

FUNERALS WITH BAGPIPES

Music is an integral part of funeral services. For hundreds of years, people have commemorated bereavement with the music of the pipes.

The association of funerals with bagpipes stem from what they do best: touch the deepest emotions where words fail to reach. Often, I am called upon to carry out this most poignant of piping duties. I take pride in being a small part of the tribute to a family member or someone's lifelong friend.

If you require a piper for a funeral, you can be assured of my professional, dignified approach and attention to details. Laying to rest of a dear one is a difficult time, yet playing pipes at a funeral can bring both peace and closeness to those gathered.



Each service is unique and requires expertise of an experienced piper committed to providing the requisite grace and dignity. Traditional highland attire is a must for a proper appearance.

Piping can occur almost anytime during the service and/or at graveside. Your church may have restrictions, so consult its clergy. Most funeral homes have their own on-site chapel and have no objections to pipes being played there.

The most requested time during a church or chapel service is at the Recessional. At smaller churches, I've remained outside to keep volume level tolerable. I arrive early enough to meet family members.

In the MidSouth, piping usually occurs at graveside:

- 1) I lead casket as it is carried to graveside by pallbearers.
- 2) Upon completion of minister's words or benediction, I perform something appropriate - usually Amazing Grace.
- 3) And at the Dismissal, from a distance I play something slightly more upbeat.

If a military detail is rendering honors, there will be a additions, but all else remains basically unchanged. Go to www.midsouthfuneralpiper.com/military.html for details of what to expect at a military honors funeral.

The most requested tune is Amazing Grace. My *modus operandi* is to perform it with three verses. Upon reaching the 3rd verse, I turn around and walk away, while remaining in sight of the family. This creates a fading effect that is quite moving.

Traditionally, bagpipes were thought to possess mystical powers. Supposedly they are the only musical instrument that can be heard in Heaven. A piper helps to direct departed souls towards Heaven's Gates. The walking away symbolizes the piper leading the departed to the Hereafter yet stopping short of the Gate through which he cannot pass.

Based on my experiences, I offer the following:

1. In the Memphis area and MidSouth, I am privileged to be the in-house piper for several funeral homes. There's a very good chance he will know me personally and can make the necessary arrangements. If not, inform him you have hired me to perform at the service. Be assured, he will have no objections, however, funeral directors should be informed prior to the service.
2. Include above information into burial pre-arrangements. The funeral director will notify me and remove the burden of contact from the family.

3. In the event that I cannot be secured for the funeral, there are other ways the memory of a loved one can be honored. It is standard practice in many churches that people are allowed to place flowers in memory of deceased family and friends. Similarly, I have been asked by families to play during a regular worship service. Most churches welcome the opportunity, and it will be received by a host of appreciative listeners.

Special Considerations...

- There are countless tunes written specifically for the pipes for any occasion. Bagpipes have a narrow range of 9 notes without accidentals and an odd scale, so many popular tunes are impossible to play. I do possess a collection of over 600 hymns transcribed for the pipes though. Should you desire a specific hymn, chances are good that I can perform it.
- If you personally contacted me to perform, it is especially considerate to inform the funeral director that a piper will be present. There will be no objections. They go to great lengths to organize services, so it is important they are aware of my attendance so they may include me in their Order of Service.
- If you are a not-so-close family member or friend who wishes to hire me, I urge you to seek the family's permission of your intentions. Graveside is hardly the place for a "Surprise!"
- Funerals often have short notice and it's not unusual for me to have 1-3 services scheduled the same day. Please provide me as much advance notice as possible, and even better, do so before final plans are arranged so that details can be worked out with you to ensure my presence.

Southern weather can be extreme. Memphis can be scorching in July, or frigid in February. I have performed at gravesides with air temperatures above 100°. I've piped at wintry services with temperatures with my record low of 8° F. And I've performed in drenching rain and thunderstorms - all successfully.

Please do not deny yourself my services at a loved one's service because of extreme weather and concern for my well-being. I have the expertise, seasonal gear, and extensive experience to make certain I am well prepared to perform as asked.



Kind regards,
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