



Celebration of Life

Although very different in nature, a Celebration of Life and a Funeral have much in common. Both gather people who have shared a common loss. A Funeral is rooted in tradition, while a Celebration of Life is less formal, less ceremonial and reflects a change in tradition.

Both serve to do two things:

1. Help the bereaved family and their community, publically acknowledge the death of one of their own.
2. Support the grieving family by surrounding them with caring friends, co-workers, and neighbours.

Yet the Funeral and the Celebration of Life achieve those things in very different ways.

WHAT IS A CELEBRATION OF LIFE?

A Celebration of Life is a gathering, which honours the life of a loved one. It both pays tribute to and celebrates the life and spirit of the deceased. A Celebration of Life is as unique as the life of the person. Working with the Funeral Director, the family plans the celebration reflective of the individual's life. The celebration brings together the unique lifestyle and personality of the deceased; perhaps even sharing in a passion such as music, hobbies, favourite food or a toast of their preferred wine.

WHAT QUESTIONS DO I NEED TO ANSWER WHEN PLANNING A CELEBRATION OF LIFE?

- 1. Is the Casket present or an urn?** Often when a family opts for a Celebration of Life, cremation takes place before and the urn (or a photo of the deceased) is present. However, if the family wishes to have the casket present, Beechwood can accommodate and still make the event less traditional.
- 2. Who will be invited?** The Celebration of Life can be a private event, where guests are personally invited by the family. Or, the family may opt for a public event, where the celebration is made known via social media or in print media with an obituary. Both options are feasible, it is a matter of personal choice.
- 3. Where and when should the event take place?** Beechwood has warm and welcoming spaces that can accommodate a sitting event or a mingling crowd. The reception suite offers access to audio-video equipment and is a wonderful place to share food, drinks and laughter. A private location is also an option - however the preparation of the event can be taxing on the bereaved and often very tired family. As for the when - many families decide to have the service within a week or so of the death occurring. However, you may choose to delay the event to allow family and friends who come from afar.

- 4. Who will be leading the event?** Often, during a Celebration of Life, there is no formal ceremony and therefore no need for an officiant. The family may opt to address its guests thanking them for attending and share a eulogy during the course of the event with no formality.
- 5. What if someone wishes to speak at the event – give a eulogy?** You will want to select someone who was special in the deceased's life, who shared a close relationship and has something meaningful to contribute. Make sure that the speakers have written down their eulogies and shared them with one another as to eliminate duplication.
- 6. What food or beverages should be served?** What you serve depends on the theme of your celebration, or may be based on your loved one's favourite dishes. From traditional menus to wine and cheese or a high tea service – the options are limitless! Offering alcoholic beverages can give people a chance to toast the deceased and casually share memories.
- 7. What music should you include?** Music is an integral part of life for many people. A Celebration of Life is the perfect event in which to showcase that. This can be done with a pre-recorded playlist or by a band, a harpist, a guitarist or a live performance.
- 8. What details of your loved one's life do you want to share with guests?** Not every biographical detail needs to be highlighted; rather, you should try to capture the essence by revealing important memories and stories. Sometimes, you can reveal their character by detailing one short moment in their life.
- 9. What memorabilia or mementoes will you have?** Many families create a tribute video and use it as the centrepiece of the event. Others choose to use a memory table of photographs or other memorabilia such as golf clubs, musical instruments, books, knitting needles, or collectibles that may show another side of the person that may have been unknown.
- 10. What could a Celebration of Life look like?** Family and friends gather in Beechwood's Borden and Fleming Suites, from 1pm until 4pm. At approximately 1:30pm, a member of the family thanks all those in attendance and gives a 5-10 minute eulogy. Once the eulogy is complete, a toast in honour of the deceased is shared while a light lunch is served.

The goal of the Celebration of Life is to pay tribute to the deceased person's life in a celebratory way while lifting everyone's spirits by focusing on positive memories.

The Celebration of Life is a beautiful way to honour the passing of loved ones while sharing the memories of their life.

Preplanning can allow your loved ones to personalize their Celebration of Life and ensure that every aspect of the service is unique to them. Please contact our preplanning specialists to schedule your no-obligation appointment today.

