

Planning A Christian Funeral



**7337 Hubbard Avenue
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PLANNING A CHRISTIAN FUNERAL

“Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust” is an evocative phrase from the liturgy for funerals reminding us of the cycle of life and death. Earth to earth reminds us we shall all return to the earth, to the dust from which we were made. Since God knelt in the dust to fashion Adam, giving him a name which in Hebrew recalls his beginning, Adamah, which means earth, or dust, we human beings know that our time on earth is limited. We too shall take our place in the earth. Eve, whose very name means mother of all living, had to bury her child Abel. She was acquainted with death early in her life.

Death is a natural time of grief. We have lost our loved one, never in this life to see them again, never in this life to hold them again, or to see their smile or hear their laughter. We grieve for our loss. As Christians we celebrate our loved one’s new life in Christ, recalling Jesus’ promise to the thief on the cross, “Today you will be with me in paradise”. And so our grief is bittersweet, bitter for us, as we continue in this world without our loved one, and sweet, for we believe in the promise of resurrection to eternal life, and we entrust our loved one into God’s keeping.

Christian funerals have two messages to proclaim. First, we grieve as people of hope. We are filled with hope that our loved one lives with God. We proclaim the message of salvation and hope in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which has now become more real to us as we experience it in the death of our loved one. We hold fast to the promise of resurrection of the dead and of life everlasting.

Our second message is one of comfort and healing for the loved ones left on earth. We gather as a Christian community to worship together, to sing and pray together, and in doing so, we share our strength and hope with the grieving family.

In planning a Christian’s funeral, both messages are attended to, and every activity surrounding such a death will point to the good news of the Gospel. As you read through this booklet, give yourself time to think and reflect on its message. Indicate your decisions in the space designated, and if you desire, indicate why you have chosen as you have. Please talk with one of your pastors about your questions and concerns. Finally, if you can, talk over your decisions with your family. Your witness to the Gospel even as you plan your funeral will provide a time for you to talk with your family about your belief and hope in Jesus Christ which can provide them strength and hope when they grieve your death.

WHAT HAPPENS TO MY BODY?

In the past the care and preparation of loved ones for burial were taken care of by family. The deceased was washed, dressed and viewed at home. Then a processional to the church or cemetery led the mourners to the funeral. This is certainly true of the Bible and was true in our country until the rise of undertakers, now called funeral directors or morticians. Our country has passed laws for public health which now mandate embalming if the body is going to be kept unburied for any length of time. We also have given over care of our loved one’s body to morticians, and they prepare the body for burial.

Decisions need to be made about the disposition of the body. Do you want to be buried in a casket in the ground? Do you want to be buried in a casket in a mausoleum (an above ground burial chamber)? Do you want to be cremated and buried? Do you want to be cremated and have someone keep the ashes? There is no Biblical injunction against cremation, so the decision can be based on personal preference. Please list your decision below, and if you’d like to share your reasoning with your family, please do so.

BIBLICAL TEXT FOR FUNERALS

Preaching at a funeral is an opportunity to proclaim the grace of Jesus Christ. First and foremost at a funeral the gathered congregation needs to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The good news of resurrection to eternal life is proclaimed, so that the family, friends and congregation can grieve as people of hope. Scripture gives comfort, inspiration, focus and understanding.

Texts are chosen from the Old Testament, the Epistles of the New Testament, and from the Gospels. Within this framework there is latitude. For example, Psalms are frequently used as an Old Testament text. If another text from the Old Testament is beloved, it can be used in place of an Epistle. Likewise, if two texts are desired from the Epistles, the Old Testament text can be eliminated. The Gospel is always proclaimed.

What should a text proclaim? The message of salvation and resurrection are essential at a funeral. Sometimes a person has a favorite text that has sustained him/her over the course of their lifetime. This is an excellent text to choose for a funeral. Below are some suggested texts for funerals.

OLD TESTAMENT

Job 19:23-27a

Psalms 8, 11, 12, 18, 19, 46:1-7, ²³25, 27, 30, 86, 88, 90, 91, 92

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Isaiah 25:6-9

Isaiah 40:1-8

Isaiah 55:1-13

Isaiah 60:1-3

Isaiah 61:1-3

EPISTLES

Romans 8:31-39

Romans 14:7-8

1 Corinthians 15:12-26

1 Corinthians 15:51-57

Philippians 3:20-21

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Revelations 21:2-7

GOSPELS

John 11:21-27

John 11:25-26

John 12:23-26

John 14:1-6

SUGGESTED TEXTS

If you have texts you'd like used at your funeral, please indicate them below:

1st Lesson – Old Testament _____
2nd Lesson – Epistles _____
Holy Gospel _____

If you have some thoughts to share with your family or Pastors about why you chose these texts, please share your thoughts.

FUNERAL MUSIC

Every service that occurs in Sanctuary is worship. Weddings, funerals, confirmations, baptisms, all are opportunities to worship God. Music is an essential element in worship and is an excellent way of proclaiming faith. Music touches our souls in very special ways, and at funerals it is very comforting to sing the faith. Because worship is a corporate experience, something that a gathered group of people do together, it is good to sing hymns at a funeral. Solos have their place, but spiritually it is different experience to stand and sing together one of the great hymns of the Christian faith. It brings healing and hope to those who sing. Choosing a blend of music, congregational hymns and/or a solo can provide a memorable worship experience as well as one that is ultimately hopeful.

The Director of Music will arrange for the organist, pianist and a soloist, if desired. If a soloist is desired, the family may indicate if they'd prefer a male or female voice, but time and availability also play a role in who sings. The St. Luke's organist normally plays for all funerals.

Below are some suggested hymns. Look them up in your hymnals. Read through the words. Again, if you'd like to share your thoughts about the hymns you've chosen, please do so. These notes are proclamations of your faith and can bring comfort to your family as they are making your arrangements. If you have hymns you'd like to choose for your funeral, please indicate them below.

SUGGESTED HYMNS

Amazing Grace	Abide With Me
This is My Father's World	Jesus Christ is Risen
Borning Cry	For All the Saints
How Great Thou Art	On Eagle's Wings
What a Friend	Thy Holy Wings
Go My Children	Children of the Heavenly Father
Beautiful Savior	For the Beauty of the Earth
I Know that My Redeemer Lives	Softly & Tenderly

HYMNS FOR MY FUNERAL

Opening Song: _____
Sermon Song: _____
Solo: _____
Closing Song: _____

ORDER OF SERVICE

Gathering

Welcome
Placement of the Pall
Processional

Word

Song
Prayer
First Reading
Psalm (optional)
Second Reading
Gospel Acclamation
Gospel
Sermon ← FAMILY SHARING
Song
Prayers

Sending

Commendation
Benediction
Song
Dismissal
Processional from the Church

Committal

Procession to Interment Place
Prayer
Reading
Interment
Lord's Prayer
Prayer
Blessing
Dismissal

MILITARY RITES

FUNERAL PALL

An ideal symbol of our baptism into Christ is the funeral pall. When we baptized we are clothed in Christ and covered with garments of salvation. The funeral pall symbolizes this salvation.

St. Luke's has and regularly uses a funeral pall. This is a fabric covering embroidered with a cross that is placed on top of the casket. This happens when the casket is wheeled into the sanctuary, before the processional. Many times the family and pastors place it gently over the casket, so their loved one is resting under the cross of Jesus. The casket flowers are removed during the funeral. When the casket is escorted out of the sanctuary the pall is removed, and the casket flowers are replaced. Families make the decision about use of the funeral pall.

When selecting a casket remember that you are buying a product. Decisions should be made based on the family financial situation and personal taste in style and color. Spending a small fortune on a casket isn't necessary.

FUNERAL LUNCHEON

The St. Luke's funeral hospitality team gladly serves families during their time of loss. A time of fellowship after a funeral provides a time to support families after they return from the cemetery. It is a time to remember your loved one, to share stories and laughter and tears as healing begins. This fellowship time is only secondarily about food.

The family chooses a caterer to provide the food for the fellowship time. The family makes decisions about the menu. Our hospitality team will have prices and menus available for comparison.

The hospitality team sets the tables, makes coffee and beverages, and serves the food. They make sure everything is going well during the meal. Afterward they do the dishes, clean up and make sure that fellowship hall is back in order. As a sign of gratitude, families normally make a donation to St. Luke's for the work of the hospitality team.

FEES

Pastor(s)	\$250
Church Musician(s)	\$150 each
Worship Technician	\$50
Facilities Manager	\$150

THE WILL AND MEMORIALS

Please let your family know where your Will is located and the name of your attorney. Please indicate below if you have made pre-arrangements with a funeral home and if you have paid for any services in advance. If you haven't made pre-arrangements, but desire a particular funeral home, please indicate that as well.

When a person dies, many family and friends give money as a Memorial gift. You can designate the recipient of such Memorials. Many times your church is a recipient, and charities, health organizations like hospice, or scholarship funds are options. If you designate St. Luke's as a Memorial recipient, you may also pre-arrange with one of the pastors what ministry or project you'd like your Memorial to fund. Please indicate your choice below.