

## ABSTRACT

### **In what ways can the Church of Ireland Funeral Service bring hope to a secularising world?**

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The Church of Ireland has carefully crafted liturgical Funeral Services since its establishment. These services were influenced by the cultural context of the time. Funeral rites enable a family to transition through their loss with their wider network of friends and community. Many funerals will tend to Church of Ireland members, and alongside them friends and family from beyond the tradition, and the Christian religion. This is a precious opportunity to engage new people who are otherwise disengaged from Church of Ireland life.

Recent statistics illustrate an increase in secularisation within the context of Northern Ireland. Alongside this is a rise in alternative celebrants and methods of body disposal free from any funeral rite. In the light of research regarding the complexities of grief, this is a concern for those who are mourning. If the bereaved are unable to process their grief, there can be ongoing complications in moving forward.

Through the primary lens of practical theology, this dissertation includes desk research and face-to-face interviews to reflect on the changing context, the current Funeral Services in the Church of Ireland, and the importance of the integration of grief and hope in the healing of those who are bereaved. As a result of the research, there is also a review of potential opportunities for the Church of Ireland to reinvigorate the Funeral Service and bring hope to a secular community.