

Funeral Planning Guide and Worksheet



Funeral Planning Guide

Jesus said: "I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also." John 14:3

Thank you for picking up First Lutheran's Funeral Planning Guide and Worksheet. This material is designed to:

- provide a tool for planning for the future when your life on this earth ends, and
- support and guide families making plans upon the death of a loved one.

In the first days following a loved one's death, the family makes an average of 200 decisions. During such an emotional, stressful and demanding time, plans that have been made earlier lighten the load after death. If you've not made advance plans, this guide will be helpful to you as you make arrangements for services and burial of your loved one. This guide will walk you through a series of questions. Your responses can be marked on the worksheet at the end. First's pastors are available to discuss any items with you. When you are finished, please share your worksheet with a family member or friend who will act on your behalf after your death. It would also be helpful to contact one of our pastors to share your worksheet so that it can be held in safekeeping for the future.

The Goal of the Christian Funeral Service

The gathering of family and friends, who form a community of hope for a funeral or memorial service, is a rich opportunity to recall the promises of God through Christ. Because of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection to new life, each time we gather to worship upon the death of a loved one, we do so in the context of God's promise.

Every funeral includes praising God in Christ who is our hope and our salvation, even as we remember the deceased and give thanks to God for the time shared with that person. Lutheran Christians believe in Jesus Christ whose bodily death and resurrection made possible life everlasting. Christians view death as another step in our life as children of God. Yet, Christians also experience death as a time of loss when sorrow, grief, and bereavement are both natural and appropriate.

These two truths inform the Christian funeral service and guide the church in its ministry to those who have lost a loved one to death, affirming with both joy and tear the promise and hope of the Good News of Jesus. A funeral or memorial service should be comforting to those who mourn as well as bear witness to our faith in Jesus Christ. The concern of gathered friends does minister to our grief but, above all else, a funeral is a service of worship to God. There, in God's presence together, we witness to our faith in the communion of saints, the resurrection of the body, and the life ever-lasting. In doing so, the assurance of God's love and salvation in Christ become a ministry, especially to the bereaved. Since a funeral is a service of worship, all that takes place should be consistent with this principle.

Planning Faithfully, Choosing Wisely

What is the difference between a funeral and memorial service?

Simply put, at a funeral service the body of the deceased is present, whereas at a memorial service either the deceased's ashes or no remains are present. Both services provide an opportunity to proclaim God's death defeating acts in Christ as we remember all that God has given us in the life of our loved one.

How does the Church view cremation?

Cremation is an acceptable way for Christians to deal with one's earthly remains. The Scriptures tell us that we are formed "of the dust of the ground" (Genesis 2:7) and, after death, we shall return "again to dust." (Job 34:15)

If I choose cremation, do I need to secure the services of a Funeral Director?

We highly recommend working with a Funeral Director. This professional will ease the strain upon family members by coordinating all the details and thus contributing to your wishes being carried out with dignity and honor. Even if cremation is your desire, a Funeral Director handles many details that are not taken care of by the church, the pastor, or family members. Attempting to save money by not using a Funeral Director is likely to cause confusion and frustration at a time when you most need guidance and support.

Should I make pre-arrangements with a Funeral Director?

Making the decision to pre-arrange some aspects of your funeral and/or burial is helpful. An appointment with a Funeral Director in advance of death is a wise step to help you decide what you and your family need from the many services available. If you are a family member caring for a dying loved one, making an initial contact now with a Funeral Director can be very helpful and will lessen the decisions and demands you'll face upon death.

How soon after death does a funeral or memorial service take place?

Funeral services are generally held within three to five days following death, thereby allowing appropriate time for family members and friends to gather for the service. Memorial services can be held at any time. However, waiting for weeks or even months after a death will have a bearing on finding a sense of closure, and this will impact the grief work that follows the death of a loved one. Therefore, it is recommended that a memorial service be held within a few weeks after death. Funeral services at First Lutheran are typically held during the week. Funeral or memorial services on Sunday are highly discouraged, as Sundays are reserved for the worship services of the congregation.

What fees are associated with a funeral or memorial service at First?

There are fees for the people involved in providing the worship service as well as meal costs. A fee schedule is available from the church office and area Funeral Directors. Payment of these fees is coordinated through the Funeral Director.

Who makes arrangements for the musician(s)?

First Lutheran's Director of Worship and Music serves as the pianist or organist for all funerals. A vocalist may be selected by you or your family, or the vocalist can be arranged by the Director of Worship and Music or the Funeral Director.

May we have a visitation at the church the evening before the service, or must that take place at a funeral home?

The visitation may take place at First the afternoon or evening before the service if there are no other events already scheduled that would pose a conflict. A visitation time is typically offered at the church one hour prior to the funeral service.

Who is responsible for producing the order of worship and bulletin?

After the service has been planned with the pastor, the church office will produce the bulletin at no cost to your family.

Who is responsible for submitting the death notice and obituary to the newspaper?

The Funeral Director will take care of this for you.

What if I desire to have memorials directed to First or other organizations?

This is an honorable thing to do. First Lutheran and any other organizations you choose are blessed when memorials are directed to support their ministries and missions. The Funeral Director will be happy to include any memorial designation(s) in the notices about the funeral service. All memorial gifts received directly by First will generate an acknowledgment to you and be listed in the monthly newsletter.

Funeral Planning Worksheet

When planning your funeral or a funeral for a loved one, there are many choices to make. Facing some of those choices now will make the process less demanding for your loved ones later. This Funeral Planning Worksheet will lead you through a variety of decisions. After death, a pastor of First will meet with family members and review your worksheet to form the funeral or memorial service.

This worksheet may be used by:

- an individual making their advance plans known, or
- a family planning the funeral of a loved one nearing death or recently deceased. Please supply as much information as you wish to share on any parts of the worksheet.

Guide for the Christian Funeral of:

Full Name: First, Middle (Maiden), Last

Date Completed: _____

For the Person Making Advance Plans:

When you have completed this worksheet, please consider sharing it with a pastor at First. Your information will be kept in a confidential file available only to the pastors of First. It will be used in consultation with your family or whomever you have directed to carry out these wishes upon your death.

Also, after completing the worksheet, consider telling someone you trust about it. You may wish to discuss with them what you have written to be certain that it is clear. Consider providing copies:

1. To your Family
2. Attached to your Five Wishes Booklet and/or your Will or Trust Plan (see www.agingwithdignity.org/five-wishes.php)
3. To a Funeral Home of your choice
4. Or simply give it to someone you trust with a note that says,

I have recorded my desires regarding my death and burial. I keep this information in the following place: _____ (i.e. on file at the church, with my will, etc.). At the time of my death, I ask that you use this information to provide guidance for my family and my church in making arrangements for the funeral I desire. Although this information is being left for safekeeping, I understand that it is not legally binding or enforceable. This worksheet does not make the church or anyone obligated or responsible for the execution of these instructions. With gratitude, Signature and Date

For Family Members Making Plans for the Funeral of a Loved One Nearing Death or Recently

Deceased:

Please use this worksheet to assist with plans that will honor your loved one's expressed wishes or desires and will reflect his/her values. If you haven't already contacted a Funeral Director, please consider doing so now. The professional services, compassionate care, and guidance they provide will greatly assist you in the days ahead. When death occurs, area Funeral Directors have personal contact information for all the pastors at First and will contact them on your behalf.

Christian Worship Service Plans

Favorite Biblical Theme or Image _____

Readers

_____ The pastor who officiates will read.

_____ I would like this/these person(s) to read at my service: _____

Bible Readings

_____ The pastor who officiates may choose the readings.

_____ My Family will choose the readings.

_____ I have chosen the readings as indicated below. *(There is a list of suggested readings on page 8.)*

Old Testament Readings

New Testament Readings

Other Readings Selected:

Congregational Hymns

_____ The pastor who officiates may choose the hymns.

_____ My family will choose the hymns

_____ I have chosen the hymns as indicated below. *(There is a list of suggested hymns on page 9.)*

*Since a live pianist/organist is included in the church pricing, please consider making all music live instead of using recorded music.

Soloist

If possible, I would like this vocalist to sing: _____

Vocal Solos Selected (Selection of solos must aim to reflect the spirit of Christian worship.)

Remembrances to be shared during worship by a Family Member or a Friend *(Please ask speakers to limit their remarks to 3 minutes.)*

_____ Yes

_____ No

I would like this person to speak: _____

Names of Pall Bearers *(Six Pall Bearers are needed when there is a coffin for burial. In the event of cremation, honorary pall bearers may be named.)*

_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____

Memorial Suggestions

_____ First Lutheran Church Endowment Trust Fund *This is an Endowed Fund where memorial gifts are invested, and the interest growth is disbursed annually to support a variety of ministries and missions of First.*

_____ First Lutheran’s Memorial Fund

_____ Specific Mission or Ministry: _____

(Ideas include: Music Ministry, Children’s Bible Fund, Community Preschool, Youth Scholarships, and Missionary Fund)

_____ Other: _____

Obituary

Full Name (including Maiden Name) _____

Birth Date and Location _____

Parent's Names (including Mother's Maiden Name) _____

Baptism Date, Church, and Location _____

Confirmation Date, Church, and Location _____

Marital Status, Marriage Date, and Name of Spouse _____

Other Marriages/Divorces/Spouse(s) _____

Names of Children _____

Additional Next of Kin _____

Personal History

On a separate page, record additional information including place(s) of residence, special events, hobbies/interests, schools attended, degrees received, accomplishments, memberships, employment history, volunteer activities, military service, etc. Include as many full names, city of residence, birth and death dates, etc. as possible. All this information is important to your family. This information does not need to be prepared in paragraph form.

Important Documents and Advisors

It is important that survivors be able to locate vital records and important documents. Before your death, you should have a current will/living trust and related health care directives which express your wishes on important personal, financial, medical, and charitable issues for your survivors. If you need information regarding estate planning, planned giving, and/or the inclusion of a Christian preamble for your will, please consult your legal or financial advisor.

Location and Date of Will/Living Trust _____

Location of my Five Wishes Booklet or Living Will _____

Attorney/Will Preparer _____

Power of Attorney/Financial _____

Power of Attorney for Health Care _____

Executor of Will/Estate _____

Guardian (for Minor Children) _____

Additional Comments _____

Suggested Readings (not an exhaustive list)

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*
Micah 6:8 *He has told you, O Mortal, what is good, and what does the LORD require of you?*
*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*
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*
2 Timothy 4:7-8 *I have fought the good fight*
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*
*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 *he 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*

**Especially appropriate at death of a child*

Suggested hymns/songs (not an exhaustive list)

308: O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright!
313: O Lord, Now Let Your Servant
377: Alleluia! Jesus Is Risen!
*381: Peace, to Soothe Our Bitter Woes
391: This Joyful Eastertide
422: For All the Saints
423: Shall We Gather at the River
483: Here Is Bread
502: The King of Love My Shepherd Is
531: The Trumpets Sound, the Angels Sing
592: Just As I Am, Without One Plea
*595: Jesus Loves Me!
*613: Thy Holy Wings
622: Neither Death nor Life
629: Abide with Me
636: How Small Our Span of Life
732: Morning Cry
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
786: O Holy Spirit, Enter In
787: On Eagle's Wings (best done as a solo)
*815: I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light
856: How Great Thou Art

On the following page is a template for the order of service. This is the basic order of a funeral/memorial service. The music and scriptures will be decided by your family at the time of planning, and you can help them out by stating your preferences.

ORDER OF SERVICE - Name

Day/Date/Time

Prelude.....

Welcome and Invocation.....Pastor

Processional Hymn.....#

Opening Liturgy.....

Prayer.....

Eulogy/Obituary (optional).....

Song/Solo (optional).....

Scripture Reading.....

MessagePastor

Hymn.....#

Apostles' Creed.....

Prayers.....

Lord's Prayer.....

Commendation.....

Recessional Hymn.....#

Everyone is invited to stay for lunch in the Gathering Space.

Burial will take place at _____ Cemetery after lunch.