

Music in Funerals and Memorial Services

Organ music and congregational hymns can be powerful components of a funeral or memorial service. Hymns sung by those gathered together can both allow them to praise God and express both faith and emotions, and provide a sense of unity and community through the medium of song. Upon occasion, choral or other vocal or instrumental music can make sense in the context of a particular service, though it might not be meaningful or practical in all cases.

Music for funerals and memorial services is appropriately arranged in consultation with, and at the discretion of, the clergy and the Director of Music. Since time for planning is often short, it can be very helpful to make musical arrangements well in advance. The Director of Music is happy to meet at a mutually convenient time to discuss service plans with individuals or families.

If desired, hymns may occupy any or all of several places in the liturgy: following the Collect, between the Lessons, during the Offertory or Communion, in a Eucharist, or prior to the Commendation or Committal. Some hymns that those planning services might wish to consider as being particularly appropriate to the context of a funeral or memorial service are listed below (note that these are by no means limited to the hymns specifically headed “Burial” in *The Hymnal 1982*).

<i>Hymn number</i>	<i>First line</i>
194/195	<i>Jesus lives! thy terrors now</i>
208	<i>Alleluia...The strife is o'er, the battle done</i>
335	<i>I am the Bread of Life</i>
620	<i>Jerusalem, my happy home</i>
624	<i>Jerusalem the golden, with milk and honey blest</i>
645/646	<i>The King of love my shepherd is</i>
662	<i>Abide with me! fast falls the eventide</i>
671	<i>Amazing grace! how sweet the sound</i>
680	<i>O God, our help in ages past</i>
688	<i>A mighty fortress is our God</i>
690	<i>Guide me, O thou great Jehovah</i>
L 8	<i>Deep River [Lift Every Voice & Sing, II]</i>
L 12	<i>We're marching to Zion [Lift Every Voice & Sing, II]</i>
L 147	<i>Come, ye disconsolate [Lift Every Voice & Sing, II]</i>
L 181	<i>Amazing grace! how sweet the sound [Lift Every Voice & Sing, II]</i>
L 184	<i>Blessed assurance [Lift Every Voice & Sing, II]</i>
L 188	<i>It is well with my soul [Lift Every Voice & Sing, II]</i>

Upon occasion hymns may be requested that are not included in the hymnals found in our pews; modest copyright permission fees must usually be paid for the reproduction of such hymns in a service-leaflet.

Organ music for funerals and memorial services can run the gamut from tragic to jubilant, from contemplative to triumphant. The array listed below is by no means exhaustive, but is organized by what might be termed “emotional themes,” attempting briefly to characterize each piece verbally for ease of reference. (Recordings can readily be found by Internet-search, but links come and go so quickly that it would be futile to compile them here.)

From Tragic to Solemn

<i>Fantasia in C minor</i>	Johann Sebastian Bach
<i>Prelude and Fugue in B minor</i>	Bach
<i>Fugue in G minor</i>	Bach
<i>Adagio</i>	Samuel Barber
<i>Passacaglia in D minor</i>	Dieterich Buxtehude
Nimrod (from <i>Enigma Variations</i>)	Edward Elgar
<i>Elegy</i>	Alexandre Guilmant
<i>Master Tallis's Testament</i>	Herbert Howells
<i>Cantilena</i>	Joseph Rheinberger

From Contemplative to Confident, Mostly Quiet

Prelude on <i>All glory be to God on high</i>	Johann Sebastian Bach
Prelude on <i>Deck Thyself, My Soul, with Gladness</i>	Bach
Prelude on <i>Before thy Throne, O God, I come</i>	Bach
Adagio e dolce (<i>Sonata No. 2</i>)	Bach
<i>Elegy</i>	George Thalben Ball
Prelude on <i>Blessed Are Ye</i>	Johannes Brahms
Prelude on <i>Deck Thyself, My Soul, with Gladness</i>	Brahms
Prelude on <i>O World, I Must Now Leave Thee</i>	Brahms
<i>Adagio in E major</i>	Frank Bridge
<i>Cantabile</i>	Franck
Allegretto (<i>Sonata No. 4</i>)	Felix Mendelssohn
Andante Tranquillo (<i>Sonata No. 3</i>)	Mendelssohn
<i>Benedictus</i>	Alec Rowley
Prelude on <i>Rhosymedre</i>	Ralph Vaughan Williams
<i>Berceuse</i>	Louis Vierne

Joyful (and even Triumphant)

<i>Prelude and Fugue in E flat</i>	Johann Sebastian Bach
<i>Prelude & Fugue in C major, BWV 545</i>	Bach
<i>Allabreve in D</i>	Bach
<i>Choral No. 1 in E major</i>	César Franck
Prelude on <i>There is a Happy Land</i>	George Shearing
<i>Toccata from Symphonie No. 5</i>	Charles-Marie Widor

Note that orchestral music, while sometimes effective in transcription, is not always readily adaptable, particularly under the time-constraints of funeral-preparation.