12). The presence of light has strong associations with hope and is understood to represent the presence of God. For the bereaved this hope may be a source of comfort. Light is also taken to represent being guided to find the way ahead. For the bereaved, setting off on a journey into the future without the deceased, the assurance of guidance from God can be a source of consolation. Some venues may include the symbol of a dove. This may be understood to represent the holy spirit, the presence of God with people. Additionally, images of doves have strong associations with peace. Both may contribute to the sense of Christian hope offered through a funeral at which the bereaved may be emotionally fragile and aided by assurances of hope for them and the deceased.

Prayers

The sense of Christian hope may be woven through the prayers that are used during the funeral ceremony and prayers that are said beforehand when the officiant visits the dying to offer pastoral care or the bereaved family after the death to offer care and begin funeral preparations. Prayers

are offered for mourners within the funeral ceremony and they generally include references to the Christian hope along with seeking comfort from God for the bereaved.

> I think that consolation is a large part of a funeral. And reassurance and so the funeral prayers I think are really important, about 'give us confidence to continue in our lives'.
>
> Elaine, chaplain.

The commendation prayers which may be said at the time of death or within the funeral ceremony involve the officiant commending the deceased to God and speak of the hope that the deceased has new life in God and is part of the heavenly community (Scottish Episcopal Church 1970: 4).

The prayers of committal occur at the end of the ceremony, often by the graveside, in the crematorium or at an interment of ashes and are prayers of farewell which clearly emphasise the belief that the deceased will experience resurrection to eternal life. Family members may be involved in leading prayers and the entire congregation is invited to affirm the prayers through the use of the 'Amen' at the end of each prayer thereby enabling the prayers to be an aspect of the ceremony in which all can actively participate. The value of offering a ceremony for the interment of ashes is emphasised by the popularity of cremation over burial in contemporary funerals. Without this the bereaved have to organise their own scattering of ashes. The large number of uncollected ashes held by funeral directors suggests many struggle to do this.

Conclusion

The concept of hope was prominent in research interviews about Christian funerals for this study. Hope is understood differently within a humanist context and some of the ways in which hope may feature in a humanist ceremony have been cited. They include the legacy of the deceased in the lives of the bereaved, but do not involve a belief in the deceased existing

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after death. Christian hope takes a particular form and is centred on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Eternal life with God is believed to begin in this life and continue after death. Death is seen as a transition into the nearer presence of God and there is an understanding that the deceased will be resurrected although the detail of this is not given. Although the dead may be seen to make their journey from an earthly life to death alone, the Christian faith views this journey as one with a clear destination towards God. Alongside this the deceased is believed to have joined a heavenly community so the sense in which the dead may be seen to travel alone is minimised against this backdrop. There is the possibility of a reunion with loved ones in heaven; however difficult questions are raised for those in families where some believe and some do not and great pastoral sensitivity is needed in supporting those who struggle with these issues at a point when they are very vulnerable. Within a Christian ceremony, the liturgy is one element in a ritual which includes pastoral, experiential, auditory and visual elements which combine to offer a ceremony imbued with hope for the deceased and the bereaved. Christian hope is the final finding to be examined and the conclusion to the thesis will follow and draw together the main findings of this study.

Conclusion

This study has involved a personal quest to learn what makes a good funeral, in order to be able to lead funerals well. Having completed this research I feel I have an increased sense of what makes a good funeral and trust that others seeking to lead funerals well may also benefit from this study. Funerals are events that mark a death, yet they involve the creation of something new, a unique ceremony. This is especially the case with contemporary funerals with their emphasis on the construction of a bespoke funeral that reflects the deceased. The co-construction of the funeral and the event itself are generative. Previous research has highlighted that many funerals feature a life motif and have the capacity to bring new life (Davies 1997). This study adds to existing research the perspective of the funeral being generative in many ways. New insight on the deceased is gained through telling the story of their life and through offering a ceremony that reflects them. Connections are renewed between people who knew the deceased who may have not seen each other for a long time. New support is received through the services of officiants and funeral directors and through this, ongoing connections may grow between families and those who serve them at other significant events in the lives of their loved ones such as marriages, naming ceremonies or other funerals. New rituals may be developed and incorporated into the ceremony. New uses may be put to buildings not previously used for funerals. Each eulogy that is composed, is, by its very nature, a new piece and it may be accompanied by audio-visual material for the unique event. In a multitude of ways, funerals are generative and as such can bring new life in the midst of death. Within Christian theology, this new life reflects the transformational work of God, most clearly revealed through the resurrection of Jesus which is made explicit within a Christian funeral ceremony.

The funeral marks the beginning of a new social status for family members, such as the beginning of widowhood. For the various communities represented, the funeral marks the beginning of their future as a changed community, without the deceased. The bereavement process will be unique according to who has died, the circumstances of their death and their

relationship with the bereaved. For those who have chosen a Christian funeral, the funeral marks the beginning of the new life the deceased is believed to have embarked upon, which involves the deceased joining the communion of saints in heaven (Kelly 1960: 391). Within a Roman Catholic of Episcopalian funeral prayers are said for the deceased, a mass or eucharist may be offered and prayers are said for the departed at every eucharist. This is one significant way in which Christian funerals within these traditions are distinctive.

This research has explored the question 'what makes a good funeral?' Its findings suggest a good funeral involves compassionate care being offered to the bereaved by the officiants and arguably the funeral director. According to this research, the level of care offered by funeral officiants is comparable to the compassionate care offered by health professionals to patients. As such, it requires considerable professional skill. Much research has focused on compassionate care offered within healthcare. It appears that this is the first time the concept has been applied to the care offered by funeral officiants. Secondly, this research suggests that rituals which are tailored to the deceased and bereaved family are aspects of a good funeral. Within a good funeral, bespoke rituals commonly involve the whole congregation. These findings support the view that it is necessary for officiants to develop ceremonial expertise in order to maximise the chances that this one-off event goes smoothly and is of high quality. This research identifies that this is particularly important in the case of large funerals, or those involving particularly difficult bereavements such as that of a child or a person who has ended their own life. This study has found that funeral rituals appear to provide containment for death which can elicit strong emotions. As far as can be ascertained, this study is the first to apply the concept of containment to funerals. Funerals can provide psychological containment in that they can prevent death from being overwhelming for the bereaved. This is also the first known study that has included qualitative interviews with clergy, humanist and civil officiants. The contrast between the varying forms of funerals has revealed that all Christian funerals offer a unique aspect which is Christian hope. This asserts the belief that death is not the end for the Christian and this is reflected within the ceremony. This is not without its complexities in situations where some family

members believe and some do not and a high degree of skill is needed by officiants to navigate these differences. Humanist funerals can offer hope in a different form such as the legacy the deceased leaves in the lives of those who knew them. Their particular strength is a high level of personalisation, the centrepiece of which is the life story of the deceased, thereby emphasising the value of each human life and conveying dignity and respect.

For the bereaved planning the funeral of a relative, there are many choices to be made. It may appear daunting or be an event they dread; however at the time when grief is most raw, being able to focus on their loved one in a constructive way through making funeral preparations can be helpful. For many bereaved people, the funeral may enlarge their view of the deceased and they may learn things about their loved one that they did not know. For the Christian officiant, the funeral is an opportunity to seek to reflect the compassionate heart of God for those who suffer and through their presence and kindness to offer hope.

Grief appears to be one of the most difficult human experiences that all people experience at some point. Funerals ensure that at least part of the process of grieving is shared and not faced alone. This study has sought to identify characteristics of a good funeral with the practical purpose that these can inform the practise of funeral officiants. It is hoped that the findings of this study can be put to use by those of us who serve the bereaved and the deceased through leading good funerals in years to come.

Appendix 1: Online advertisement for potential interviewees

Be involved in research on funerals

Hello, I am doing research on what makes a good funeral as part of a PhD with Durham University. I am looking for people who have experienced the funeral of a close family member in the last two years and would be willing to speak about the funeral with me. We would meet once for 30-40 minutes, at a place and time convenient to you for a conversation about the funeral. The interview would be sensitively conducted. Your personal details would be kept confidential and you would be able to withdraw from the study at any time. The research will help those taking funerals learn about what is helpful and unhelpful.

If you may be interested in being involved, please contact me and I can give you further information.

Many thanks

Jane Edwards

North Berwick

Tel: ……………………………….

Email address:……………………………..

Appendix 2: Email sent to funeral officiants

Opportunity to be involved in research on funerals

I am conducting researching on what makes a good funeral as part of a PhD with Durham University. I am looking for Anglican clergy, Humanist and Civil celebrants who have conducted at least one funeral in the last two years and would be willing to speak about conducting funerals with me. We would meet once, at a place and time convenient to you for a conversation about funerals or speak at an agreed time on the telephone. Your personal details would be kept confidential and you would be able to withdraw from the study at any time.

If you may be interested in being involved, please contact me by telephone or email and I can give you further information.

Many thanks

Jane Edwards

Tel: ………………………….

Email address: …………………………………..

Appendix 3: Flier for potential interviewees

Opportunity to be involved in research on funerals

I am conducting researching on what makes a good funeral as part of a PhD with Durham University. I am looking for people who have experienced the funeral of a close family member in the last two years and would be willing to speak about the funeral with me. We would meet once, at a place and time convenient to you for a conversation about the funeral. The interview would be sensitively conducted. Your personal details would be kept confidential and you would be able to withdraw from the study at any time.

If you may be interested in being involved, please contact me by telephone or email and I can give you further information.

Many thanks

Jane Edwards

Tel: …………………………..

Email address: ……………………………….

Appendix 4: Consent form

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: What makes a good funeral?

Name of Researcher: Jane Edwards

Please initial box

1. **I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated for the above project**	....
2. **I have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask any questions**	....
3. **I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason**	....
4. **I have been informed about how the data will be used and stored**	....
5. **I agree to take part in the above project**	....

<u>**Participant**</u>

Name   **Signature**   **Date**

....
<u>**Researcher**</u>

Name   **Signature**   **Date**

....

Appendix 5: Risk assessment form

Risk Assessment Form

Details of the nature of the risk	What can be done to reduce the risk?	Decision on how to proceed	If going ahead - indicate when action has been taken to reduce risk

Appendix 6: Information sheet for funeral officiants

Information Sheet

2016/2017

Details of researchers:

The researcher is Jane Edwards. Jane is a PhD student of Durham University, a BACP* Accredited Counsellor and training to be ordained as Priest within the Scottish Episcopal Church.

Purpose of research:

This research aims to explore what makes a good funeral. Jane hopes the study will help her learn how to conduct funerals. She will share results with others who conduct funerals, interested to learn from this study.

Deciding if you want to take part in this study.

You do not have to take part in this study if you don't want to. Participation is voluntary. There is no payment for being involved in this study.

Ethical approval:

This study has been granted ethical approval by the University of Durham.

Additional Contact:

If you have questions about this study, please contact Jane Edwards in the first instance

Phone:…………………………   Email address:……………………………..

Address:………………………………………….

In addition, you can contact Jane's supervisor, Professor Douglas Davies if you want to discuss this study with him, or make any complaints. Contact details:

Professor D Davies. Address: ……………………………………………. Phone: ………………………….

If you have a complaint you could also contact the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). Contact details:

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), Professional Conduct Department 0870 443 5217.

The interview process:

If you decide you would like to take part in this study you will be interviewed in person by Jane. The interview will be confidential and no one else will be present. The interview will be recorded, take place at a location and time convenient for you and last no longer than 75 minutes. The interview will be a conversation involving questions about funerals, including those you have conducted. The recording will be heard by Jane and someone who may help with typing.

You will be able to withdraw from the study at any time, or stop the interview at anytime.   If you withdraw from the study you will not have to give a reason for this and any information you have given will be destroyed. You will be offered a copy of a report on the findings of this study when complete.

Confidentiality:

Any information that might identify you (like your name or address etc) will be kept confidential during the study. Your personal details will be stored securely and separately from the record of your interview. All data will be destroyed at the end of the study.

Information from the interview will be used in research Jane is doing on funerals and quotations from your interview may be used anonymously in reports or published papers.

*British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

Appendix 7: Information sheet for people who have arranged a funeral

Information Sheet

2016/2017

Details of researchers:

The researcher is Jane Edwards. Jane is a PhD student of Durham University, a BACP* Accredited Counsellor and training to be ordained as Priest within the Scottish Episcopal Church.

Purpose of research:

This research aims to explore what makes a good funeral. Jane hopes the study will help her learn how to conduct funerals. She will share results with others who conduct funerals, who are interested to learn from this study.

Deciding if you want to take part in this study.

You do not have to take part in this study if you don't want to. Participation is voluntary. There is no payment for being involved in this study.

Ethical approval:

This study has been granted ethical approval by the University of Durham.

Additional Contact:

If you have questions about this study, please contact Jane Edwards in the first instance

Phone: ……………………….   Email address: ……………………

Address:…………………………………………………….

In addition, you can contact Jane's supervisor, Professor Douglas Davies if you want to discuss this study with him, or make any complaints. Contact details:

Professor D Davies. Address: …………………………….Phone: …………………………..

If you have a complaint you could also contact the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). Contact details:

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), Professional Conduct Department. Phone: …………….

The interview process:

If you decide you would like to take part in this study you will be interviewed in person or by telephone by Jane. The interview will be confidential and no one else will be present. The interview will be recorded, take place at a location and time convenient for you and last no longer than 75 minutes (usually 30-40 minutes). The interview will be a conversation involving questions about the funeral of your family member. The recording will be heard by Jane and someone who may help with typing.

You will be able to withdraw from the study at any time, or stop the interview at any time. If you withdraw from the study you will not have to give a reason for this and any information you have given will be destroyed. You will be offered a copy of a report on the findings of this study when complete.

Confidentiality:

Any information that might identify you, such as your name or address, will be kept confidential during the study. Your personal details will be stored securely and separately from the record of your interview. All data will be destroyed at the end of the study.

Information from the interview will be used in research Jane is doing on funerals and quotations from your interview may be used anonymously in reports or published papers.

*British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

Appendix 8: Post interview information sheet

<u>Information sheet on support after the interview</u>

If you would like to speak to someone for support after the interview here are organisations who can help:

The Samaritans – support over the telephone, 24 hours – phone 116 123.

Breathing Space – support over the telephone, phone …………………..

Opening hours are Monday – Thursday 6pm-2am, Friday 6pm -Monday 6am.

Crossreach Counselling Lothian – counselling for all issues including bereavement in Edinburgh phone ……………… and Dunbar phone ………

Cruse – bereavement counselling and support groups in Edinburgh and East Lothian, phone ……………..

Appendix 9: Interview questions for funeral officiants (clergy)

Interview questions for interviewing officiants (clergy)

Please provide demographic information:

What is your age (20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69)?

Your gender?

Your role?

How long have you been conducting funerals for?

How many funerals have you taken in the last 2 years?

Roughly how many of those people did you know beforehand?

What difference did knowing them make?

If family do not know you, how do they make contact with you?

How much contact do you usually have with the family before the funeral?

How are decisions made about the content of the service?

What about situations where there are differences of opinion? E.g. between you and the family, or between what the deceased wanted and what the family want?

Have you ever been asked to use readings or music that you are not comfortable with? Please give examples.

From your point of view, what do you see as the purpose of the funeral?

How would you describe your role?

What qualities help you do this?

Please tell me about a funeral that was particularly difficult and how you tackled it.

Please tell me about a funeral you feel did not go well, including why it did not go well.

How would you describe your relationships with undertakers/funeral directors?

In your experience, what impact does the venue have on the service e.g. churches, crematorium?

How does a funeral service involving cremation differ from one involving burial?

Have you taken a funeral somewhere unusual?

Have you ever found difficulties with using Christian liturgy if the deceased or their relatives do not have a connection to the faith community?

Some people say the funeral is really for those left behind. What do you think?

What are your views on praying for the dead?

Do you touch the coffin during the service?

When you're leading a funeral are you thinking purely of the family or also of the rest of the congregation? How do you see yourself linking to all the people that are there?

How do you feel about family participating in such ways as doing readings, giving eulogies?

Have you ever felt awkward whilst conducting a funeral? If yes, why was this?

Do you attend the refreshments afterwards?

What do you hope the funeral provides?

What kind of impact does taking a funeral have on you?

What makes a good funeral for you? What makes a good funeral for the bereaved do you think?

Is there anything else you'd like to say before we end?

How has it been to speak about these things?

Appendix 10 – Interview questions for funeral officiants – humanist/civil

Interview questions for interviewing officiants (humanist/civil)

Please provide demographic information:

What is your age (20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69)?

Your gender?

Your role?

How did you come to be doing this?

Are you a member of any organisation?

What is your occupation?

How long have you been conducting funerals for?

How many funerals have you taken in the last 2 years?

Roughly how many of those people did you know beforehand?

What difference did knowing them make?

If family do not know you, how do they make contact with you?

How much contact do you usually have with the family before the funeral?

How are decisions made about the content of the service?

What about situations where there are differences of opinion? E.g. between you and the family, or between what the deceased wanted and what the family want?

Have you ever been asked to use readings or music that you are not comfortable with? Please give examples.

From your point of view, what do you see as the purpose of the funeral?

Please describe your role.

What qualities help you do this?

Please tell me about a funeral you feel went particularly well, including why it went well.

Please tell me about a funeral you feel did not go well, including why it did not go well.

How would you describe your relationships with undertakers/funeral directors?

In your experience, what impact does the venue have on the service e.g. crematorium?

How does a funeral service involving cremation differ from one involving burial?

Have you taken a funeral somewhere unusual?

Some people say the funeral is really for those left behind. What do you think?

Do you touch the coffin during the service?

When you're leading a funeral are you thinking purely of the family or also, of the rest of the congregation? How do you see yourself linking to all the people that are there?

How do you feel about family participating in such ways as doing readings, giving eulogies?

Have you ever felt awkward whilst conducting a funeral? If yes, why was this?

Do you attend the refreshments afterwards?

What do you hope the funeral provides?

What kind of impact does taking a funeral have on you?

What makes a good funeral for you? What makes a good funeral for the bereaved do you think?

Is there anything else you'd like to say before we end?

Appendix 11: Questions for interviewing those who have arranged a funeral

Interview questions for family members

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed about the funeral of your loved one. If at any point you want the interview to stop, please let me know and we will stop. We will only continue if you are happy to do so.

Please provide demographic information:

What is your age (20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69)?

What is your gender?

What is your occupation?

What was your relationship to the person whose funeral we will speak about?

When was the funeral?

Who did you contact to arrange the funeral?

Was your relative buried or cremated? If cremated, what happened to their ashes?

Thinking about when you were making plans for the funeral service…who did you meet with to discuss the service? Who was present?

How was the content of the funeral service decided upon?

Had your relative ever talked to you about what they would like in the funeral service?

If so, did you follow these closely or were different arrangements made?

Who led the service?

Did you know them before this? What difference did that make?

How did it go?

How many people came?

Was anyone missing?

Was there anybody there that you didn't expect to see there?

Did anyone other than the person leading take part in the funeral?

What did you think of the words that were used?

What did you think of any music that was used?

Was there anything in the service that you did not like?

Was there anything in the service that surprised you?

Was there anything you think should have been done differently?

What about the length of the service? Did you feel it was too short, about right, too long?

Did you feel supported and cared for during the funeral?

Looking back, has it helped you, do you think?

Was there anything in the service that really helped you?

Perhaps it's difficult to speak about this, but I wonder if there's anything you'd like to say about the cost? Funerals are often expensive.

Looking back on the funeral, was it a good one do you think?

Is there anything else you would like to say before we finish?

How has this been for you – talking about the funeral of your ……………?

Appendix 12: Administrative Assistiance confideniality agreement

Confidentiality Agreement

Title of Project: What makes a good funeral?

Name of Researcher: Jane Edwards

In assisting in typing transcripts I agree to maintain confidentiality regarding all data I have access to. I will ensure that any data I am working with is stored securely in password protected files. This confidentiality continues to apply after the end of the study.

<u>**Administrative assistance provided by:**</u>

Name	**Signature**	**Date**
……………………………………………	…………………………………………	………………………

Appendix 13: Ethical Approval application

DURHAM UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES

ETHICAL APPROVAL FORM

Please submit in electronic form

STATEMENT

All work with human participants or ethically sensitive material carried out by members of the University must be assessed for ethics approval, whether it is conducted by undergraduates, postgraduates or staff.

This requirement applies to both original research projects, and to external engagement and impact activities.

This form should be used by all undergraduates, postgraduates and staff.

No research which might have ethical implications can be carried out until the form has been signed by the designated ethics officer in the department or school.

Several categories of research require approval from bodies outside the University: these include research involving patients and users of the NHS, prisoners and young offenders, or any persons to whom either the NHS or

statutory social services have a duty of care. Please consult the department or school ethics officer if you think this may be relevant in your case.

Please name the professional code of conduct/practise/ethics with which you will comply (if appropriate) in the box below.

Ethical Framework of British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

All participants should declare their consent.

Information on consent/assent forms and information sheets for participants must be written in appropriate language or communicated in a way in which the participant can understand.

A model consent form is included at the end of this form, and this should be followed as closely as possible.

When completed, this form should be forwarded to the department/school office for approval by the committee which provides ethical review.

An end-of-project report form should be completed, as assurance that appropriate ethical standards have been maintained. This can be downloaded at https://www.dur.ac.uk/research.office/local/research.governance/research.ethics/ethical.review/

Please confirm by marking an x in the box, that you have completed the Epigeum Ethics modules. See: X

https://www.dur.ac.uk/research.office/local/research.governance/research.ethics/ethical.review/epigeum/

Please type information into boxes, print off and then sign the form.

INVESTIGATOR

1. **Name**

Jane Edwards

[*If any co-investigators, please specify.*]

Undergraduate	☐	Supervisor
		Programme and module
Postgraduate (Taught)	☐	Supervisor
		Programme and module
Postgraduate (Research)	X	Supervisor
		Professor Douglas Davies and Professor Chris Cook
Academic & Research Staff	☐	

PROJECT

2. **Title of project**

What makes a good funeral?

3. **Expected start and end dates**

> Interviews to commence once ethical approval has been granted. If possible, October 2016.

4. **Where will the research take place?**[1]

> Interviews conducted at venues convenient to interviewees. A choice will be offered of the interviewees home, a church hall or an interview room at the local library.

5. **Provide a brief description of the aim(s) of the project**

> To ascertain the elements which constitute a funeral that officiants and bereaved people believe to be most fitting and most helpful.

6. **What data will be collected? (where applicable, sample questions for interviews or questionnaires must be included).**

Written questionnaires ☐

Audio and/or recordings ☐

Interviews ☒

Behavioural measures ☐

Other ☐   Please specify

[   ]

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[1] When conducting or collaborating in research, investigators should comply with the legal and ethical requirements existing in the UK and in any other country where the research is being conducted.

7.   Where appropriate, please state the source of funding for the work

> Grants from St Baldred's Scottish Episcopal Church, The Walker Trust and a contribution from the researcher.

8.   **Proposed outcome**

Dissertation

☒ X

Other type of publication

☒ X   Please specify

> It is hoped that a paper can be published and results disseminated to interested funeral officiants including those within the Scottish Episcopal Church and other groups and denominations.

PARTICIPANTS

Please note: intrusive research[2] involving adults without the capacity to consent must comply with the requirements of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and requires approval by an NHS Research Ethics Committee or the Social Care Research Ethics Committee (SCREC).

9.   What type of participants will be involved?

Professionals   ☒ X   How many?   6-10

Other Adults   ☒ X   How many?   6-10

Minors (17 and under) ☐   How many?

10. How will potential participants be selected and how will you contact them?

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[2]   Intrusive research is defined as research that would be unlawful if it was carried out 'on or in relation to a person who had capacity to consent to it, but without their consent'.

As diverse a range as possible of Anglican clergy will be approached, and as diverse a range of Humanist and Independent Celebrants. Participating officiants will have taken at least one funeral in the last two years. People who have been bereaved within the last two years will be asked if they would like to participate by clergy/Humanist/Independent celebrants passing on a flier (see copy) about the research asking potential interviewees to contact the researcher if interested.

11. **Is there a potential conflict of interest?**

YES ☐   Please specify

NO   ☒

12. **Are there any potential risks to participants and/or researchers?**

YES ☒   Please specify and indicate what precautions are to be taken to minimise these risks

> Risks that bereaved people may become distressed when speaking about the funeral of a loved one. I am a qualified counsellor (British Association of Psychotherapy Accredited) and will seek to employ sensitivity in the questions that are asked, how they are asked, by offering breaks during the interview and reminding interviewees that they do not need to proceed if they do not want to. I will provide information on agencies who could offer free emotional support over the telephone after the interview (see Form 7).
> Risk related to safety of researcher conducting interviews in interviewees' homes. If there are particular concerns over the safety of a particular interview the interviewee will be asked to come to the local library or local church hall. The researcher will carry a phone when meeting interviewees. Details of the location of interviewees will

> be left in a file that can be accessed by the researcher's husband if the researcher does not return after the interview.

NO ☐

13. Has a risk assessment been carried out and, if travelling to another country, has the University Insurance Office been consulted?[3]

YES ☒ Please specify

> To minimise the risk of interviewees finding it upsetting to speak about the funeral of their loved one, participants will be those who have voluntarily contacted the researcher stating they would like to be involved and given consent to be interviewed. Questions will be asked sensitively and participants be able to stop the interview at any time and only continue if they wish to.
> Interviewees will be able to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. An information sheet has been produced for participants so they have organisations to contact after the researcher has left if they feel they need some support.
> If planning to conduct an interview in an interviewees home, a risk assessment on conducting that particular interview will be carried out using Form 6.

NO ☐

Please list any documentation included in the application where appropriate

CONSENT

Participants should be given appropriate information on the project, and express their consent. Please attach a copy of your information sheet and consent/assent forms as well as any other relevant documentation.

---

[3] State special arrangements for indemnification in the event of injury or non-negligent harm to the participants. (For most research done in the department using questionnaires or interviews, no special indemnification is required. In case of doubt, consult the university insurance officer.) Please include any relevant documentation from the University's insurance office.

Where minors are involved, there should also be an information sheet for the teachers and parents/guardians.

14. **Will you seek written or verbal consent from your informants for participation in the project and the use of any data that you might generate?**[4]

YES

| X | Please provide further details |

| Written consent – see consent forms. |

NO

| | Please give reasons |

| |

REQUIREMENTS OF PROFESSIONAL CODE OF CONDUCT

15. **Where research requires approval from bodies outside the University, please state the review body that conducted an independent review of your proposed project and the verdict.**

Name of Review Body

| Not applicable |

Verdict

| |

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

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[4] Please note that when obtaining verbal consent, all information contained in the consent/assent form must be communicated to the participant.

16. Will the data be anonymised*?*

YES

$\boxed{X}$

NO

☐   Please give reasons[5]

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                 │
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17. Indicate what steps will be taken to safeguard the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants' records, if applicable, and confirm that the requirements of the Data Protection Act (1998) will be complied with. See the 8 Principles http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents

> Interview recordings will be kept securely, in computer files that are password protected. Interviewees names and contact details will be kept separately in a locked cabinet.

18. Who will have access to the data both during and after the study and will all members of the research team have access to personal data during this time?

> The researcher and if necessary, someone who will assist with typing transcripts and sign a confidentiality agreement.

19. In the event that a participant withdraws their consent, what will happen to the data for that participant?

> It will be destroyed.

20. Will the data be destroyed at the end of the study?

YES

$\boxed{X}$

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[5]   If you do not intend to anonymise your data, you should specify if your consent/assent form(s) include an explicit request to acknowledge participants by name and guarantee that they will be anonymised if they so request.

NO ☐ Please give reasons[6]

> How long will it be kept after the end of the study?

> How will you ensure that it will be kept securely?

Password-protected hard disk ☐

Locked cabinet ☐

Other ☐

Please specify

21. Please enter any other information relevant to the approval of the application which is not covered by this form.

The study is part of a PhD.

PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION

22. What is the proposed dissemination plan for this project?

A summary to be offered to participants and more widely to funeral officiants and other celebrants working in Scotland through email. A

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[6] A very strong case should be made for data to be kept (see principle 5 in the Principles for Data Protection http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents). It is expected that in the vast majority of cases data gathered for UG projects will be destroyed at the end of the relevant examination period. Students intending to keep their data for possible future use (e.g. for a PG degree course) need to explain the exceptional nature of these circumstances.

journal paper to be submitted for publication in a relevant academic journal.	

23. Will participants be given a lay summary of the research findings?

YES   [X]   Please provide further details

All interviewees will be offered a lay summary of the findings.

NO   [ ]   Please give reasons

CHECKLIST

Please indicate below, where applicable, the material that will be used in collecting research materials and obtaining agreement from participants. Copies of documents should be supplied as appendices to this form, when submitted.

Please number documents and enter corresponding number(s) in first column against relevant document name(s).

Where documents have been translated into another language, a copy in that language must be submitted in addition to a copy in English.

NUMBER(S)	DOCUMENT(S)	YES/NO/n/a
1	Recruitment material	Yes - flier
2	Letter of invitation to participate	Yes – email
3 a & 3b	Information sheet	Yes
4	Consent form/(s)/assent form(s), e.g. interview consent, recording agreement	Yes
	Access request/agreement	N/A
5a, 5b, 5c	Interview questions	Yes

6	Risk assessment (when or where required)	Yes
	Evidence of consultation with the University's Insurance Office	N/A
7	Other	Yes – post interview information sheet
8	Other	Yes- Confidentiality agreement for person assisting tying transcripts.

I confirm that I will contact the Chair of the Departmental Ethics Committee or other designated officer:

1. where the project continues unchanged, three years after the date of approval;

2. where there is any change to the project, from the date of that change;

3. where there is any change to the legislation/regulations affecting this project, from the date of that change.

I confirm that I have read:

1. The University's document on Ensuring Sound Conduct in Research

   www.dur.ac.uk/resources/hr/policies/research/ResearchIntegritypolicyandcodeofpractise.docx and believe that my project complies fully with its precepts.

2. The Principles for Data Protection (Data Protection Act 1998)

   http://www.dur.ac.uk/data.protection/dp_principles/

3. The Guidance for Research Using Personal Information

   http://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/data.protection/100929ResearchDPAAdviceV1.3.pdf

Applicant's Signature	**Date**
Jane Edwards	01/09/2016

Supervisor's Signature **(If UG or PG student)**	**Date**
Douglas Davies	01/09/2016

DECLARATION BY CHAIR OF DEPARTMENTAL ETHICS COMMITTEE OR OTHER DESIGNATED OFFICER:

I confirm that:

1. I have read and approved this application for consideration by the Departmental Ethics Committee/other designated officer

2. The principal investigator and other key researchers have the necessary expertise and experience and have access to the resources needed to conduct the proposed research successfully.

3. This application is approved*/not approved* by the Departmental Ethics Committee/other designated officer.

   * delete as appropriate

Signed ……………………………………….. Date …………………………

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