

Funeral and Bereavement Course for ALMs and Readers

Course outcomes, ministry agreement guidelines, and session outlines

October 2018- March 2019

Course outcomes

In partnership with the training minister the course will seek to prepare the student to competently lead a funeral service and minister to the bereaved on behalf of their local church.

The course will seek to prepare students for this ministry by:

- creating a learning environment and subject matter that recognizes their considerable life experience
- enabling a good awareness of the bereavement process
- connecting theological insights with contemporary understanding of death and its associated rituals
- giving practical experience in leading a service and using resources for funeral liturgy and pastoral care
- Engaging with pastoral issues that affect funeral liturgy and how to address them
- Addressing ministry issues about the implications of being a 'representative' minister of the local church
- Encouraging student's self evaluative skills about the effectiveness of their ministry, their capabilities and limitations, and to work in a supervisory relationship with their incumbent
- Fostering a collaborative approach to this ministry

It will be the responsibility of the training minister/incumbent in conjunction with the PCC to assess the readiness of the student to engage in this ministry.

Ministry Agreement guidelines

In partnership with the Incumbent and PCC, the student and training minister will supplement any current Ministry Agreement stating the form of ministry undertaken, its parameters and support structures. These should be initiated in outline before Part 2 of the course by the training minister. The intention is that the student should know clearly what the training minister is expecting once this training is completed, and the student can work towards these expectations.

The issues that need to be considered within the particular church context are:

- If, and what type of authorization might be appropriate and how this is communicated.
- Any parameters on what type of funeral services/ bereavement ministry the ALM/Reader will engage in.
- How the ALM/Reader will be 'apprenticed' in doing funerals, or on a 'trial' period and for how long
- A PCC approval for the ALM/Reader to undertake this ministry within this ministry agreement
- Authority structures when the incumbent is absent or when there is no incumbent
- Time duration of ALM/Reader authorization
- Meeting structures with supervising minister/team
- Clear request/supervisory structures in regards to ministry teams and funeral directors
- Support group/team memberships/individual support needs and parameters

- The allocation of fees eg. to the diocese/parish and how this is to be done
- How the ALM/Reader will be 'introduced to the bereaved' and funeral directors, `eg as one of the team, an ALM, a Reader, non-ordained, etc

Course Sessions and Practical Training

The sessions and practical training will be the responsibility of the course tutors and the training ministers. This section outlines the proposed taught sessions by the tutors and the practical tasks overseen by the training ministers.

Part 1

Induction Session-(30th October)

Course introduction, tasks to be completed with training minister and completing training agreements
Please make sure your incumbent has this date.

1. Death – what it is – what it means in our lives (6th November)

Aim: to engage with the reality of death in our own and other peoples' lives.

Outcomes: By the end of this session students will have:

1. considered their own experiences of bereavement in order to help others.
2. discussed different types of death in order to reflect on their impact on family and friends necessitating different types of funeral in varied contexts.
3. begun to reflect on their own understanding of death and issues of eternal life and judgement.
4. reflected on self-support structures and what 'supervision' might mean

2. Before the Funeral (13th November)

Aim: to consider the process of bereavement care and to focus on pre-funeral ministry.

Outcomes: By the end of this session students will have:

1. viewed the process and importance of bereavement care from start to finish.
2. reviewed those tasks which need to be completed before a funeral.
3. considered the pre-funeral visit; its purpose and content.
4. discussed what makes a 'good' funeral.

Practical task:

A. To accompany incumbent on pre-funeral visit to observe the process and then to attend the funeral and post-funeral visit using prepared pro-forma questions.

B. Before the funeral to prepare a eulogy based on what was heard at the visit. Subsequently to reflect on this with the incumbent.

3 The Funeral (20th November)

Aim: To understand the format of a funeral service and to explore its purpose and execution.

Outcomes: By the end of this session students will have:

1. learned how the funeral service is conducted and why.

2. considered the 'gospel' that is being shared in the funeral service and how we share it.
3. developed strategy for a 'team' approach to the funeral

Task

C. To observe at least one service in church and one at the crematorium and write notes on the process for sharing again using prepared questions.

If possible, to observe a number of funerals (taken by different ministers) at the crematorium and in church.

Break: *Time to complete tasks A,B,C and also D, which is to visit a funeral director and observe the 'process' from their perspective. If possible spending time behind the scenes at the crematorium.*

Part 2

4. Reflection on the experience so far (22nd January)

Aim: To review and consolidate learning to date.

Outcomes: By the end of this session students will have:

1. shared individual experiences.
2. pooled understanding of good practice.
3. begun to prepare for their own practical experience and self-evaluation.
4. been introduced to a range of resources which could be used e.g. music, poetry, art and artefacts.

Practical Work

E. Doing a dummy run in church.

F. Being observed by your training minister doing a first funeral and reflecting on it.

5. Mourning and Grief (12th February 2019)

Aim: To appreciate the process of grieving and its implications for the bereaved.

Outcomes: By the end of this session students will have:

1. looked at models of the grieving process.
2. considered reactions to the death of a loved one and the tasks of mourning.
3. become aware of when it is necessary to refer on and to whom.
4. increased knowledge of resources for supporting the bereaved

6. Post-Funeral Care, reflection on the course, and ministry agreements (5th March 2019)

Aim: To reflect on the process from beginning to end and to answer unanswered questions.

Outcomes: By the end of this session students will have:

1. thought about the need for ongoing care and its practical implications for the minister and the bereaved
2. had time to reflect on the course and its implications for ministry.
3. drawn together threads of their learning in preparation for their ministry agreement.