



## RITUAL AND REMEMBRANCE

### **Funeral for a woman with special needs who died suddenly at the age of 34**

#### **Introduction**

*Alison* was a very special person.

She was special to her parents,.....,who've looked after her so well over the years.

She was special to her brothers and sisters, .....and to the whole family.

She was special to her friends at her centre and everywhere else.

And she was special to all those people, many of you here today, who've known her all her life, and to those of us who've known her as a friend and neighbour and someone we enjoyed being with.

It's heart-breaking to have to be here today doing this now, and there's no way of making it any easier, except to remember that God is with us, and that *Alison* was and is and always will be special, very special, to God as well. And for those of us who believe that there is a God, which I know can be very hard at times, there is absolutely no doubt that *Alison* is with God now.

#### **Prayer:**

God in heaven, you know how hard it is to believe in you on a day like this.

But we want to believe in you.

We want to believe there is more to life than what we see or hear or feel around us.

We want to believe that the life you give us continues beyond the narrow limits of our sight, and we want to know, most of all today, that *Alison* is with you now, safe and well, happy and at rest until we can all see each other again in your time and in your presence.

We want to believe this so that we can find some comfort in the deep hurt we feel now, so that we can know that the love we've felt for *Alison* and all the love and care that have been poured out on her, and all the love she herself has shown throughout her precious, special life, so that we can know that this has all been worthwhile and valuable in your sight as well as ours, so that we can know that this love has not been wasted but has made *Alison* herself happy, and has helped to make us all better people.

So, God who has been with *Alison* and her family and all who've been so much part of her life, don't desert us now when we need to know you're there and we need to feel, now more than ever, your love and understanding, your comfort and your strength.

And where we can't easily feel your love like this,  
where we cannot find our way to this kind of faith,  
give us at least the comfort of the love and care  
of our family and our friends around us today,  
that in the holiness of purely human grace and kindness  
we might find some solace and some help.

And bring peace to Alison today, as we gather so reluctantly and painfully  
to place her soul into your arms.

Bless her soul who has been for us the light and joy of so many happy days,  
who made us laugh and smile, who has drawn out of us  
so much love and care and compassion  
by the love and care and compassion that she always had within her.

And be with us, your people here, who need your love and comfort now  
more than we have ever needed it before, because we pray for this in Jesus' name, Amen.

### **A reading**

"The Existence of Love" by Marjorie Pizer

*I had thought that your death  
was a waste and destruction,  
A pain of grief hardly to be endured.  
I am only beginning to learn  
That your life was a gift, a growing  
And a loving left with me.  
The desperation of death  
Destroyed the existence of love,  
But the fact of death  
Cannot destroy what has been given.  
I am learning to look at your life again  
Instead of your death and your departing.*

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### **Luke 12:27-34**

*Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory  
was not arrayed like one of these.*

*But if God so dresses the grass which is here today and gone tomorrow, how much more will he be sure  
to clothe you, O you of little faith!*

*So do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be of anxious mind. For all the people  
of the world seek these things; and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom,  
and these things shall be yours as well.*

*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom...provide yourselves  
with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.*

*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

**From 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:4-14:1**

*Love is patient, love is kind.  
It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.  
It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered; it keeps no record of wrongs.*

*Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.  
It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

*Love never fails...  
Now we understand only in part; in time we shall understand fully,  
just as God fully understands us.  
For now, though, these three remain: faith, hope and love.  
But the greatest of these is love.*

**Tribute**

I know it's very hard for all of us to be here today, doing what we're doing.  
But I know too that you all wanted to be here to share with .....and all of *Alison's* family something of the heartache they're all feeling, because we're all feeling this with them.

Alison's has been no ordinary life.  
As we said at the beginning of this service, she was a very special person, someone who was deeply precious to the family who loved and cared for her every day of her life, and to everyone who's had the privilege of knowing her and sharing her friendship.

I've known Alison for less time than most of you here today, but in that time I could see how precious she's been, how deeply loved she's been and how her own love has brought out the love in others, and has made many others better people. I also know that Alison leaves behind many, many happy memories, from her younger years...  
*(details of Alison's life...)*

There is a lot of pain in letting go of her now, and our prayers are with ..... and with everyone who's going to miss her so much. There's a lot to give thanks for in the person Alison was, and in the good, happy life she was able to live surrounded by so much love and help and support from ..... and the family.

There is a huge amount of love and warmth in all the very good memories there are of Alison's life. Not everyone leaves behind such a store of love and warmth and friendship. Not everyone in our lives is as special and precious as Alison has been. But we're not just letting her go now. We're placing Alison, spirit and soul, into the hands of a God who loves her and cares for her every bit as much as we do.

So in trying to hold on to this faith and these memories, let's pray once again...

## **PRAYER:**

God of all we are and all we go through,  
God who's quietly with us in our days of peace, and who we hope is with us still  
when the storms hit and all we are and feel is turned inside out and upside down:

Our hearts are full of love for Alison.  
Our memories of her are deeply and genuinely grateful.  
And it's with this love and thanks that we embrace Alison now  
and place her carefully and tenderly into your safe and gentle arms.

Alison has changed our lives.  
We know that and are grateful for it, even though this parting hurts so much.  
We thank you for who she's been and what she's meant to us  
as a very special daughter and sister and aunt,  
as one who enjoyed her friendships and gave so much love as a friend to others.  
We thank you for the sign Alison has been to us of your love,  
for the life she lived that has not offended you as much as we so often do,  
that has not damaged your loving purposes as we habitually do,  
that she has lived her life on earth with an innocence and goodness  
we would all do well to learn from.  
We have treasured Alison as we know you know and understand.

We will never forget her and we know that because of her we are different people now,  
and different for the better too.  
We are jealous of your presence with her now, and can't deny that.  
We wish she were still here with us.  
But help us to know that she is safely in your company now  
and that you're enjoying her as much as we have ever done.  
Thank you for leaving us with memories, that are so good and warm and happy.

And give us any strength you can just now, Lord.  
Give us any faith we're capable of holding on to.  
And give to us all the love for each other that Alison drew out of us all  
and we're all going to need to see us through the lives that lie ahead of us.  
Let us, in our lives now, continue to be true friends, for there are those who trust us.  
Let us continue to love and show love, for there are those still who depend on us and need us.  
Let us be as strong as you can make us, for there are those who will need to lean on us.

And as we remember Alison now, as we remember together her unique and special life,  
please ease our pain, share the burden with us, and with love for one another,  
and with whatever faith we have in you, give us strength and hope, in Jesus' name, Amen.

## **Benediction**

*Now may the God of all life, laughter, and love, touch our saddened hearts  
with gratitude this day, for all we've shared, all we've learned, all we've received.  
And may this God be with us now, in all his goodness and grace,  
to bring us comfort, and fill us with strength, with the warmth of his blessing,  
and the assurance of his promises, Amen.*