

Funeral Planning Guide



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Funeral Planning

At a person's death, the church shares the grief of those who mourn and remembers the brevity of life on earth. At the funeral we give voice to sorrow, thank God for our loved one, and entrust this companion of ours into the hands of God. Trusting in God's promise in baptism that we are claimed by Christ forever, we rest in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection. When the church gathers to mark the end of life, Christ crucified and risen is the witness of worship, the strength of mutual consolation, and the hope of healing.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 279

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Preparing Ahead of Time

What can I do to assist my family with funeral plans and after death decisions before I die?

Talking about our death, or planning for it, is not easy. Our tendency is to ignore the inevitable and just leave any and all decisions that need to be made at the time of our death to our family. This is often the worst time for people to have to make important decisions and many times funeral decisions are made in haste when dealing with the death of a loved one.

One of the greatest gifts we can give to our loved ones is to have prepared for our death and provide all the necessary information they will need for funeral decisions and other necessary decisions.

So, how can I preplan for my death that will allow my loved ones to deal with my death in a healthy way?

1. Plan for your actual funeral.

- a. Meet with your pastor and plan the funeral/memorial service.
- b. Decide on such things as:
 - i. Scripture texts
 - ii. Hymns/music
 - iii. Do you prefer the service be in the church or at the funeral home?
 - iv. Who would you like to assist at your funeral service?
 1. Lectors, ushers, pallbearers...
- c. Make sure your pastor has a copy of all of your decisions for the funeral/memorial service.

2. Make plans with a funeral home.

- a. Do you want to be cremated or not?
- b. Select casket or urn, vault...
- c. Select burial plot
- d. Pre-pay for the services
- e. State your wishes regarding a closed or open casket if not being cremated
- f. Select the cemetery if appropriate
- g. If being cremated, are your remains to be buried, or ashes scattered?
 - i. If scattered, where, and make the appropriate arrangements.
- h. If you are a veteran, do you want military honors?
 - i. Flag
 - ii. 21-gun salute
 - iii. "Taps"
- i. Provide the contact information for your pastor to the funeral home.

3. The details.

- a. Death certificate: At the time of your death, your family will need to advise the funeral home of the number of death certificates they will need. Most financial institutions, government agencies, and utility companies require certified certificates, and copies will not be accepted. Therefore, it would be beneficial for you to develop a list of agencies/companies that will require certified death certificates. The following list might be helpful:
 - i. Social Security
 - ii. Motor vehicle licensing

- iii. Credit card companies
- iv. Phone company
- v. Utility companies
- vi. Other financial institutions
- vii. Banks
- viii. Mortgage company
- ix. Life insurance
- x. Stockbrokers
 - 1. 401K
 - 2. Any stock certificates held in note form, not held in trust.
 - 3. Retirement company pension plan
- xi. Military benefits (free VA copy is issued specifically for VA benefits)
- xii. Children ought to keep a certificate
- xiii. If child under the age of 18, they may need to provide a death certificate for a parent as they apply for financial assistance, etc., to prove their parent is deceased.
- xiv. When burying or scattering ashes in some states, an original death certificate is required by the cemetery or scattering service.

As a rule of thumb, anytime you will be getting funds back, you will in most cases require an original death certificate.

b. Documents you will need to have:

- i. Social Security
 - 1. Make sure you have Social Security card (or number).
 - 2. When a death occurs, Social Security should be contacted.
- ii. Some people prefer that this be done by the funeral home, and most funeral homes will provide you this service, but they will need the deceased Social Security information.
 - 1. To contact the Social Security office, call **1-800-772-1213**.
- iii. Marriage certificates
- iv. Birth certificates
 - 1. Including birth certificates of children under 18
- v. Will/trust paperwork.
 - 1. Your survivors will need the original paperwork
- vi. Attorney
 - 1. Deeds, titles, promissory notes (mortgage, other loans...)
- vii. Insurance policies
 - 1. Insurance agent contact information
- viii. Employer contact information
- viii. All financial investment information
 - 1. Contact information for investment manager(s)
- ix. Power of Attorney for health care, or in a living will
- x. Pre-paid funeral contracts
- xi. Military service papers, including discharge records
- xii. Court documents for adoptions and divorce (including any property settlement, etc.)
- xiv. Safe deposit box information (location, key, security code...)
- xv. Driver's license
- xvi. Passport

- c. Lists:
 - i. Provide a list of regular bills.
 - 1. Include things like utilities, mortgage, credit cards, property tax...
 - 2. Note if any are on automatic payment plans and note when payments are due
 - 3. Include any passwords needed
- d. Provide all banking information.
 - i. Locations
 - ii. Account listings, including account numbers
 - iii. Best to have a joint owner/co-signer on the account
- e. Provide information regarding all social media accounts.
 - i. Email, Facebook, ...

Additional Questions

What do we do when a doctor or nurse tells us our family member is near death?

When death draws near, contact the pastor so that he/she may extend the ministry of the church.

What do we do when our family member dies?

When death comes, contact the church immediately, so that we may best assist you during this difficult time. We ask that you contact the church before arrangements are made with a funeral home. We can then assist you with scheduling service times and coordinating with the funeral home.

Who do we have to talk to in order to set a funeral date?

If the funeral/memorial service is to be at the church, the date and time ought to be determined in consultation with the pastor first. Speak with the church office before confirming a time or date with a funeral director.

What will take place when I meet with the funeral director?

Prior to meeting with the funeral home please contact the church first for verification of funeral date, time, and pastor's availability. (see "Funeral Planning Worksheet" on pages 10-14)

The director will meet with the family and establish the wishes of the family and the loved one. You will be asked to bring information such as Social Security number and insurance information, and information on the loved one's date of birth, place of birth, names of parents and siblings, and a list of survivors.

You will be asked to consider the number of death certificates. These have to be certified copies from the county (copies are not accepted). (see item #3a on page 1)

Should the body or ashes be present at the funeral?

The presence of the body or cremated remains is always encouraged. The church honors the body that was the temple of the Holy Spirit and insists that the body be treated with reverence. The service may be used as a memorial service following interment or when the body has been destroyed in an accident or natural catastrophe.

A visitation may be held in the church narthex immediately before the funeral. During the visitation, the coffin may be left open. It may remain open in the narthex as guests arrive for the service. Shortly before the service begins the family makes their last visit to the coffin. While they are preparing for the service with the pastor, funeral home staff members close the coffin and prepare it for the service. The coffin remains closed for the service and is not opened again. A white pall will be placed over the coffin to recall the white robe given in baptism, the robe of Christ's righteousness.

What about Holy Communion?

Holy Communion is a tremendous gift of grace that is a foretaste of the feast that we will one day enjoy together in the presence of God and of one another. The celebration of Holy Communion may be included during the funeral service.

How can family members participate in the service?

Family members or friends are always encouraged to participate in the service as scripture readers, Communion assistants, musicians, pallbearers, etc. Family and friends may also wish to offer a remembrance or tribute. We recommend no more than three remembrances and ask that thoughts be written down in advance. Each tribute should be kept to three minutes. Spontaneous comments are not recommended.

What about a video tribute?

Families may wish to create a video tribute to show prior to or during the service. Salem Lutheran Church has audiovisual technology that can facilitate this meaningful remembrance. Please inform us as soon as possible if you would like to use our audiovisual system for this purpose, and we will provide specific instructions as to the format of the video.

Memorial service details

If a memorial service is planned (no body present), many times people think it is not necessary to have someone from the funeral home at the church to coordinate. But it is very helpful to church staff to have someone from the funeral home in attendance who can attend to any cremated remains if they are present; arrange flowers; set up the guest book, worship bulletins, and memorial envelopes; serve as ushers; and attend to any details of which the family may be unaware.

In the absence of a body, furniture is arranged near the chancel to hold an urn and/or a picture of the deceased, along with an arrangement of flowers. A symbol of the faith of the deceased may also be provided — a well-worn Bible, for example.

What about meal or a reception?

A luncheon or a reception following the service is encouraged. See “Funeral Meal Options” on page 5 for planning a funeral meal. By gathering around the table for mutual conversation and consolation we hold one another up in faith.

Military honors

Military honors occur outside the church, after the recession, or at the graveside after the benediction.

Memorials

Many families choose to designate preferences for memorial gifts. You may wish to designate memorials to either Salem Lutheran Church or another organization. Information about this option is available.

Bulletins

Bulletins outlining the service and containing information about the deceased will be made available at no cost.

Flowers

After the funeral, all flowers, potted plants, or floral displays may be taken to the gravesite or taken by family members with prior arrangement.

Funeral Meal Options

A fellowship meal may be held in Luther Fellowship Hall or Koinonia Fellowship Hall following the service. You may choose from two basic types of meals:

• Coffee and Dessert

- The room will be set with a linen-topped buffet table holding coffee, tea, and dessert.
- Lemonade is available upon request.

• Deli Sandwich Buffet

- The room will be set with linen-topped tables.
- The luncheon will consist of sliced cold meats, cheese and condiments, and rolls or bread.
- There will be a minimum of two side dishes.
- Coffee and/or tea will be offered.
- Lemonade is available upon request.
- Dessert will also be provided.
- A bill will be sent to the family for the cost of the deli tray.
- The family is encouraged to take home what is left.

Suggested Scripture Readings for Christian Funerals

Old Testament

Job 19:23-27a For I know that my Redeemer lives

Isaiah 25:6-9 Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces

Isaiah 61:1-3 The Lord has anointed me ... to bind up the brokenhearted

*Lamentations 3:22-26, 31-33 He will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love

Daniel 7:1-3, 15-18 The holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom forever

Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9 The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God

Psalms

+Psalm 23 The Lord is my shepherd

Psalm 34:1-10, 22 O taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are those who take refuge in Him

Psalm 42:1-7 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?

Psalm 46:1-7 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble

+Psalm 90 Turn, O LORD! How long? Have compassion on your servants!

Psalm 91:9-16 Under his wings you will find refuge

+Psalm 118 Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his steadfast love endures forever

Psalm 121 I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come?

+Psalm 130 My soul waits for the LORD, more than those who watch for the morning

Psalm 139:1-12 O LORD, you have searched me and known me ... even the darkness is not dark to you

Psalm 143 Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning, for in you I put my trust

Psalm 149 Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the faithful

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2a or 3:1-8 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven

New Testament Letters

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the Gospel; it is the power of God for salvation

Romans 5:1-11 Reconciled to God by Christ's death

Romans 5:17-21 Through Adam came sin and through Christ comes justification

Romans 8 The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death

Romans 8:31-35, 37-39 Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord

Romans 9 It depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy

+Romans 14:7-9 Accepting diversity in the community of faith (14:1-12)

1 Corinthians 15:12-26 Christ has been raised, the first fruits of those who have died (15:12-20)

1 Corinthians 15:51-57 or 55-58 Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 Living by faith

*appropriate for the burial of a child

+appropriate for the graveside or graveside procession

Philippians 3:20-21 Christ will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory

Ephesians 1:11-23 God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died.

2 Timothy 4:6-7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith

Hebrews 13:6-8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever

Hebrews 13:14-16 We are looking for the city that is to come

1 Peter 1:3-9 New birth into a living hope through the resurrection

*1 John 3:1-3 We are God's children

Revelation 7:9-17 The multitudes of heaven worship the Lamb

+Revelation 14:13 Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord

Revelation 21:2-5a or 21:1-7 A new heaven and a new earth

New Testament Gospels

Matthew 5:1-12 Blessed are the poor in spirit

*Matthew 11:25-30 Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest

Matthew 24:1-13 The one who endures to the end will be saved

Luke 6:20-31 Jesus speaks blessings and woes

Luke 12:35-40 Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat

Luke 23:39-43 Today you will be with me in paradise

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son

John 5:24-29 The hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live

* John 6:37-40 All who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day

John 10:1-5 Jesus the Good Shepherd

John 11:21-27 The raising of Lazarus: I am the resurrection and the life

John 11:32-44 The raising of Lazarus

John 12:23-36 Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit

John 14:1-6 In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. Christ the way, the truth, and life

Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20 The Resurrection of Jesus

*appropriate for the burial of a child

+appropriate for the graveside or graveside procession

Music for the Service

Prelude Music

The prelude music helps to prepare mourners for the service to follow. Music with special meaning to the deceased or family members may be selected; consider preludes on favorite hymn tunes. The Salem Lutheran Church Worship Director is available to provide guidance in musical selection.

Hymns

Procession into the church

A hymn of comfort, baptismal remembrance, or resurrection hope is appropriate.

Hymn following the sermon

A hymn that carries forth the images of the readings and sermon or is reflective of the life of faith of the deceased is appropriate.

Recession out of the church

A final hymn may be sung as the coffin is carried from the church, usually one of resurrection hope. It is appropriate for the recession to simply be accompanied by an instrumental musical selection.

Soloists

It is appropriate for special music to be provided by soloists or other instrumentalists. Fees will be determined by the musician and paid directly to the musician.

The organist fee is \$150, paid directly to the organist.

The sound and video fee is \$50, paid directly to the technician.

Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW) / With One Voice (WOV) / Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW) /

All of Us Go Down to the Dust	ELW 223
Alleluia! Jesus is Risen!	WOV 674, ELW 377
Amazing Grace	LBW 448, ELW 779
Beautiful Savior	LBW 518, ELW 838
Behold This Host Arrayed in White	ELW 425
Blessed Assurance	WOV 699, ELW 638
Blessing, Honor, and Glory.....	ELW 433
Borning Cry.....	ELW 732
Children of the Heavenly Father.....	LBW 474, ELW 781
Come Away to the Skies	WOV 669
For All the Saints.....	LBW 174, ELW 422
Guide Me Ever, Great Redeemer	LBW 343, ELW 618
He Leadeth Me.....	LBW 501
How Great Thou Art	LBW 532, ELW 856
I Am the Bread of Life	WOV 702, ELW 485
I Know of a Sleep in Jesus' Name.....	LBW 342
I Know that My Redeemer Lives!.....	LBW 352, ELW 619
I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light.....	WOV 649, ELW 815
In Peace and Joy I Now Depart	ELW 440
In the Morning When I Rise.....	WOV 777

Into Paradise May the Angels Lead You.....	ELW 222
Jerusalem, My Happy Home	LBW 331, ELW 628
Jesus Christ, My Sure Defense	LBW 340, ELW 621
Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won!.....	LBW 133
Jesus Shall Reign	LBW 530, ELW 434
Jesus, Remember Me	WOV 740, ELW 616
Jesus, Still Lead On	LBW 341, ELW 624
Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus.....	LBW 487, ELW 802
Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending.....	LBW 27, ELW 435
Lord of All Hopefulness	LBW 469, ELW 765
My Faith Looks Up to Thee.....	LBW 479, ELW 759
My Lord, What a Morning	WOV 627, ELW 438
O Blessed Spring	WOV 695, ELW 447
O Christ the Same	WOV 778, ELW 760
O God, Our Help in Ages Past	LBW 320, ELW 632
O God, Whose Will is Life and Good	LBW 435
O Holy Spirit, Enter In.....	LBW 459, ELW 786
O Lord, Now Let Your Servant.....	LBW 339, ELW 313
O Sacred Head, Now Wounded.....	LBW 116,117; ELW 351,352
Oh, Happy Day When We Shall Stand	LBW 351, ELW 441
Oh, What Their Joy.....	LBW 337
On Eagle's Wings.....	WOV 779, ELW 787
On Jordan's Stormy Bank I Stand.....	ELW 437
Precious Lord, Take My Hand.....	ELW 773, WOV 731
Shall We Gather at the River	WOV 690, ELW 423
Sing With All the Saints in Glory	WOV 691, ELW 426
Soon and Very Soon.....	WOV 744, ELW 439
The King of Love My Shepherd Is (Ps 23).....	LBW 456, ELW 502
The Lord's My Shepherd (Ps 23).....	LBW 451, ELW 778
Thine is the Glory.....	LBW 145, ELW 376
Thine the Amen, Thine the Praise	WOV 801, ELW 826
This Joyful Eastertide	WOV 676, ELW 391
Thy Holy Wings	WOV 741, ELW 613
Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying	LBW 31, ELW 436
We Are the Lord's	LBW 399
We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight	WOV 675, ELW 635
We Were Baptized in Christ Jesus	WOV 698, ELW 451
What Wondrous Love is This	LBW 385, ELW 666
Who is This Host Arrayed in White	LBW 314
You Who Dwell in the Shelter of the Lord.....	WOV 779

Solo Favorites

Psalm settings, especially of Psalm 23, 121, 42:1-7; 46:1-7, 143

Shepherd Me, O God by Marty Haugen (Ps 23)

Day by Day

On Eagle's Wings by Michael Joncas

Lord, Now You Let Your Servant Depart in Peace

Lord's Prayer

Softly and Tenderly Jesus is Calling

Funeral Planning Worksheet

The following personal information should be gathered as soon as possible and will be helpful for the church, the funeral home, and any others who will be assisting with the funeral:

Deceased full legal name (include nicknames in parentheses):

Birth date (include city and state in which the person was born):

Death date:

Home address:

Family names (always indicate if someone is deceased):

The names of the parents of the deceased:

If deceased was married, what was the date of the marriage and where did the marriage take place (city and state):

Spouse's name:

Names of all children (include names of spouses):

Names of grandchildren (including great-grandchildren, etc, if any):

Names of siblings:

Church membership:

Name and location of the congregation:

Funeral/memorial service:

Will the body be cremated: Yes ___ No ___

Name and location of funeral home:

Name of funeral director:

Phone number/email:

Time of visitation (if offered):

Time of the funeral:

Date of funeral:

Type of worship service (see "Funeral Worship and Celebration of Life Planning Document" on pages 12-14)

Funeral with casket/urn present

Memorial service without remains

Graveside service only

Approximate number of attendees for service: _____

Cemetery: _____

Bible Readings: _____

Hymns:

Procession: _____

Hymn of the Day: _____

Recession: _____

Special music:

Song: _____

Vocalist/instrumentalist: _____

Printed Bulletin: Obituary Photograph

Holy Communion: Yes No

Video Tribute (see page 4 for details) Yes No

Remembrances and tributes:

Name and relationship: _____

Name and relationship: _____

Name and relationship: _____

Names of pallbearers (normally there should be six):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Memorials

_____ Salem Lutheran Church Memorial Fund

_____ Other: _____

Luncheon/Reception: _____ Coffee and dessert _____ Deli sandwich buffet

_____ Other: _____

_____ Anticipated number of attendees for luncheon/reception

If the reception is to be held at Salem the family will need to determine with the Salem Meal Ministry Team what is to be offered and the potential cost, if any.

Estimated number of attendees: _____

Funeral Worship and Celebration of Life Planning Document

Name of deceased: _____

Completed by: _____ Date: _____

Opening comments:

The funeral/memorial service is:

- Worship to God
- A celebration of life
- Thanks to God for the gift of a life lived in Christ as a blessing to others
- Communal in nature — A celebration and thanks shared in community:
 - ◊ Thought should be given to the ways that the community/congregation can participate:
 - Singing of hymns
 - Lord’s Prayer, Apostles’ Creed, Communion

General Items:

- Music — includes decisions around:
 - ◊ Instrumentation: piano, organ, other
 - ◊ Singing: communal songs, solos, choir
 - ◊ Hymn/song selections
- Video (see page 4 for details)

Gathering

- At entrance of sanctuary — with procession of coffin
- At front of sanctuary:
 - With coffin
 - With ashes
 - For memorial service

Thanksgiving for Baptism

Processional/Opening Hymn

- No
- Yes

Name of Hymn: _____

Greeting

Prayer of the Day

Remembrances and Tributes

- No
- Yes

Suggested individuals: _____

Scripture Readings (two or three):

Reading # 1 _____

To be read by:

- Pastor
- Other _____

Reading # 2 _____

To be read by:

- Pastor
- Other _____

Reading # 3 _____

To be read by:

_____ Pastor

_____ Other _____

Sermon

Hymn of the Day

Name of hymn: _____

Creed

_____ Apostles' Creed

_____ Other: _____

Prayers of Intercession

Communion

A service with Communion continues with the peace. Following the prayer after Communion, the service continues with the commendation.

A service without Communion continues as follows:

Lord's Prayer

Commendation — with coffin or ashes

Recessional Hymn

Name of hymn: _____

Graveside Committal Service:

_____ No _____ Yes