



Arranging a Funeral in the Var

The most important difference in France is that Burial or Cremation must take place within six days of death. For a Jewish or Muslim person the burial or cremation should take place in 24 hours. If it is impossible to collect family and friends in time for the six day time limit, the surviving spouse could consider arranging a small private funeral for close relatives followed by a memorial service at a more appropriate time.

In France it is the custom to leave the coffin open until the time of the funeral. One of the relatives or an appointed representative would usually be expected to be present when the coffin is officially closed. The funeral director must be informed if the family does not wish to be present. The undertakers can usually make all the necessary arrangements and help with formalities, if this is requested.

The family has to decide whether they wish for flowers or a donation to a specific charity. As a general rule the crematorium will not welcome flowers, they usually prefer there to be only one wreath on the coffin, from the family. With Burials there is more scope for individual choice.

The next decision to be made is regarding the funeral cortege. Will there be one starting from the home or would the family prefer the mourners to meet the family at the Crematorium ('crématorium') or Church?

An order of service needs to be printed, not difficult when many families own a Personal Computer. The time of the service and place must be notified to the mourners. Crematoria in general tend to work to a tight schedule, so care needs to be taken that enough time is booked for the service.

There are several priests willing to officiate at services even if the family is not normally members of their congregation (see list below). If the deceased is not well known to the priest, he must be given good biographical details even if there is to be a eulogy. As well as the full name, age, place of birth, length of marriage, time in France, the priest will need to know the names of his wife, his children and grandchildren and any surviving siblings. He will also be able to help in arranging the order of the service and the choice of the hymns if necessary.

For a service at a Crematorium special thought needs to be given to the arrangement of music. Each crematorium may differ but, generally, all that will be provided is a sound system capable of playing recorded music. There may not be a piano or organ. So, in this case, an organist would need to bring his/her own portable keyboard if the family wishes to have music to



accompany the chosen hymns. As time is limited, usually it's only possible to have two hymns. For a service, music is also needed while the congregation

is entering and leaving the chapel. It is a common tradition that music is chosen which was significant for the deceased or the family. The organist must be informed so that he/she can bring the appropriate music, and, if necessary, practice beforehand.

Who will deliver the Eulogy? Where in the order of the service will it be placed? What other readings will be chosen, from the bible or other sources, and who will read them?

At the end of a church service, the mourners leave the chapel, leaving the coffin in place at the front, near the altar. Only the family, or one member, witnesses it being moved on its final journey. Perhaps a close friend can be asked to stay in the chapel with the coffin until the crematorium staff come to move it.

Transport to and from the church must be considered, especially if refreshments are being offered after the service at a location other than the family home. Often a friend will take upon themselves the task of organizing the food and drink and the venue. There does not seem to be an invariable rule as to what should be offered. At one end of the scale, it could be a few simple nibbles and a glass of wine. At the other end, family and close friends may go to a restaurant for a full meal. The healing process, which starts with the service, is helped by family and friends being able to remember the good times they had together. A funeral should be, as well as a time of mourning, a time to celebrate the life and achievements of the deceased.

The urn containing the ashes is usually available for collection at the end of the following day but the funeral director can be asked to deliver them to the home of a family member. If it is intended to bury the ashes at sea, ask for a special porous urn with a weighted base.

The bereaved family will continue to need support in the days, weeks and years after the death of a loved one. Sometimes friends neglect the survivors, once the funeral is over, assuming that the family will be able to carry on as if nothing has happened. Spouses need to talk; children need reassurance that it was not their fault that the parent has gone away. Feelings of anger, guilt, grief, despair and other emotions need an opportunity to surface so that they can be faced and worked through.

The Bereavement Support Network of the Var (www.bsnvar.org) may be able to help work through some of these difficulties. They can be contacted through Sandra on 04 94 84 64 89 or 06 32 35 31 24, and on this email address info@bsnvar.org



Ministers in the Var who are able to conduct funeral services:

Rev Keith Bretel
Church of St. John the Evangelist
Ave. Paul Doumer
St. Raphael
04 94 95 45 78
www.sjevar.com
info@sjevar.com

Rev. Sister CECILE CGA Harrison (Church of England)
La Prasada
Qua. Subrane
83440 Montaroux
04 94 47 74 26
www.cgaprasada.com
cga.prasada@orange.fr

Father Michael HAYES (Roman Catholic)
28 Rue Gambetta
83990 St. Tropez
04 94 97 15 47

Father Peter WATTS (Roman Catholic)
Presbytère
10 Rue Gacharel
83310 Grimaud
04 94 43 20 56

Rev Peter Massey (Anglican)
ARK Pastoral Care
1801 Chemin des Pailles
83510 Lorgues
04 94 73 93 37
Fax 04 94 99 40 74
petermassey@arkpastoralcare.org
www.arkpastoralcare.org

Rev Isobel Prichatt (Non-Conformist)
129 Chemin Font Salade
Domaine des Charles
83490 Le Muy
04 94 45 18 44
bobandisobelp@gmail.com



Crematoria in the Var

Crématorium de Vidauban
quartier d'Aubrèdes
175 boulevard des Pins Parassols
83550 VIDAUBAN
tél. : 04 94 99 73

Crématorium de Cuers
quartier Saint Roch
83390 CUERS
tél. : 04 94 28 50 69

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