

These robot priests are programmed for a high-tech funeral

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Adding a high-tech twist to eternal rest, robotic Buddhist priests are now offering up their services for funerals in Japan.

A new code update to Softbank's humanoid [robot](#) Pepper allows the cute, big-eyed bot to chant sutras (in a computerized voice) while beating a drum, The Guardian reports. The robot was unveiled recently at the Life Ending Industry Expo, a trade show for [funeral](#) services, in Tokyo.

Funeral arrangers can dress Pepper in a Buddhist monk's robe, and can live-stream the proceedings for friends and family who can't attend the event in person.

Using Pepper instead of a live monk could be a major cost-saver - the average cost of a funeral in Japan can top \$25,000, with human priests costing \$2,175, The Guardian reports, citing 2008 data from Japan's Consumer Association. Nissei Eco, the company showing off the funeral-bot hopes to rent Pepper out for just \$450 per funeral.

That price difference also could make robot priests an attractive alternative in the U.S., where the median cost of a funeral, with a viewing and burial, hit \$7,181 in 2014, according to the National Funeral Directors Association.

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