GENERAL

how to write a funeral resolution

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When a family member or friend passes away, the emotional toll can be overwhelming. Amid grief, practical tasks often pile up, and one important yet overlooked duty is drafting a funeral resolution. A funeral resolution is a formal document that outlines the wishes for the funeral or memorial service, and it can guide clergy, funeral directors, and family members through a smooth, respectful process. This guide explains what a funeral resolution is, why it matters, and, most importantly, how to write one that reflects your loved one's life, values, and your family's needs.

What Is a Funeral Resolution?

A funeral resolution is a written statement—often a letter or formal document—submitted to the funeral home, church, or other service provider to communicate the deceased's and family's preferences for the funeral or memorial service. It typically includes:

- Details about burial or cremation
- Desired officiant or clergy
- Music and readings
- Order of service
- Special requests (e.g., donation to charity, use of a particular location)
- Contact information for key family members or friends who will coordinate the event

While the exact format may vary by region or religious tradition, the core purpose remains the same: to ensure that the service honors the deceased and provides clarity for everyone involved.

Why Is a Funeral Resolution Important?

Grief can cloud judgment and make it difficult to make decisions. A funeral resolution helps:

1. Reduce Stress: By laying out clear instructions, you prevent confusion and last minute changes.
2. Respect Wishes: It ensures that the deceased's personal or religious preferences are honored.
3. Facilitate Communication: It provides a single reference point for clergy, funeral directors, and family members.
4. Protect Privacy: By controlling what details are shared, you can manage sensitive information.
5. Save Money: A written plan helps avoid unnecessary expenses by specifying exactly what is needed.

In many jurisdictions, a funeral resolution is also a legal requirement, especially when dealing with burial permits or specific religious rites. Failing to provide one can lead to delays or default arrangements that may not align with the deceased's wishes.

Preparing to Write a Funeral Resolution

Before you sit down to draft the resolution, gather the following information:

- Full name, birth date, and date of death of the deceased.
- Preferred burial or cremation details.
- Religious or cultural practices to observe.
- Music, readings, and speakers.

- Desired location(s) for the service.
- Contact information for key family members or friends.
- Special requests (e.g., donation to a charity, environmental burial, specific attire).

Having a clear list of preferences will streamline the drafting process and reduce the likelihood of omissions.

Consulting Family and Friends

Involve close family members and friends early. Their input can provide valuable insight into the deceased's values and help ensure that the resolution reflects a shared vision. A collaborative approach also distributes the emotional burden.

Understanding Legal Requirements

Check local regulations regarding funeral arrangements. Some regions require a written resolution for burial permits, while others may have specific forms for religious or cultural rites. Knowing these details beforehand will save you from last minute paperwork.

Structure of a Funeral Resolution

Although there is no one-size-fits-all template, a well structured funeral resolution typically follows this outline:

1. Header – Include the title, date, and the deceased's full name.
2. Opening Statement – A brief introduction expressing gratitude and stating the purpose of the document.
3. Service Details – Specifics about burial/cremation, location, officiant, and timing.
4. Order of Service – A detailed outline of the ceremony's flow.
5. Special Requests – Any unique wishes (e.g., music, readings, donations).
6. Contact Information – Names and phone numbers of key family members or friends.
7. Signatures – Signatures of the person drafting the resolution and, if required, witnesses.

Below is a sample outline you can adapt to your situation.

Sample Funeral Resolution Outline

1. Header

   Title: "Funeral Resolution for [Full Name]"
2. Date: [MM/DD/YYYY]
3. Deceased: [Full Name], born [MM/DD/YYYY], deceased [MM/DD/YYYY]

"I, [Your Name], in loving memory of my beloved [Relationship], hereby set forth the following wishes for the funeral and memorial service."

- Type of service: Burial / Cremation
- Location: [Address or cemetery name]
- Officiant: [Name], [Religious Affiliation]
- Date and time: [MM/DD/YYYY] at [HH:MM]

1. Procession
2. Opening remarks
3. Readings (list titles and speakers)
4. Music (list songs and musicians)
5. Eulogy
6. Prayer or reflection

7. Closing remarks
8. Burial or cremation ceremony
9. Reception (if applicable)

- Music: “Amazing Grace” by [Artist] and “What a Wonderful World” by [Artist]
- Readings: “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost, read by [Name]
- Donation: In lieu of flowers, please donate $50 to the American Cancer Society.
- Environmental burial: Request for a biodegradable casket and a green burial plot.

- Primary contact: [Name], [Phone], [Email]
- Secondary contact: [Name], [Phone], [Email]
- Funeral director: [Name], [Phone], [Email]

Signature: _____

Name (printed): _____

Date: _____

Witness (if required): _____

Step-by-Step Guide to Writing a Funeral Resolution

Step 1: Gather All Necessary Information

Start by collecting all the details that will form the backbone of the resolution. This includes the deceased’s full name, birth and death dates, religious or cultural preferences, and any specific requests. Create a simple checklist to ensure nothing is overlooked.

Step 2: Choose a Format

You can draft the resolution as a formal letter, a PDF document, or a simple typed form. If your local funeral home offers a template, use it to guarantee compliance with legal standards.

Step 3: Draft the Opening Statement

The opening should be heartfelt yet concise. It sets the tone and clearly states that the document represents the deceased’s wishes. Keep it respectful and personal.

Step 4: Outline Service Details

Be explicit about burial or cremation, the cemetery or crematorium, and the officiant. If the deceased had a preferred religious denomination, mention it. Specify the date and time, as well as any logistical constraints (e.g., travel restrictions, health protocols).

Step 5: Create the Order of Service

List each segment in the order it will occur. Include names of speakers, musicians, and any special rituals. If you’re uncertain about the exact order, consult with the officiant or funeral director; they can offer guidance based on tradition or local customs.

Step 6: Add Special Requests

Here’s where you can personalize the ceremony. Mention music selections, readings, or specific rituals. If you wish to make a charitable donation in lieu of flowers, note the organization and donation amount. Also, specify any environmental or sustainability preferences, such as biodegradable caskets or green burial plots.

Step 7: Provide Contact Information

List the primary and secondary contacts who will coordinate the service. Include phone numbers, email addresses, and any relevant social media handles if needed for coordination.

Step 8: Sign and Date

Sign the resolution and date it. Depending on local laws, you may also need a witness signature. Keep a signed copy for the funeral home and for family members.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Leaving Details Vague: Ambiguity can lead to misunderstandings. Be specific about every request.
- Ignoring Legal Requirements: Check local regulations; failing to comply can delay the service.
- Not Involving Key Family Members: A resolution drafted in isolation may miss important preferences.
- Overlooking Cultural Sensitivities: Respect traditions and customs to avoid offense.
- Failing to Update: If circumstances change (e.g., location change, new donation organization), update the resolution promptly.

Sample Funeral Resolution for Different Situations

1. Traditional Religious Service

In this version, the resolution emphasizes religious rites, scripture readings, and hymns. The order of service follows a conventional structure, and the officiant is a clergy member from the deceased's faith.

2. Secular or Non-Religious Service

This version focuses on personal stories, music from the deceased's life, and a celebration of their achievements. The officiant may be a friend or a professional celebrant.

3. Green Burial or Eco-Friendly Service

Here, the resolution highlights environmental considerations: biodegradable casket, no embalming, a tree planted in memory, and a donation to an environmental charity.

How to Distribute the Funeral Resolution

Once drafted, you should:

1. Send a copy to the funeral home or clergy.
2. Provide copies to close family members and friends who will coordinate the service.
3. Keep a hard copy in a safe place (e.g., a fireproof safe or a trusted family member's home).
4. Store a digital copy in a secure cloud storage for easy access.

FAQs About Funeral Resolutions

What if I forgot to create a resolution?

Many funeral homes can assist in drafting a resolution on the spot, but having one prepared in advance reduces stress and ensures your wishes are honored.

Do I need a lawyer to draft a funeral resolution?

Not necessarily. Most funeral resolutions are simple documents, but if you have complex legal or estate considerations, consult a lawyer to ensure all aspects are covered.

Can a funeral resolution be changed after it’s been submitted?

Yes, you can amend the resolution. Send an updated version to the funeral home and all relevant parties. Keep a record of the changes.

Is a funeral resolution required by law?

Requirements vary by jurisdiction. Some states mandate a written resolution for burial permits, while others do not. Verify local regulations to ensure compliance.

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