

WHAT I LEARNED FROM PRINCE PHILIP'S FUNERAL



Like the millions of people around the world, I watched Prince Philip's ceremonial royal funeral at St George's Chapel, in the grounds of Windsor Castle on Saturday 17 April 2021.

Although Prince Philip's funeral had been adapted to deal with pandemic, I still expected his funeral to be one of grandeur and spectacle. But I was taken aback by the simplicity of the ceremony.

As I watched the funeral being live streamed around the world, I reflected on a once very traditional industry which is being changed by new technology and shifts in consumer demand.

So, what were the biggest things I learned from Prince Philip's funeral?

The importance of pre-planning Prince Philip planned every detail of his funeral "down to the letter". He wanted a 'no fuss' funeral.

Instead of a grand coffin on show, Prince Philip's coffin was covered with his personal standard, on which was placed his sword, naval cap and a wreath of flowers.

There was no sermon delivered during the funeral service. There were no members of the royal family giving readings and there is no eulogy. This was all in keeping with Prince Philip's wishes.

The Prince selected the songs and music to be played at his funeral such as the hymn Eternal Father, Strong to Save, which is traditionally associated with seafarers and the maritime armed services.

Like Prince Philip, we should all consider pre-planning our funeral in advance. Not only will you get the the sort of funeral you would like, you are also empowering your loved ones to make informed decisions and they will be able to put your wishes to action.

Traditional funerals still matter Unfortunately, our mourning-avoiding culture has to a large extent seen a rise in direct cremation and a break away from convention in rituals. "Direct cremation" is a low-cost, no-frills option where there is no funeral service and mourners aren't present.

Although direct cremation has become more popular, Prince Philip's funeral demonstrated the importance of a service. For his family and the world who was watching, it had meaning.

Funeral traditions still play an important part of the grieving process and help to combat anxiety, fear, and pain. Noted author, educator and psychologist Dr. Alan Wolfelt, provides the following insight on the value of the funeral ritual:

"Rituals are symbolic activities that help us, together with our families and friends, express our deepest thoughts and feelings about life's most important events. Baptism celebrates the birth of a child and that child's acceptance into the church family. Birthday parties honor the passing of another year in the life of someone we love. Weddings publicly affirm the private love shared by two people.

The funeral ritual, too, is a public, traditional and symbolic means of expressing our beliefs, thoughts and feelings about the death of someone loved. Rich in history and rife with symbolism, the funeral ceremony helps us acknowledge the reality of the death, gives testimony to the life of the deceased, encourages the expression of grief in a way consistent with the culture's values, provides support to mourners, allows for the embracing of faith and beliefs about life and death, and offers continuity and hope for the living."

While direct cremation offers many advantages, a no service-no attendance cremation may not be therapeutic enough to satisfy surviving family members. In addition, direct cremation may not allow the family to celebrate the life of the deceased, nor does it give friends an opportunity to say goodbye.

So, when you are faced with the responsibility of organising a funeral, consider its value to the deceased and family and friends left behind.

Live streaming is becoming more popular Prince Philips funeral was live streamed to millions of people around the world. Whilst the members of the Royal Family were in attendance, we were all allowed to participate from home.

It made me think how live streaming has evolved in recent years. The idea of live-streaming a loved one's funeral on Facebook or Instagram may seem strange or even shocking, but in these times of lockdown, more and more families are turning to social media to allow people to attend funerals in real time.

It is a relatively new technology now being adopted by a number of our member funeral directors which allows mourners who are unable to attend a funeral for any reason to watch the event remotely from a device connected to the Internet.

Funeral Directors are more important than ever The importance of the main organiser of the funeral cannot be understated. Although the funeral service was conducted by the Dean of Windsor, there would have been someone assigned to make sure everything planned for the funeral went smoothly.

It made me think about the importance of a funeral director. Funeral directors have always been deeply valued and esteemed members of their communities. However, the important work they do can sometimes be misunderstood, feared, or even overlooked.

Losing a loved one is a difficult process for everyone, and we seek guidance by someone we can trust. A funeral director is not only there to arrange the final services of the deceased. They also serve as a steward of the living, guiding us through the array of choices and decisions. A funeral director provides insight, comfort, and compassion at a moment's notice.

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Our member Funeral Directors operate in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Australia wide. They are chosen for their knowledge, quality, service, personalisation and experience. They go above and beyond, and will take the time to support the family.

For more information or to make contact with a trusted Independent funeral director, call eziFunerals on 1300 236 402 or visit www.ezifunerals.com.au.

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