



FUNERAL PLANNING GUIDE

Faith Lutheran Church, Oregon, WI

Pastor Jeff Hendrix

Introduction

Funeral planning is often a difficult task for a variety of reasons. One is grief—decisions can be especially challenging when one is weighed down by the nearness of death. Another is that the variety of funeral services practiced within society may lead to confusion as to how a funeral should be conducted. This brief booklet is provided to explain and assist in the preparation of a funeral service.

Theology of Death and Funerals

A theology of funerals can be summed up in a couple of Scripture texts. One is Romans 6:23: “**For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**” The other is Romans 3:23-24: “**For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.**” Both of these texts are clear: because of sin, each of us faces and deserves eternal death of body and soul, and none of us can do anything to earn salvation. However, Jesus Christ has suffered that eternal death for sin already on the cross; and risen again from the dead, He already gives forgiveness and eternal life by means of His Word and Sacraments.

“**Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life,**” says John 3:16: salvation is solely the work of Jesus and His gift to us.

A Christian funeral reflects this Law and Gospel. We speak fondly and respectfully of the one who has died, though at the same time we acknowledge his/her sinfulness and the need for Christ’s forgiveness. This is hardly speaking ill: it is the same confession that the deceased has made by their church membership. (Thus, except for very rare circumstances, funerals at Faith are reserved for church members in good standing, or non-members who have received pastoral care before their demise from a pastor serving the congregation.) All the more, we proclaim that Christ has died for the sins of the deceased and that Christ is risen to give them eternal life. This hope-filled proclamation is carried out by both pastor and congregation in a beautiful service that may include chanted psalms, hymns, Scripture readings, responses, the Creed, and prayers. In speaking and singing, those in attendance put Christ’s life-giving Word into each other’s ears.

Two Families

In planning a funeral service, it is helpful to keep in mind that the deceased is a member of two families: his/her household and his/her church family. The Christian funeral service reflects the faith and practice of his church family, as much as a family reception would reflect the faith and practice of his/her household. (Hopefully, the faith of both families overlaps significantly, though this is not always the case.) In preparing the funeral service, the pastor welcomes the conversation and assistance of the household in determining significant Scripture readings and appropriate hymns; and appreciates that family’s humble submission and respect to the faith of the deceased and his/her church family.

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH

Faith Lutheran Church

143 Washington St., Oregon, WI

Planning the Funeral Service Proper

One of two funeral services will be used: the one found in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod's *Handbook for Ministerial Acts*, or Christian Funeral in the Wisconsin Synod's *Christian Worship* Hymnal. Both are beautiful services in which pastor and worshipers both take part in proclaiming Christ's victory over death in their respective callings. This established order also makes service planning quite simple.

Songs

A typical funeral service will feature 1-3 congregational hymns. While silence or wailing denotes grief in Scripture, singing indicates rejoicing and hope. Hymns may be selected from the hymnals used by the deceased's church family, either *Christian Worship* (CW - Northwestern Publishing House, 1993), or *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* (ELH - Morning Star Publishers, 1996). The family is invited to share favorite hymns (For help, a list of suggested hymns especially appropriate for funerals is included below, but any other hymns from our hymnals should make for fine proclamations of the resurrection of the dead. (Songs not in either hymnal are discouraged from being used, although if the family insists, the song will need to be approved by pastor and organist/pianist first). If the family would like a solo, these two hymnals serve as a resource for special music as well.

Readings

The funeral service is also rich in the proclamation of salvation and eternal life from the Word of God. To demonstrate that this joyous news runs throughout the Bible, there are normally 3-4 different Scripture readings and Psalms, one of which will serve as the text for the funeral sermon. The family is invited to share favorite Bible sections for use for the sermon or the pastor would be happy to choose a comforting selection from Scripture.

Other Tributes

Where eulogies and other tributes to the deceased are desired, they are reserved for the reception.

Planning the Reception

Faith Lutheran Church is happy to provide a luncheon or reception in memory of a church member who has died, whether that reception takes place in the fellowship hall or elsewhere. Should the family desire photographic displays, video tributes or favorite music of the deceased, this is the appropriate setting. Limited audio-visual equipment is available onsite: please check with Pastor.

After the Graveside Service/Committal

Military Honors

It is our hope for every veteran that their funeral and burial best reflect the gospel hope of resurrection. It is our practice to follow the Military Tradition of Military Honors at graveside following the committal.

Christians strive to keep the gospel hope of the resurrection at the center of all observances associated with the death of a Christian. Because the church understands the Burial of the Dead to be a service of worship to God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, it does not allow social or fraternal societies to introduce rites or ceremonies into its liturgy.

These ceremonies should not be mingled with the church's worship of God either in the church building or in any other setting (such as a funeral home, mortuary, or at the graveside). Military honors and fraternal tributes and rites should be kept separate from the funeral and committal services of the church. This is easily done by having the services/rites of the church be concluded before other secular rites are begun.

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List of Especially Appropriate Hymns

Below is a list of suggested hymns that especially proclaim Christ's power over death. Selections are taken from *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* (ELH); most hymns are also found in *Christian Worship* (CW).

Now May He Who from the Dead - ELH 19
Holy Ghost, Dispel Our Sadness - ELH 20
We Now Implore God the Holy Ghost - ELH 33
In Peace and Joy I Now Depart - ELH 48
Crown Him with Many Crowns - ELH 55
The Lord Hath Helped Me Hitherto - ELH 71
O Jesus Christ, Thy Manger Is - ELH 161
Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus - ELH 236
He That Believes and Is Baptized - ELH 241
God's Own Child, I Gladly Say it - ELH 246
A Mighty Fortress is Our God - ELH 250/251
Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me - ELH 286
A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth - ELH 331
Christ, the Life of All the Living - ELH 333
O Sacred Head, Now Wounded - ELH 334/335
Awake, My Heart, with Gladness - ELH 341
Christ the Lord is Risen Today; Alleluia! - ELH 341
I Know that My Redeemer Lives - ELH 351
Like the Golden Sun Ascending - ELH 354
The Lord My Faithful Shepherd Is - ELH 368
The King of Love My Shepherd Is - ELH 370
The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want - ELH 371
Why Should Cross and trial Grieve Me - ELH 377
On Christ's Ascension I Now Build - ELH 392
God Loved the World So that He Gave - ELH 403
Lord, Thee I Love With All My Heart - ELH 406
Come unto Me, Ye Weary - ELH 413
Let Me Be Thine Forever - ELH 427
In Jesus I Find Rest and Peace - 437
All Depends on Our Possessing - ELH 468

All Men Living Are But Mortal - ELH 472
For Me to Live Is Jesus - ELH 473
I'm But a Stranger Here - ELH 474
Praise God, This Hour of Sorrow - ELH 475
Now Lay We Calmly in the Grave - ELH 476
The Will of God is Always Best - ELH 477
Asleep in Jesus! Blessed Sleep - ELH 478
Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide - ELH 511
In the Cross of Christ I Glory - ELH 523
I Know of a Sleep in Jesus' Name - ELH 525
O How Blest Are Ye Whose Toils Are Ended - ELH 526
In the Midst of Earthly Life - ELH 527
My Course is Run - ELH 528
Vain World, Now Farewell - ELH 529
I Fall Asleep in Jesus' Wounds - ELH 530
The World is Very Evil (Jerusalem the Golden) - ELH 534
Farewell I Gladly Bid Thee - ELH 535
Jerusalem, My Happy Home - ELH 539
Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers - ELH 543
Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying - ELH 544
Abide with Me; Fast Falls the Eventide - ELH 561
Forever with the Lord - ELH 552
God's Word Is Our Great Heritage - ELH 583
Grant Peace, We Pray, in Mercy Lord - ELH 584
How Blest Are They Who Hear - ELH 586
Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing - ELH 588
On My Heart Imprint Thine Image - ELH 593

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FUNERAL PREFERENCES

Note: Faith Lutheran Church and the Pastor will make every attempt to accommodate preferences, but may be unable to fulfill every wish.

Date of Death: _____

Date of Funeral: _____ Time: _____

Location of Funeral Service:

Location of Reception:

Burial Cremation

Location of Burial/Inurnment:

Desired Scripture Reading(s):

CW pg. 148 has many appropriate lessons listed. If none are selected, Pastor will be happy to choose the lessons.

Desired Hymn(s):

Silence denotes grief, but singing indicates rejoicing. However we are free in Christ to do either. If no singing is desired, please write "no hymns."

Special Music:

Indicate if a soloist/choir/instrumentalists/etc. is desired. List also what the desired music selection(s) is/are. Note that the use of such songs - if not contained in either hymnal of our church - will be up to the Pastor's discretion.

Other Rites/Rituals (at the graveside after the committal):

(Military honors, etc.)

Other Special Considerations:

Is there anything else you wish the Pastor to know about the deceased or the family?

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