

Funeral Ministry Training Course 2026-27

Purpose of the Course

To build understanding, skills and confidence in this ministry, in order to:

- equip Readers who are recommended by their Oversight Minister/PCC to explore the possibility of leading funerals as a new aspect of their ongoing ministry;
- open up funeral training for selected lay ministers, recommended by their Oversight Minister/PCC, for whom funeral ministry will be a specialised ministry;
- provide a refresher for any clergy who would value it.

Course Leaders

The course is overseen and supported by Toby Hole, with input and facilitation from a team: Mark Newitt, Michael Towle, Sarah Maughan and Beryl Adamson.

Introduction

The course runs from October 2026 to June 2027. It involves meeting together at Church House in Rotherham and also online, plus a supervised placement. These are the dates:

Sat 17 October	10am to 1pm	Church House
Tue 17 November	7pm to 9pm	Zoom
Tue 12 January	7pm to 9pm	Zoom
Tue 9 February	7pm to 9pm	Zoom
Sat 13 March	10am to 1pm	Church House
Tue 13 April	7pm to 9pm	Zoom
Tue 11 May	7pm to 9pm	Zoom
Sat 12 June	10am to 1pm	Church House

One of the later dates and times might be adjusted for a visit to a Crematorium, if an opportunity suitable for participants can be created.

Certificates for completion of the course will be presented at the Celebration of Lay Ministries service on Saturday 26 September 2026. If you do not already hold a

Bishop's licence, then on successful completion of the course you can be licensed on the same date.

Course Content

Theological

- Death, resurrection and Christian hope - and how all this feeds into preaching and the crafting of the service.
- Funerals as missional opportunities.
- Becoming more theologically reflective practitioners (initially related to the placement experiences)

Pastoral

- How we regard death and experience bereavement.
- Visiting and caring for people of all ages before, during and after the funeral.
- Leading funerals which may be particularly different / difficult.

Practicalities

- Familiarisation with the Common Worship service materials and other resources.
- Preparing well for the funeral.
- Speaking at a funeral:
 - o Sermons
 - o Tributes
- Relating well to Funeral Directors (includes input from an FD in person).
- Different settings: in church, at crematorium, at a graveside (includes a visit to a Crematorium)
- Other services: burial of cremated remains, memorial services.
- Legalities: permissions, fees, graveyards.
- Local practicalities: liaising with your Oversight Minister.

Supervised Ministry Placement

The placement is supervised by the Oversight Minister or another supervising minister. The following tasks are to be completed:

- As an observer not a mourner, attend a funeral in a church and another in a crematorium, each led by different people.
- Accompany the OM/supervising minister through the process of a pre-funeral visit, and the subsequent funeral. Afterwards meet with them to discuss and reflect upon the experience.
- Lead or assist in leading a funeral with the OM/supervising minister present. Reflect on this experience with them afterwards.

- Meet with a Funeral Director and visit a Crematorium (if possible).

Throughout the placement keep a Reflective Journal – to be submitted by 1st May
(send by email to lucy.bissett@sheffield.anglican.org)

Assessment

The course facilitators, along with the OM/supervising minister, will make an assessment and recommendation to the diocesan Bishop with regard to licensing, based on the Reflective Journal and on participation in the gathered sessions.

If not already up to date, the **Safeguarding Leadership module** must be completed before licensing.

Timetable

Sat 17 October 2026 (Church House 10am to 1pm)

- Introduction to the course and each other.
- An introduction to funerals in the UK (statistics, trends etc.)
- How do we feel about ageing, illness and death? How do we contemplate the prospect of our own death? What is our experience of the death of ones we love?
- A brief theology of death, salvation and eternal life. What is the Christian hope?

Tue 17 November (Zoom, 7pm to 9pm)

- Understanding bereavement and the process of grief.
- Our own experiences of grief (which may not involve death).
- Terminal illness and pre-death grieving.

Tue 12 January 2027 (Zoom 7pm to 9pm)

- Deathbed ministry and prayers for the dying. Listening well.
- Questions around faith, healing, dying well etc.
- Pastoral care for the terminally ill and dying. Handling our desire to fix things

Tue 9 February (Zoom 7pm to 9pm)

- Planning and designing a funeral (or thanksgiving) service. Understanding ritual and rites of passage.
- The Structure and options in Common Worship.
- Implicit and explicit theologies – songs, tributes, music, other faiths etc. Is it ever right to say “no”?

Sat 13 March (Church House 10am to 1pm)

- Funeral Directors and their experience of death and dying.
- Working well with Funeral Directors.
- What happens between death and a funeral.

- Visiting next of kin in preparation for a funeral. Important questions to ask.

Tue 13 April (Zoom 7pm to 9pm)

- Writing a funeral talk.
- Making good use of Scripture and prayers.
- Leading a funeral for non-churchgoers.

Tue 11 May (Zoom 7pm to 9pm)

- After the funeral. Follow up visits and strategies.
- Direct cremations; burial of ashes.
- Missional opportunities (bereavement cafes, Blue Christmas, memorial services etc).

Sat 12 June (Church House 10am to 1pm)

- Difficult funerals – children, murder, suicide; also people you were close to.
- Dealing with family disagreements.
- Culturally different funerals.
- Taking care of yourself and recognising your vulnerabilities.
- Resources available.
- Q & A.