



Faith Lutheran Church

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Funeral Guidelines



"I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall not die." John 11:25

This funeral guide has been written to help those who may be planning their own funeral or that of a loved one, those who have just lost a loved one, or for members of the congregation who want to understand Faith's role in the funeral process.

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Christians and Death

The resurrection is a central doctrine of the Christian faith and shapes Christians' attitudes and responses to the event of death. Death brings loss, sorrow, and grief to all. In the face of death Christians affirm with tears and joy the hope of the gospel. Christians do not bear bereavement in isolation but are sustained by the power of the Spirit and the community of faith. The Church offers a ministry of love and hope to all who grieve.

Planning Arrangements

Members should discuss and plan in advance the arrangements which will be necessary at the time of death, including decisions about the Christian options of burial, cremation, or donation for medical purposes. These plans should provide for arrangements which are simple, which bear witness to resurrection hope, and in which the Christian community is central.

When death occurs, the Pastor and other officers of the congregation should be informed as soon as possible, in order that they might provide appropriate consolation and support to the family and friends, and assist them in making arrangements for the funeral.

Family members, friends, or members of the congregation may be invited by the Pastor to share in the service.

Prior to the Service

The altar candles may be lighted before the people arrive and extinguished after they have left. When there is a choir, members should assemble in their places quietly before the service begins. The choir should not participate in the processions. When a pall is to be placed over the coffin, it should be ready in the Narthex.

A Service of Worship

The Christian funeral is a service of worship and should involve all

those present. Funerals today are held in various places outside the church, but seldom should the location preclude congregational participation. The funeral serves a support function such that the religious, social, and emotional needs of the mourners are met.

Location of the Worship Service

The funerals of practicing Christians should be in the church, the place where their lives of worship have centered. In this setting, congregational singing should be encouraged and participation in the prayers should be taken for granted certainly to the extent of saying "Amen" and joining in the Lord's Prayer.

Changes in the Worship Service Format

Because of the emotional stress involved, the occasion of a funeral is not the time to press for changes in accepted parish practices.

The Ministry of the Pastor

The Pastor's ministry is to lead the bereaved into and through the rites of the church where the voice of the Gospel can be heard with healing power and clarity. In an effort to be positive and to emphasize the victory of the resurrection, the pain and loss of death must not be minimized or ignored. Both must be held in balance. The bereaved need to confront and accept the loss of the deceased as well as be given hope. Moreover, the congregation and the Pastor need to support the bereaved not only at the time of the funeral but also as the bereaved return to the duties of their lives. Post-death bereavement support is so important.

The Service of the Burial of the Dead

Intended primarily for use in the church with the body of the deceased present. But service may be easily modified for use in other locations -- crematory chapel, private house, funeral parlor -- where processions and other liturgical actions are not feasible. The service may be

used as a Memorial Service, following interment or when the body has been destroyed in an accident or natural catastrophe by omitting certain portions of the liturgy.

Funerals for Non-Members

Conducting funerals for people who have no connection with the church is a normal part of the pastoral obligation. It is usually inappropriate to hold such a service in the church and not all the parts of the service may be appropriate. By certain omissions and choices of alternate selections this service may be adapted for such funerals. Should the funeral be allowed in the church, a fee of \$250 will be charged for use of the church facilities.

Music Selections

Music selected for use at a funeral should embody high standards of quality, and in general reflect the spirit of Christian confidence, trust, and hope in the resurrection. The hymns should reflect such themes as the invocation of the Holy Spirit, the communion of saints, and the hope in the resurrection. Hymn versions of appropriate psalms may be sung also.

Overview of the Service

The Pastor, vested in alb or surplice and stole in the seasonal color, will meet the coffin, the pallbearers, and the bereaved at the entrance of the church. (The bereaved may arrive and go to their seats prior to the beginning of the service.) The location of the opening part of the service should be chosen so that the congregation is able to hear what is said. The coffin remains closed throughout the service. When the service is in a funeral parlor or private house, the coffin is closed and in place before the liturgy begins. The funeral director shall be instructed concerning such matters as timing, closed caskets, music, flowers, etc. A white pall may be placed over the coffin to recall the white robe given in Baptism, the robe of Christ's righteousness. The pall further has democratizing value, for it prevents both the display of

a costly coffin and embarrassment at a simple one. This action of placing the pall over the coffin will take place prior to the liturgy. The procession which begins the liturgy is as follows: Cross, Paschal Candle, Presiding Pastor, Assisting Pastor, Pallbearers with the coffin, the Bereaved, The symbolic intent of this order of the procession is that the symbols of Christ go first - - cross, paschal candle, Pastor -- and then the dead and the living follow where "Christ has led the way," as the final prayer at the grave puts it. As the procession moves to the altar, a psalm or hymn may be sung. (See suggested list of appropriate hymns). The coffin is to be placed in the position with the feet toward the altar. The position reflects the accustomed role of the deceased in the church -- facing the altar as part of the congregation. (Note: Two locations within the Sanctuary at Faith will meet this need: 1) Centered on the Altar and within the aisle; 2) to the left of the altar and congregational seating and placed at a 45 degree angle.) The paschal candle is placed on its stand at the head of the coffin. The liturgy of the Burial of the Dead proceeds. (See list of suggested readings) The sermon may include a recognition of the life of the deceased, but its purpose is not eulogy but a proclamation of hope and comfort in Christ. In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate for relatives or associates of the deceased to comment briefly on the meaning of the life of the deceased for the community, but this must not overshadow or exclude a proclamation of the Gospel by the Pastor.

The service for the Burial of the Dead may be part of the Holy Communion. The visual and active aspect of the Holy Communion can be helpful when words fail, and when silence and embraces and eating together are important. Moreover, the Preface, which joins our earthly praise with the praise of the hosts of heaven, has particular relevance to a funeral. When the Holy Communion is celebrated, the service continues after the prayers with the Peace. Under normal circumstances, gifts of money would not be gathered. Under no circumstances should the bread and wine be received by the family of the deceased to the exclusion of the congregation. The sacrament is for the gathered congregation.

The Commendation

The Commendation is a prayer which asks God to receive the deceased in mercy. The prayer is a concluding statement of trust to console the living with God's care for the departed. When the body is to be cremated, the service may be held in the church and the commendation in the crematory chapel. In that case, at the commendation the coffin should remain in its place until the mourners have left, rather than having it disappear by some mechanical device. At the commendation, the Pastor(s) take their places at the coffin. The procession forms in the same order as before. As the procession leaves the church, a psalm, hymn (especially an Easter hymn), or anthem may be sung. If it has not been sung in the Holy Communion, "Lord, now you let your servant go in peace," is appropriate or the Benedictus, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel," might be sung. The pall is removed from the coffin in the narthex. The paschal candle remains at the church. The processional cross may be taken to the place of interment.

The Committal

When the body of the deceased is to be transported to a distant interment site, when it has been donated for medical use, or in other situations when those present at the funeral cannot be present at the interment, the commendation alone will suffice. When the body has been willed for medical research or other scientific purposes, the committal service, with appropriate modifications, may be used with the bereaved before the body is removed. A memorial service may be held later. When feasible, the procession from the hearse to the grave follows the same order as before: cross, presiding Pastor, pallbearers and coffin, the bereaved. Where this is not feasible, at least the presiding Pastor should precede the coffin to the place of interment. It should not be necessary for the mourners to have books or pamphlets to participate in the Committal. The coffin is lowered into the grave or placed in its resting place. It is important that the mourners see the coffin lowered into the grave and not simply remember it resting on

top of the device by which it will later be lowered after the mourners have left, for it gives the mourners a clearer memory of what happened to the body. Earth (not sand or flowers) may be cast on the coffin by the Pastor and those who stand around, as the Pastor commits the body to its resting place. The dismissal, "Let us go in peace," is said by the Pastor. This makes a dismissal by the undertaker unnecessary.

The Mood of the Liturgy

The Burial of the Dead is an Easter liturgy. It has its focus in Baptism by which one is made a child of God forever and is dramatized in the Easter Vigil and its celebration of the passage through death to new life, where Christ has led the way. The mood of the Burial of the Dead is richer than the older practice that developed in medieval times and emphasized the loss, the sorrow, and the fear that death evokes. In this service, both the sadness and the joy must be seen together -- one tempered by the other. Fraternal and other rites should not be a part of the church's liturgy.

Meals or Refreshments

Coffee and other refreshments will normally be made available during visitation hours by the Bereavement Committee. A meal will normally be provided for the bereaved family and friends either before or immediately following the interment of the deceased. Normally the LWML Bereavement Committee will also coordinate the food and setup for the meal. Involvement of the LWML Bereavement Committee is normally arranged by contacting either the Faith Pastor or Office Secretary. Should the relatives of the deceased wish to donate toward the meal a donation to the LWML of \$30 - \$50 is appropriate.

Fees for Musical Services from our Congregation

The organist shall receive an amount commensurate with the amount of support provided. A basic service fee begins at \$30. The organist will set the fee upon determining the full range of services expected (number of songs, rehearsals required, etc.). The fee for special mu-

sic such as solos should be negotiated with the person being asked to perform the service. A minimum of \$20 per person is normal. Should music be arranged through the funeral home, fees must be arranged with the funeral home's management.

Visiting Clergy

Visiting clergy may be present upon the consent of this congregation's Pastor.

Flowers

After the funeral, flowers may be left at the church, buried at the grave site, or taken by family members.

Bulletins

Bulletins outlining the service and containing information about the deceased will be made available at no cost when produced by the church. If special bulletins are desired by the family, the cost of purchasing materials and any outside printing costs will be charged to the family. Church bulletins should indicate the congregation stand as the body enters and exits the Sanctuary.

Memorials

Memorials to the church are encouraged.

Fraternal Groups

Such groups, upon the consent of the Pastor and following the guidelines established by the LCMS may be permitted to give tribute to the deceased.

Visitation

The visitation hours shall be established after consultation with the Pastor. Visitation in the church is highly encouraged.

Gifts to the Pastor

Members of the deceased's family shall normally offer the Pastor a fee. The amount of the fee is normally in the range of \$100 - \$150.

Pastoral Services to Members of Another Congregation

The responsibility and authority for pastoral acts or services rest with the Pastor or vice-Pastor of the congregation where the deceased held membership. The Pastor who is asked to provide pastoral services for members of other congregations shall contact the Pastor or vice-Pastor of the church in which the person held membership before providing the service.

List of Suggested Readings for Funerals

Old Testament

- * Job 19:23-27 I know that my redeemer lives
 - Isa. 25:6-9 God will swallow up death forever
 - Isa. 26:1-4, 19 God will keep them in peace
- * Isa. 40:1-11, 28-31 Comfort my people
- * Isa. 40:28-31 Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength
 - Isa. 43:1-3a, 18-19, 25 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you
 - Isa. 44:6-8 I am the first and the last
 - Isa. 55:1-3, 6-13 Ho, everyone who thirsts
 - Isa. 61:1-4, 10-11 The spirit of the Lord is upon me
- * Isa. 65:17-25 I create new heavens and a new earth
 - Lam. 3:19-26, 31b-32 The Lord's steadfast love
 - Dan. 12:1-3 Many of those who sleep in the dust shall awake
 - Joel 2:12-13, 23-24, 26-29 Return to the Lord with all your heart
 - Zech. 8:1-8 Children playing in the streets of the city
 - Lam. 3:1-9, 19-23 The Lord's steadfast love

Psalms: The following psalms are appropriate for singing or reading in the service.

- Ps. 16:5-11 The Lord is my chosen portion
- * Ps. 23 The Lord is my shepherd
 - Ps. 27:1, 4-9a, 13-14 The Lord is my light and my salvation
 - Ps. 39: 4-5, 12 Lord, let me know my end
 - Ps. 42:1-6a As a deer longs for flowing streams
 - Ps. 43 Give judgment for me, O God
 - * Ps. 46:1-5, 10-11 A very present help in trouble
 - * Ps. 90:1-10, 12 Teach us to number our days
 - Ps. 91 The one who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
 - * Ps. 103 Bless the Lord, O my soul
 - Ps. 106:1-5 O give thanks to the Lord
 - Ps. 116:1-9, 15 The Lord has heard my voice
 - Ps. 118 Open the gates of righteousness
 - * Ps. 121 I lift up my eyes to the hills
 - * Ps. 130 Out of the depths I cry to the Lord
 - * Ps. 139:1-12 Where shall I go from your spirit?
 - Ps. 145 I will extol you, O God my King
 - Ps. 146 Hallelujah! praise the Lord, O my soul

Epistles

- Rom. 5:1-11 Hope does not disappoint
- Rom. 6:3-9 Baptized into Christ's death, raised to live with him
- * Rom. 8:14-23, 31-39 Nothing can separate us from the love of God
- * Rom. 14:7-9, 10b-12 Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's
 - 1 Cor. 15:3-8, 12-20a Christ raised from the dead
 - 1 Cor. 15:20-24a In Christ shall all be made alive
- * 1 Cor. 15:20-26, 35-38, Death is swallowed in victory
 - 42-44, 50, 53-58
 - 1 Cor. 15:35-44 The natural body and the spiritual body
 - 1 Cor. 15:50-57 We shall all be changed
- * 2 Cor. 4:16-5:1 Visible things are temporary, invisible things eternal
- 2 Cor. 5:1-10 From God we have a house not made with hands
- Eph. 1:11-2:1, 4-10 Saved by grace through faith
- Phil. 3:7-11 Knowing him and the power of his resurrection
- Phil. 3:20-21 Our citizenship is in heaven
- Col. 3:1-17 Set your minds on the things that are above

- * 1 Thess. 4:13-18 The comfort of Christ's coming
- 2 Tim. 2:8-13 If we died with him, we shall also live with him
- Heb. 2:14-18 Christ was tested in every way
- Heb. 11:1-3, 13-16; 12:1-2 Faith, the pilgrimage, the cloud of witnesses
- 1 Peter 1:3-9 Without seeing Christ, you love him
- 1 Peter 3:18-22; 4:6 Christ's ministry to the spirits in prison
- 1 John 3:1-3 We are children of God
- Rev. 7:2-3, 9-17 These are they who have come out of the great tribulation
- Rev. 14:1-3, 6-7, 12-13 Rest for the saints
- * Rev. 21:1-4, 22-25; 22:3-5 A new heaven and a new earth
- Rev. 22:1-5 The Lord God will be their light

Gospels

- Matt. 5:1-12a The Beatitudes
- Matt. 11:25-30 Hidden from the wise, revealed to infants
- Matt. 25:1-13 Wise and foolish bridesmaids
- Matt. 25:31-46 The Last Judgment
- Luke 7:11-17 Jesus raises the son of the widow of Nain
- Luke 18:15-17 We enter the kingdom only as children
- * Luke 23:33, 39-43 Today you will be with me in Paradise
- John 3:16-21 God so loved the world
- John 5:24-29 Whoever hears and believes has eternal life
- John 6:37-40 Anyone who comes to me I will never drive away
- John 6:47-58 Whoever believes in me has eternal life
- * John 11:17-27 I am the resurrection and the life
- John 11:38-44 Lazarus raised from the dead
- John 14:1-6, 25-27 Let not your hearts be troubled

Acknowledgements

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