



## Introduction

- Deaths due to COVID-19 have surpassed 1 million globally
- Many have experienced negative effects from the pandemic on grief and bereavement
- **Need to consider alternative ways to celebrate, commemorate and grieve**

## Study Objectives

The goal of this study was to discover the online platforms for hosting a virtual funeral, explore the safety considerations during the pandemic and highlight the experiences of those who have previously hosted a virtual service.

**This study was conducted by performing an environmental scan through academic, grey literature and online websites.**

## Findings

**Virtual platforms can be used to view funerals, burials, celebrations of life, memorials, and other religious or cultural gatherings.**



Audio-visual equipment is needed to record the live service



A device such as a laptop, desktop, tablet or mobile phone is used to view the service



An online platform is often used to view the service

## Recommendations

- Masks placed on the deceased and double body bags used for transport
- Wear Personal Protective Equipment when burying, hydrolyzing, cremating and embalming and when touching the body
- Limit in-person attendees to 10, avoid pre/post service gatherings
- Screen guests for COVID-19 symptoms and recent travel
- Disinfect high-touch surfaces
- Avoid sharing religious items or ensure items are sanitized
- Hand washing stations or alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be provided

### Commercial Platforms

Platforms widely used by the public for general content sharing such as Facebook Live

- Most are free to use
- Usually offer conference rooms and chats
- Are non-denominational
- Most are compatible with multiple devices
- Accessible across the globe
- Hosts will need to manage security features themselves
- Audio-visual equipment is not provided
- On some platforms, content may be accessible and visible to the public

### Specialized Platforms

Platforms that specialize in facilitating virtual bereavement services such as GatheringUs

- Some offer event planning, online obituaries, tribute videos and printed material
- Some offer audio-visual equipment installation
- A service can be downloaded or accessed for specified length of time
- Security often maintained through a private, password-protected link
- Most work directly with death services
- Price often determined by the funeral provider

## Feedback

- Virtual services allow more people to attend the service due to Covid-19
- One individual stated that it felt like an intimate experience
- Virtual services allow guests to grieve alone or with others while in the comfort and safety of their homes
- Some noted having difficulty navigating the technical hitches of the platform

### Key Considerations when Choosing an Online Platform

1. Who is the client?
2. How much will this cost?
3. What resources are available?
4. Can the service be viewed on multiple devices?
5. Are audio-visual equipment included?
6. How many people can access the virtual service?
7. Does the platform offer chat rooms, obituaries, tribute videos etc.?

## Conclusion

The effects of grief during Covid-19 is a topic that may benefit from further research as individuals seek alternative forms of connection.

**Right now there is an opportunity to educate others about the use of current technology to provide the connection that is needed during a time of loss, both during a pandemic and beyond.**

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## Online Etiquette

- ✓ Maintain timely attendance to the service
- ✓ Other browsers on the device should be closed
- ✓ Microphones should be put on mute
- ✓ One should dress accordingly
- ✓ Choose a background that is appropriate and quiet
- ✓ Do not share or record the service without permission