

Planning a Christian Funeral



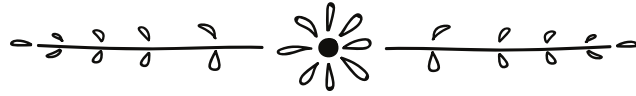
HOLY CROSS
LUTHERAN CHURCH

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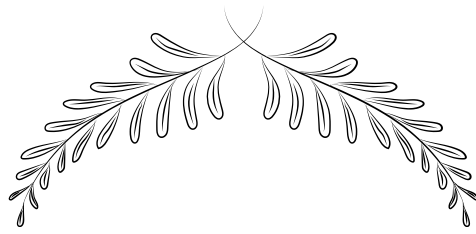
This booklet has come into being as a result of study and represents the practice of Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church in Duluth, MN. Planning a funeral is easier to think about prior to the need for it when the family is numbed by news of a death. We pray this will be helpful to the families of our congregation as they plan the funeral of a loved one or as you plan your own funeral.

We had our own loved ones in mind as we proceeded with this venture, and we dedicate this booklet to their memory, the memories of the many Holy Cross members who are deceased, and also to the memory of your loved ones.

This booklet came in to being as many other brochures were gathered and researched. This particular brochure was created from a brochure from Prince of Peace Lutheran Church and Our Savior's Lutheran Church of Sioux Falls. We are grateful to their thoughtful work in the area of funeral ministry.

Christian funerals take place within the context of our trust in the promises of God, promises of both forgiveness and new life in Christ. While we grieve, we also remember that death is but a transformation, a change, or a passage to this promised new life.





INTRODUCTION

When death comes to members and friends of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, we all feel the loss, but your sense of loss is always unique. The death of a loved one is a painful, difficult and confusing time that is filled with many emotions. It is also a celebration of the resurrection for us who have been joined to the death of Jesus Christ in our baptism.

When you experience a death in your family, please call the church office to inform us so we can be a support and help to you in this difficult time. If the deceased has not preplanned their funeral, you will be faced with a multitude of decisions in a very short period of time.

Because you are planning a worship service, there are some things set by church policy and other things where you have more discretion. That will be spelled out in this booklet.

As you plan you may be driven by "this is what Mom or Dad, etc. would have wanted;" however, also keep in mind those things that you will find meaningful. The funeral is primarily for you, your family and friends to express your needs and faith in God. Ritual is a powerful, necessary experience we all need as we face loss and life transitions. It needs to be a meaningful rite for you and your loved ones.

"None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then whether we live or whether we die we are the Lord's."

- Romans 14:7-8

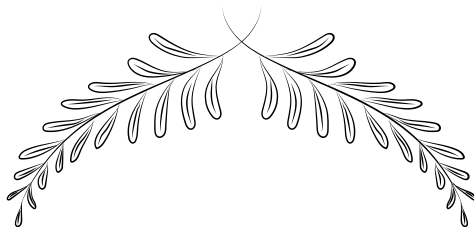


THE CHRISTIAN FUNERAL

The death of a human being is a reminder of the brevity of life on earth and of the universal, inescapable nature of life's end. In the face of death, care for the dying and those who have died is a fundamental sign of humanness, giving expression to deeply held convictions about the meaning of life's end. The church's most deeply held conviction is the Paschal Mystery—Christ's saving passage through death to resurrected life as the new creation. The ritual of worship that gathers God's people at the death of a loved one calls upon this Paschal Mystery in which we live, and which is the mutual consolation and hope presented by the church in the worship service for a Christian funeral. In the funeral worship we sing our alleluias because Christ has conquered death.

The Service for the Christian funeral is found in the hymnal called Evangelical Lutheran Worship. The service lasts from 35-60 minutes. Holy Communion may be celebrated as a part of the funeral worship. All in attendance would be invited to participate in the sacrament. While it is very appropriate for family members or friends to share memories and deliver eulogies remembering the deceased, thereby adding a personal touch to the service, they should be brief and concise (no more than two speakers). These will take place at the early part of the service before the liturgy of worship begins.

Because the focus of our liturgy is the hope of baptism and the promises of the resurrected Christ, the sanctuary of the church is the most appropriate place for a Christian funeral. It is the place where we mark all of life's passages from birth and baptism to confirmation, marriage and now, the transition to a new life through the grave. If you desire to have the service at the funeral home, or a short service at the grave site, this is also appropriate and we will be happy to lead the service in these locations as well.



FUNERAL OR MEMORIAL SERVICE

At a funeral home the body is present for viewing prior to the service and often the night before during visitation with family and friends. If the service is held in the church, it is possible to have a viewing in the narthex. In either case, the casket is closed for the funeral service itself.

Cremation is an acceptable option for those who wish to consider it. However, viewing of the body of a loved one remains an important part of the grieving process and arrangements should be made for that possibility.

When the body is present for a funeral service the pastor will lead the procession with the coffin. The family may choose to process in with the coffin or be ushered into the sanctuary beforehand.

A memorial service does not begin with a processional. If the deceased has been cremated, the cremains may be placed before the altar during the memorial service.

The family may wish to have a prayer service at the funeral home or at the church the night before the funeral service. Arrangements need to be made with the officiating clergy and funeral home.

*May God support us all the day long till the
shades lengthen and the evening come and the
busy world is hushed and the fever of life is over
and our work is done. Then in mercy may God
give us a safe lodging and a holy rest
and peace at last.*

- John Henry Newman



THE FUNERAL PALL

One of the symbols we have available at the church for your use during the funeral liturgy is a funeral pall. The funeral pall is a woven covering placed on the coffin prior to the start of worship and remains on the coffin throughout the service. It is symbolic of the garment we believe God put on us when we were joined to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in our own baptism. The pall is removed when the coffin is taken from the church building for burial. It is not appropriate to have anything on top of the pall. Flowers may be placed on the coffin during viewing prior to the service. A funeral pall is also available to cover the urn containing the deceased cremains. There is no cost for use of the palls.

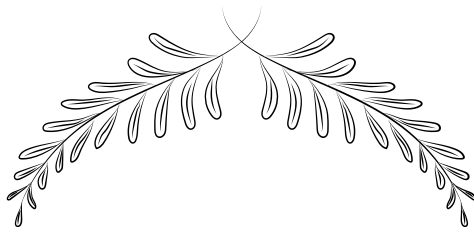


MEETING WITH THE PASTOR

Plan a meeting between the pastor and immediate family members or a family representative to discuss details for the service before finalizing arrangements with the funeral home. It is appropriate to invite the pastor to come to the funeral home so that all are on board to make plans for the funeral. This will include such things as who is to participate in the service, preferred scripture readings, choice of hymns to be sung, or other musical preferences. You will also be asked to share insights about the deceased which will help to prepare the sermon prayers, and other aspects of the service.

Meaningful funerals do not just happen. They are a ritual that requires your focus and time. Planning may feel less burdensome when you create a personalized, inclusive ceremony that will help your family and other mourners during this time of bereavement and beyond.





SCRIPTURE TEXTS

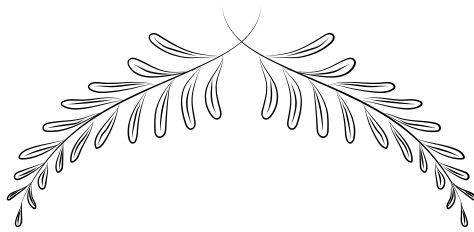
The family is invited to choose scripture texts which are meaningful for them. In addition, the pastor may also choose a text or two. The following is a suggested list which is by no means exhaustive:

Death in General

Job 19:1, 23-27a....."For I know that my Redeemer lives"
Psalm 23....."The Lord is My Shepherd"
Psalm 91....."My God, in whom I trust."
Psalm 121....."I lift my eyes to the hills"
Psalm 130....."Out of the depths I cry to you"
Psalm 139:1-18....."O, Lord, you have searched me"
Isaiah 25:6-9....."God will wipe away tears"
Isaiah 40:27-31....."They shall not be weary"
Isaiah 43:1-3a....."I have called you by name"
Matthew 5:6-8....."Blessed are they who mourn"
Matthew 25:1-13....."10 Bridesmaids and their lamps"
John 10:27-29....."My sheep hear my voice"
John 11:21-27....."I am the resurrection and the life"
John 14:1-6....."In my Father's house..."
Romans 5:1-11....."Since we are justified by faith"
Romans 8:31-35, 37-39....."Nothing can separate us..."
Romans 14:7-9....."We do not die to ourselves"
1 Corinthians 15:12-26....."Christ has been raised"
1 Corinthians 15:51-57....."We will all be changed"
Philippians 3:20-21....."Our citizenship is in heaven"
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18....."Do not grieve without hope"
1 Peter 1:3-9....."A new birth into a living hope"
Revelation 7:9-17....."Who are these robed in white"
Revelation 14:13....."Blessed are the dead"
Revelation 21:2-7

Sudden Death

Genesis 4:10....."The voice of your brother's blood"
Job 12:10....."In God's hand"
Job 13:15....."Though he slay me, yet will I trust"



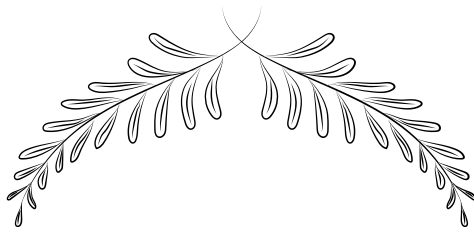
Job 14:1....."Man is born of woman is of a few days"
Psalm 46:1-7....."God is our refuge and strength"
Psalm 103:15-16....."As for man, his days are like grass"
Isaiah 55:8-10....."My thoughts are not your thoughts"
Lamentations 1:12....."Is there any sorrow like my sorrow?"
Luke 13:4-5....."Were those who the tower fell on..."
Romans 11:33-34....."Oh the depth of the wisdom"
1 Corinthians 13:12....."Now we see dimly"

Death After Prolonged Illness

Job 3:20-22....."Which long for death..."
Psalm 16:6....."I have a goodly heritage"
Psalm 30:11-12....."You have turned my mourning into dancing"
Psalm 34:19....."Many your affliction, but the Lord delivers"
Psalm 126:5-6....."Those who sew in tears"
Psalm 130:5....."I wait for the Lord"
Lamentations 3:22-24....."Great is your faithfulness"
Matthew 5:12....."Rejoice for great is your reward?"
Luke 13:43....."Today you will be with me in paradise"
John 16:22....."Now you have sorrow"
Romans 5:33-35....."Suffering produces endurance"
Romans 8:18....."Sufferings of this time"
2 Timothy 4:7-8....."I have fought the good fight."
James 1:12....."Blessed is the one who endures..."
Revelation 2:10....."Be faithful unto death"

Death of Parents

Genesis 48:21....."I die, but God will be with you"
Genesis 50:21....."Fear not, I will nourish you..."
Psalm 10:14....."You are the helper of the fatherless"
Psalm 46:10....."Be still and know that I am God"
Psalm 146:8-9....."God upholds the orphan and the widow"
Isaiah 41:13....."Fear not, I will help you."
Isaiah 63:16....."O Lord you are our father"
Isaiah 66:13....."As one whom your mother comforted"
John 14:18....."I will not leave you comfortless"
1 Peter 5:7....."Cast your care on him"



Death of Youth

Isaiah 40:30-31....."Even youth shall faint"

Death of Children

Genesis 37:35....."I will go down to the grave of my son"

1 Samuel 27:28....."I have lent this child to the Lord."

2 Samuel 12:23....."Now he is dead, can I bring him back"

2 Samuel 18:33....."O my son Absalom, would I have died for you..."

Isaiah 65:17-20a....."No more...an infant who lives but a few days"

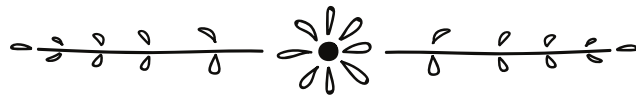
Jeremiah 31:15....."Rachel is weeping for her children"

Lamentations 3:17-26, 31-33....."I have forgotten what happiness is"

Matthew 11:25-30....."You have revealed them to infants"

Luke 18:15-17....."Let the little ones come to me"

1 John 3:1-2....."We should be called children of God"



MUSIC

Music is a meaningful medium as an expression of our grief and our celebration. When selecting music for the funeral consider the hymns of the church which share messages of God's love and grace.

Congregational hymns provide an opportunity for those gathered to participate more fully in the worship. Easter hymns are always fitting.

Since this is a worship service, music which expresses our faith in God or God's faithfulness in our lives is most desirable. While secular music is not inappropriate and is sometimes used, it should have this same focus.

Other dimensions like strings, flute, brass, woodwinds, guitar etc. add to the service. The pastor will help the family plan for special music, arrange for the services of the church organist, and for the selection of hymns. The following list is provided as a starting point.



SUGGESTED HYMNS AND SONGS

- "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" (ELW Hymnal: #503, #504, #505)
- "Abide with Me" (ELW Hymnal: #629)
- "Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound" (ELW Hymnal: #779)
- "Be Thou My Vision" (ELW Hymnal: #793/WOV Hymnal: #776)
- "Beautiful Savior" (ELW Hymnal: #838)
- "Blessed Assurance" (ELW Hymnal: #638/WOV Hymnal: #699)
- "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" (ELW Hymnal: #656)
- "Borning Cry" (ELW Hymnal: #732/WOV Hymnal: #770)
- "Children of the Heavenly Father" (ELW Hymnal: #781)
- "Day by Day" (ELW Hymnal: #790/WOV Hymnal: #746)
- "For all the Saints" (ELW Hymnal: #422)
- "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" (ELW Hymnal: #733/WOV #771)
- "Guide Me Ever, Great Redeemer" (ELW Hymnal: #618)
- "Healer of our Every Ill" (ELW Hymnal: #612/WOV Hymnal: #738)
- "How Great Thou Art" (ELW Hymnal: #856)
- "I Know that My Redeemer Lives!" (ELW Hymnal: #619)
- "In the Garden" (Written by C. Austin Miles)
- "Lift High the Cross" (ELW Hymnal: #660)
- "Lord of All Hopefulness" (ELW Hymnal: #765)
- "My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less" (ELW Hymnal: #596, #597)
- "My Life Flows On in Endless Song" (ELW: #763/WOV: #781)
- "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" (ELW Hymnal: #632)
- "On Eagle's Wings" (ELW Hymnal: #787/WOV Hymnal: #779)
- "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" (ELW: #773/WOV: #731)
- "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me" (ELW Hymnal: #623)
- "Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling" (ELW: #608/WOV: #734)
- "The Church's One Foundation" (ELW Hymnal: #654)
- "The King of Love My Shepherd Is" (ELW Hymnal: #502)
- "The Lord's My Shepherd" (ELW Hymnal: #778)
- "The Old Rugged Cross" (Written by George Bennard)
- "Thine is the Glory" (ELW Hymnal: #376)
- "Thy Holy Wings" (ELW Hymnal: #613/WOV Hymnal: #741)
- "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" (ELW Hymnal: #742)
- "What Wondrous Love Is This" (ELW Hymnal: #666)
- "When Peace like a River (It Is Well with My Soul)" (ELW: #785)
- "Behold the Host Arrayed in White" (ELW Hymnal: #425)



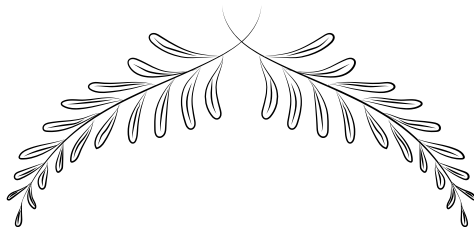
THE DEATH OF A CHILD

The death of a child leaves parents and the community with a multitude of losses. Not only the death of this little one who already became such a precious part of one's life (whether born or stillborn), but also the loss of our hopes and dreams for this child. It can be experienced as the loss of our future.

Whether this loss is through miscarriage, stillbirth, shortly after birth, or after they have grown, it is essential to have ritual around the death of a child for the family to have support. This loss tears at the very fabric of marriage. It can be therapeutic for the parents to be actively involved in creating a meaningful worship service (ritual) for their child(ren). There are resources of poems, readings, prayers, etc. available at the church, hospitals, and funeral homes.

While emergency baptism ought not to be done out of fear of God, there are pastoral occasions when the sacrament is most fitting—such as when a newborn child and its parents are wrestling with impending death and the comfort of baptism can be called upon. In cases of imminent death, a person may be baptized by any Christian. Should sudden death prevent baptism, we commend the person to God with prayer, trusting in God's grace, but the child or adult, is not baptized. Prayers at such a death may include naming, signing with the cross, and anointing for burial. Prayers and commendations may be offered in the event of a stillbirth or of the early loss of a pregnancy.

In the section of scripture passages, you will find a number of them listed under "The Death of Children." There are hymns and songs listed in the music section appropriate for children's services, but also consider songs they learned in Sunday School like "Jesus Loves Me," "This Little Light of Mine," etc.



FLOWERS, MEMORIAL GIFTS, PHOTO DISPLAYS AND STREAMING

It is recommended that the use of flowers at or near the altar be modest. If there are additional flowers, they can be placed in the narthex. The family needs to designate where the flowers are to be taken after the funeral service: i.e. hospitals, nursing homes, the church, family members, etc. If the family wishes to leave flowers for use at the church we are honored to receive them.

In lieu of flowers, you may consider a lasting gift which will perpetuate the memory of your loved one. You may want to suggest contributions be given to memorial funds and charities of your choice, or funds may be designated to Holy Cross for particular ministries. These should be listed in the obituary.

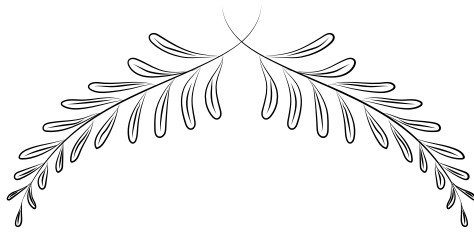
Photo arrangements for display at the visitation, in the church narthex, or in the fellowship hall before and after the service help participants give thanks for the life of the deceased and remember moments of celebration.

In this post-COVID world, broadcasting church worship services online has become the new norm. This is also an option for funeral services. If you are interested in offering this, please let the Pastor or church office know.



WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE FUNERAL HOME

As soon as you make contact with a funeral home, they will immediately begin to take care of the details. The funeral director takes responsibility for the body of the deceased, the gathering of the necessary information for the death certificates, and compliance with legal requirements.



He/she will meet with the family to discuss your wishes and will also coordinate the details of the service in conjunction with the officiating clergy. You can expect to be offered a wide selection of caskets, vaults or urns that will reflect your wishes. They also contact and make the cemetery arrangements.

Appropriate clothing for the deceased would be what they generally would wear for a special occasion. Jewelry that has family significance and coordinates with the clothing is most generally used. The jewelry will be removed prior to the closing of the coffin if the family requests it be returned.

The family is expected to write the obituary. Be aware that newspapers charge by the column inch for printing obituaries. They can be quite costly depending on the length. The death announcement and the obituary appearing in the newspaper(s) will be taken care of by the funeral director. Obituary folders are printed by the funeral home. Holy Cross prints service bulletins.

The funeral director will also take care of the arrangements for the visitation and family prayer service prior to the day of the funeral.

The following are items that may be needed by the Funeral Home:

- Recent photo of the deceased
- Glasses and/or Dentures
- Jewelry and/or Organizational Pins
- Complete Burial Outfit, including full underclothing
- Contact Information for Officiating Clergy
- Contact Information for Soloist
- Contact Information for Organist/Musicians
- Contact Information for Audio/Visual Technician(s)
- Hymn Selection
- Cemetery Deed (if burial is taking place)
- Veteran's Discharge Papers
- Social Security Number
- Deceased's birthplace, father's name and mother's maiden name



FUNERAL RECEPTION

Following the funeral/memorial service, it is most appropriate to have some fellowship time with family and friends. The Fellowship Hall at Holy Cross is available for this purpose. To arrange for use of the Fellowship Hall for a funeral reception, please contact the pastor or church office. Please note that those planning the funeral are responsible for all set up and clean up of the Fellowship Hall space and all food and serving supplies need to be brought and/or catered in. The church kitchen is not available for cooking food.



HONORARIUMS

When the funeral/memorial service is held at Holy Cross, the honorarium guide below should be used for those involved in the service.

- Pastor Noah Johnson - \$250
- Organist/Pianist - \$125
- Soloist/Musician - \$75
- Audio/Visual Technicians (If service is livestreamed and/or recorded) - \$50

If a funeral service is conducted at a funeral home, costs for clergy, organist, etc. are typically included in the billing the funeral home provides the family.



THINKING AND PLANNING AHEAD

There is nothing unseemly, morbid, or inappropriate about you anticipating what should be done when a death occurs.

Written documentation in advance about the kind of service you prefer, choice of funeral home, place of burial, music and scripture, the desire for burial or cremation, selection of pallbearers, and memorials preferred are most helpful for your loved ones. The funeral home you choose to work with can help you with the prearrangement. In the matter of cremation, this must be documented and your family must give their approval in writing. Cremation is theologically accepted in the Lutheran tradition as an appropriate disposition of the deceased.

When a family member is in a terminal condition, it is most helpful to talk openly about the situation and if your family member is willing, then together you can make plans for their funeral service. Your pastor is available for counsel and guidance in these matter and can help facilitate family decisions surrounding these issues. Death is a reality we all face.



RITUALS OF OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

If there is to be a ceremony or tribute of social or fraternal organizations, they must be done at the end of the funeral service. Military rites are generally done at the conclusion of the committal (burial) service and the ceremonies or tributes by other organizations generally the night before the funeral service.





THE GRIEVING PROCESS AND RESOURCES

How we handle our grief is unique to each of us. There is no particular way to go through grief except at your own pace and in your own way. You will experience a multitude of emotions and at times may feel like you are going crazy. It can be a very confusing time as you move through this difficult transition. Others may appear to be handling it so much better than you. Anger, pain and depression will be your companions at times. All of that is normal and can be expected. Your grieving can last for months and years, depending on the circumstances. Pastor Noah would invite you into conversation and is willing to journey with you. You need not deal with it alone. Help is available.



Essential Health

Call 218.786.4402 or email griefcenter@essentiahealth.org.

St. Luke's

Bereavement Counselors:

- Lori Williams, LISW, at 218.249.6102
- Michelle Tretter, LGSW, at 218.249.6161.

Duluth Counseling Center

Call 218.249.0595

GriefShare

GriefShare is a nationwide network of groups of people who meet weekly to share and support each other during the grief recovery process. Visit www.griefshare.org to find a support group near you.



