

Guide to Planning a Funeral Immanuel Lutheran Church

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A few general questions:

What is a funeral?

At a person's death, the church shares the grief of those who mourn and remembers life is a gift of God. 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 hope of the resurrection.

The movement of the funeral service begins with the Gathering. This contains the Thanksgiving for Baptism, when we remember the baptism of the deceased and encourage the bereaved to persevere in faith. The liturgy moves to the Word, remembering the life of faith of the deceased and connecting his/her story to the story of our salvation through Jesus Christ. The Meal (Holy Communion) can further connect us to Jesus and to all the company of saints who now live in him. Finally, we end with the Sending, when we release our beloved to God and celebrate the promise of the resurrection already at work in them.

What do we do when our family member is near death?

If you have not already contacted the church, contact us now (651-699-5560), so we may walk with you in this difficult time. Prayer, Holy Communion, or a service of commending the dying to God can be helpful to families as they prepare for the death of their loved one.

What do we do when our family member dies?

When death comes, contact the church as soon as possible, so the community can support you in this difficult time. It is best that the church be contacted before any arrangements are made for a funeral. Call the church to speak with Pastor Cindy.

How do we schedule a funeral date?

The church will make every effort to work with you in scheduling the funeral. Sometimes there are unavoidable conflicts in the building's or pastor's calendars. Please speak with the church before confirming a time or date with a funeral director. Funerals can be held any day of the week except Sunday.

Who plans the funeral?

Families, Pastor Cindy, and Minister of Music Rebekah will meet to plan worship and details surrounding the funeral. At this meeting families are also invited to help the staff know their loved one better so they can make the service unique to that individual. An initial meeting can occur before a death if so desired.

What do we bring to the planning meeting with Immanuel's staff?

Favorite hymns, Bible verses, poems, full baptismal name, baptismal date (if known), calendar, brief biography, a symbol of faith, other things you wish to share with the pastor and musician. It is also helpful to bring a picture of the deceased and a copy of the obituary for the bulletin.

Who participates in the funeral?

The pastor will always participate in the funeral. If the family wishes to have organ music and hymn accompaniment, the church has a professional organist who is skilled with and well acquainted with our instrument. We ask that others not be invited to play the organ. If the family wishes to have solos or other instrumental music, skilled musicians are available and can be coordinated with the minister of music

If family members wish to participate in the service, they may be asked to

- read scripture
- carry the cross at the beginning of the service
- place the funeral pall (baptismal garment) on the casket
- hand out bulletins
- help with communion

Often, family members wish to participate as musicians. If you have family and friends who can offer these services, be certain that they are experienced in this role and are able to sing during this time of grief. It is our experience that most family members are not able to sing for the service of someone they loved dearly.

What fees are involved?

Staff will discuss incidental fees and suggested honoraria with you as we work together to shape the service. Please make these payments to each individual participant (the organist, soloist, custodian, lunch caterer, etc.) Often the funeral home coordinates this.

What about cremation?

The Christian church fully accepts cremation as one of the means of honoring earthly remains. Your decision regarding cremation will more than likely be shaped by the feelings, convictions, and traditions of your family. If time and circumstance allow, the cremated remains should be present at the funeral.

Before and After the Funeral:

It is good to gather informally with family and friends to tell stories and support each other. Two opportunities are available:

Visitations

Visitations held at the church are welcome. They may be held the evening before the funeral or immediately before the funeral. The visitation will be held in the Gathering Space. Families may wish to bring photos or memories of their loved one. The church can provide tables and a video projector/screen. We do not provide easels for photo displays. Contact your funeral home about easels.

Luncheons

Christianity is a meal fellowship at its heart. By gathering around the table for mutual conversation and consolation we hold one another up in faith. Luncheons are catered from an outside vendor. The family is responsible for the payment of the caterer. Volunteers from the church are available to serve. If you wish to have a luncheon, please indicate that at the funeral planning meeting and the coordinator will contact you for more details.

What should we place on or around the casket or urn?

If there is a casket:

During the visitation, families may wish a floral spray or flag to be placed on the casket. If you wish, a national flag may be displayed during the visitation, either on a flagpole, across the foot of the coffin, or placed folded inside the coffin. The coffin is open during the visitation except in unusual circumstances. It remains open in the Gathering Space as guests arrive for the service. Shortly before the service begins, the family makes their last visit to the coffin, and while they are preparing for the service with the pastor, the funeral home staff members close the coffin and prepare it for the liturgy. The coffin remains closed for the service and is not opened again.

The flag or floral arrangement will be removed from on top of the coffin before we enter the narthex and sanctuary, where the funeral pall (the symbol of our baptism in the body of Christ) will be placed upon the coffin.

If there is an urn:

During the visitation, the urn is placed in the gathering space with a picture, flowers or significant items around it. The pastor and the family will decide whether the urn will be processed into the sanctuary or will simply be up at the front of the sanctuary before the service begins. During the funeral service, a funeral pall will be placed upon the urn to remind us that the deceased is a baptized child of God.

The funeral service:

The procession in and out of the funeral service:

Before the beginning of the service (after the visitation), the family will gather in the West Lounge for prayer with the pastor. Then, the family will make their way to the narthex for the service. The worship begins in the back of the sanctuary, where, as Romans 6 is read, a white baptismal garment (funeral pall) is placed on the casket

or urn. This reminds us that we all entered into the presence of God through our baptism. During the Gathering Hymn, all will process into the sanctuary. The order is: cross, casket, family, pastor. Once you reach the pews, remain standing until the pastor seats the entire congregation after the Prayer of the Day. At the end of the service, during the Sending Hymn, the procession will lead out. Again, the order is: cross, casket, family, pastor.

Spoken Tributes

Often, family members and close friends desire to share thoughts and memories. Potential speakers should be carefully selected to offer a dignified tribute. Tributes should honor the deceased, giving a special glimpse into the character of the one that some would not have known as well. In this way, we can all see God working in the life of that person.

We ask that you limit the number of tributes to **no more than three** speakers offering tributes of **two to three minutes** in length to keep the service focused. We recommend that speakers address different aspects of the life of the deceased; family, friends and work. Please note that, during the service, the pastor will **not** publicly offer the opportunity for any additional tributes from those in the congregation.

Music:

Singing allows us to join the countless ranks of angels in heaven. Through song, we can thank God for giving us this beloved person, praise God for this person's life, comfort one another in our grief, and sing the beloved deceased to glory. Some people also wish to have a soloist participate in the funeral--either a vocalist or instrumentalist. Some families wish to have a small ensemble. A list of suggested hymns is located at the end of this manual. Other hymns or solo music can be suggested by our minister of music.

Holy Communion:

Celebration of the Holy Communion is appropriate and welcome at funerals. Communion is a way to gather with the deceased around the heavenly banquet table. We suggest this option if you will find it meaningful for you and the family.

What if we're having a memorial service?

In the absence of a body, furniture is arranged near the chancel to hold a picture of the deceased, along with an arrangement of flowers. A symbol of the faith of the deceased may also be provided--their well-worn Bible, for example. 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 members to have someone from the funeral home in attendance who can attend any cremated remains if they are present, arrange flowers, set up the guest book, worship bulletins, and memorial envelopes, serve as ushers and tend to any details of which the family may be unaware.

What about military or fraternal honors?

Military honors most often occur at the graveside. Fraternal honors may happen at the visitation.

What about flowers or memorials?

In the planning process, some families choose to designate preferences for memorial gifts; including the family's desires regarding gifts of flowers. This preference should be made know to the funeral director so it may be included in the obituary. If there are flowers present, some will be taken into the sanctuary for the service.

After the funeral:

A pastor will make follow-up calls. Your loved one will be included in the next All Saints Day celebrations and our book of remembrance. There are grief support groups available, brochures may be found at the church. Church and Foundation staff can assist you in selecting a fitting gift as you seek to memorialize your loved one.

General Outline of a Funeral Service using Evangelical Lutheran Worship

Gathering

The ministers may meet the coffin and the bereaved at the entrance to the church. The assembly stands and faces them.

Thanksgiving for Baptism

As a sign of being clothed with Christ in baptism, a pall may be placed on the coffin or urn by family members, pallbearers, or other assisting ministers. A procession may form and enter, the ministers leading. A hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung.

Hymn

Greeting

Prayer of the Day

Word

Readings

Sermon

Hymn of the Day

Creed

Prayers of Intercession

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

OR

A service without communion continues as follows.

Lord's Prayer

Commendation

Let us commend *name* to the mercy of God, our maker and redeemer.

Into your hands, O merciful Savior, we commend your servant *name*. Acknowledge, we humbly beseech you, a sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your own flock, a sinner of your own redeeming. Receive her/him into the arms of your mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting peace, and into the glorious company of the saints in light. Amen.

Sending

Let us go forth in peace,
in the name of Christ. Amen.

Suggested Readings:

Old Testament

Job 19:23-27a: I know that my Redeemer lives
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8: For everything there is a season
Isaiah 25:6-9: God will swallow up death forever
*Isaiah 40:1, 6-11: God will gather the lambs
Isaiah 40:1-11, 28-31: Comfort my people, says your God
*Isaiah 43:1-3a, 5-7: I have called you by name
Isaiah 43:1-3a, 18-19: I am about to do a new thing
Isaiah 55:1-3, 6-13: Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters
Isaiah 61:1-3: The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me
*Isaiah 65:17-20, 23-25: A new heaven and a new earth
*Isaiah 66:10-14: As a mother comforts her child
Jeremiah 31:8-13: I will turn their mourning into joy
Lamentations 3:22-26, 31-33: The steadfast love of the LORD

Psalm

*Psalm 23: The LORD is my shepherd
*Psalm 42:1-5: As a deer longs for flowing streams
Psalm 46:1-7: God is our refuge and strength
*Psalm 121: I lift up my eyes to the hills
*Psalm 139:7-12: The gracious omnipresence of the LORD
*Psalm 142:1-6: I cry to the LORD with my voice
Psalm 143: LORD, hear my prayer

New Testament

Romans 5:1-11: Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ
*Romans 8:31-35, 37-39: Who will separate us from the love of Christ?
1 Corinthians 15:12-26: Christ, the first fruits, has been raised
2 Corinthians 4:6-12, 16-18: Treasure in clay jars
*1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, 18: Teaching about those who have died
Hebrews 12:1-2: Surrounded by a cloud of witnesses
1 Peter 1:3-9: A living hope through Jesus' resurrection
*1 John 3:1-2: See what love the Father has given us
Revelation 7:9-17: God will wipe away every tear
Revelation 21:2-7: I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem
Revelation 22:1-5: The Lord God will be their light

Gospel

*Matthew 5:1-10: Blessed are those who mourn
Matthew 11:25-30: I will give you rest
*Matthew 18:1-5, 10-14: A child is the greatest in the kingdom
*Mark 10:13-16: Let the little children come

Mark 16:1-7: The resurrection of Christ
Luke 24:1-9: the resurrection of Christ
John 1:1-5, 9-14: The light shines in the darkness
John 6:37-40: I will raise them up on the last day
*John 10:11-16: I am the good shepherd
John 11:21-27: I am the resurrection and the life
John 14:1-6: I prepare a place for you
John 14:25-27: Peace I leave with you

**Although most of the suggested readings are suitable for a funeral involving a person of any age, these may be especially useful at the death of a child.*

Suggested Hymns:

308: O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright!
313: O Lord, Now Let Your Servant
351, 352: O Sacred Head, Now Wounded
377: Alleluia! Jesus Is Risen!
*381: Peace, to Soothe Our Bitter Woes
391: This Joyful Eastertide
409: Kyrie! God, Father
422: For All the Saints
423: Shall We Gather at the River
429: In Our Day of Thanksgiving
447: O Blessed Spring
483: Here Is Bread
500: Now We Remain
502: The King of Love My Shepherd Is
531: The Trumpets Sound, the Angels Sing
*595: Jesus Loves Me!
*613: Thy Holy Wings
621: Jesus Lives, My Sure Defense
622: Neither Death nor Life
629: Abide with Me
636: How Small Our Span of Life
637: Holy God, Holy and Glorious
639: When We Are Living
721: Goodness Is Stronger than Evil
730: Lord Our God, with Praise We Come
732: I was there to hear your boding cry
750: Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart
759: My Faith Looks Up to Thee
760: O Christ the Same
770: Give Me Jesus
773: Precious Lord, Take My Hand
778: The Lord's My Shepherd
779: Amazing Grace
781: Children of the Heavenly Father
786: O Holy Spirit, Enter In
787: On Eagle's Wings
*815: I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light
826: Thine the Amen

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