

Funeral Planning Guide

And

Personal Funeral Planning Worksheet

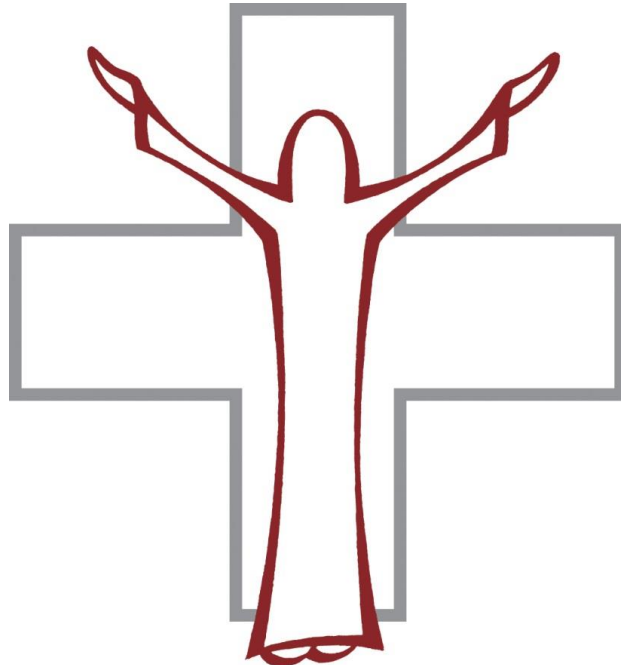


Table of Contents

A Christian Funeral	2
What exactly is a Christian Funeral?	2
Why plan for your funeral?	3
What parts of a funeral can I plan?	3
Before there is a death...	3
A Christian Will	4
Is organ donation acceptable?	4
When should I call the pastor after a death?	4
Other Questions Regarding Funerals	
Is cremation acceptable for Christians?	5
What about a visitation and prayer service?	5
Should the funeral be at the church or at the funeral home?	5
What is the difference between a funeral and a memorial service?	5
Isn't viewing the body rather morbid?	6
What is a funeral pall?	6
At whose funeral does Zion Lutheran allow her pastors to officiate?	6
May a non-LCMS pastor officiate/co-officiate at our funeral services?	7
Are family and friends allowed to speak at the funeral?	7
Are Masonic Lodge ceremonies or rites of other organizations permitted at our funeral services?	7
What about Military Honors?	7
What about flowers?	8
What about memorial gifts?	8
Examples of Christian Preambles to a Will	8
Suggested Funeral Hymns	9
Personal Funeral Planning Worksheet	

A Christian Funeral - A time to grieve, but a time to grieve in hope.

Certainly we as Christians grieve at the death of loved ones. We cannot hide the fact that in death there is a separation and there is a need to say a final farewell. But we do not mourn as those who have no hope as the Apostle Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4: 13:

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep.

A Christian funeral service reminds us of the hope we have that the departed Christian's soul is now in the realms of heaven. Though a body rests in the earth, a believer's spirit is with the angels, archangels, and all the saints in heaven, praising God. So although we experience grief we have the assurance of the forgiveness and salvation of Jesus Christ.

A Christian funeral service is a time to celebrate God's faithfulness to His people. It is even more a time to look to the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the victory He has won for us over sin and death. The Apostle Paul writes,

When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

"O death, where is your victory?"

O death, where is your sting?"

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:54-57 ESV

So with all of God's Children, we confess and celebrate the forgiveness of sin, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

What exactly is a Christian Funeral?

A Christian funeral is first and foremost, a worship service; as such, we keep in mind that Jesus Christ is the center of all Lutheran worship. From our Baptism to our Funeral, we proclaim Jesus' victory over sin, death, and the devil.

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. Romans 6:3-5 ESV

Funerals, like all other worship services held at Zion Lutheran Church, are officiated by Zion's pastor(s), and are Christian liturgies, governed by the Scriptures, our Lutheran Confessions, and the liturgical practices of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS). While practices may vary (even within our own synod) we strive by God's grace to hold to the best, most faithful practices of our Lutheran faith.

Why plan for your funeral?

Planning your funeral service is a way to share your last confession of faith in Jesus Christ, our Savior, while comforting your loved ones in their grief and pointing them to the hope that is found only in Jesus. Funerals provide a time to clearly proclaim what we believe and confess as Lutheran Christians. Making plans for your funeral before your death is a wonderful gift to give your family by making your wishes clearly known, relieving any doubt and anxiety that they may have about honoring your intentions.

What parts of a funeral can I plan?

As noted above, since a funeral service is in fact a worship service, Zion's pastor(s) have a responsibility to ensure that all elements of the funeral service are appropriate for the occasion and they have final approval on all things, including Scripture readings and music used. Having said that, your suggestions for a Bible passage and hymns are welcome as this helps the pastor(s) to personalize their message to your loved ones at your funeral, allowing them to share a part of God's Word or hymns that were particularly meaningful to you. Please note your Bible passage and hymn suggestions on the first page of the personal funeral plan included with this guide.

Regarding hymns for a funeral; our hymnal is a great place to find doctrinally sound music that is consistent with our Lutheran faith. A list of hymns well suited to a funeral service are listed for you on page 9 of this planning guide, but other hymns may be used upon approval by the pastor conducting the funeral. Typically 2 or 3 hymns are used in a funeral service. If you would like to discuss either your selection of a Bible passage or hymns, please feel free to talk with Zion's pastor(s).

You can make your final wishes regarding your funeral known to both your family and Zion Lutheran by completing the personal funeral plan, the "Funeral Plan of _____" included at the end of this informational guide and giving copies to both your family members and the church. By taking the time now to contemplate your funeral, you can help save your family the additional stress and worry of wondering what you would have wanted.

Before there is a death...

In the case of serious illness or injury, please notify the pastor immediately so that he may be present to offer the comfort of the Lord through Word and Sacrament as well as personal and private pastoral care to both the person dying and the family as well. It is far more helpful to notify the pastor early on, when the dying person is still able to communicate clearly, so that they can have the opportunity to discuss their concerns with their pastor, receive absolution, and be well-prepared to meet death in the certain hope of the victory of Jesus Christ, than to wait until they are in their final hours.

A Christian Will

It is certainly a good practice to have a will to deal with your earthly possessions, and every Christian, as a final witness to one's faith, is encouraged to include a Christian preamble to their will. This provides you the opportunity to give a final, written, posthumous testimony of your faith in Jesus Christ and share your true wealth, the Good News of forgiveness through that faith. A couple samples of Christian preambles have been included on page 8.

You are also encouraged to remember God's church in your will and thereby continue to help support the on-going mission of the church even after your death. Planning to give in this manner allows you to give from resources that you are certain will not be needed for your life and care. It can also be an important witness to remember your congregation or other Lutheran organization in your will with a financial gift for the ministry and mission of the Lord's Church. If restrictions are placed on how the bequest is to be used (such as that it is used only for certain expenses) consider requesting that the restrictions be lifted after a certain amount of time (x number of years/decades).

You may also wish to consider leaving a donation to begin, or add to, an endowment fund. An endowment can help fund the operation and mission of Zion Lutheran well into the future, helping to ensure that the Word of God continues to be faithfully taught for generations to come.

Is organ donation acceptable?

Since it was generally not possible during the time of their writing, Scriptures do not address organ donation. It is a decision for you to prayerfully consider with counsel from the pastor(s) and your doctor, and then discuss with your family. You are neither obligated to do so, nor forbidden to do so. There is nothing unchristian about deciding to give the gift of life, or sight, etc. to a fellow human being. Likewise, there is no obligation for a Christian to be an organ donor. Please know that some donations are taken before a body is fully dead. We advise donations only after brain, cardiac, and pulmonary death so that the donation is not the cause of death.

When should I call the pastor after a death?

When a loved one dies, please contact the pastor right away so that he may be available to have devotions with and comfort bereaved family members. The pastors of Zion Lutheran Church typically meet with families at the funeral home to help them plan the funeral service and make arrangements. Helping families plan for a loved one's funeral is a regular part of pastoral care and our pastors are more than happy to help guide you through the process and give you the benefit of their experience.

While families may have preferences for certain elements of the funeral service, please understand that the pastor also has a responsibility to maintain the service as a Christian funeral rite according to the confession of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS). Some elements of the service may change as noted above, but others may not.

Other Questions Regarding Funerals

Is cremation acceptable for Christians?

The custom of God's people in the Old Testament was burial, and the Lord Jesus himself was buried after His death. The Old Testament forbade cremation because of its use by pagan peoples and the unbelieving Romans burned bodies of Christians in a futile attempt to prevent the resurrection. However, if God can resurrect the bodies of martyrs burned at the stake, eaten by lions, or decomposed to dust after centuries in the grave, He will have no trouble at all with the cremains. Traditionally, faithful Christians have buried bodies in a sleeping posture as a confession of the expectation of the resurrection on the Last Day. While burial is preferred because of its clear witness to the resurrection of the dead when Jesus returns, cremation is not expressly forbidden and does not violate our principles of faith as long as it is not done with the intention of denying the resurrection.

If you are considering cremation for financial reasons, know that there are less expensive options such as a private family viewing within 24 hours and then closing the casket or immediate interment and a memorial service later. Regardless of whether choosing burial or cremation, we show respect for the body which means we do not "sprinkle the ashes" somewhere. (This practice is also illegal.) Christ has redeemed that very body, along with the soul, and we know and confess that Christ will raise all the dead on the last day and give eternal life to all believers in Christ.

What about a visitation and prayer service?

Often families choose to have a visitation the day or evening before a funeral, either at the church or the funeral home. Zion's pastors are available to have a brief prayer service during this time. Others may wish to have no visitation or visitation may be held an hour or two before the funeral service.

Should the funeral be at the church or at the funeral home?

Because a Christian funeral is also a Christian liturgical service, God's house is the most appropriate place for a baptized member's funeral. Often funeral chapels are devoid of Christian symbols so that they do not offend non-Christians. Members are encouraged to have their funeral in Zion's sanctuary.

What is the difference between a funeral and a memorial service?

A memorial service does not have the casket or remains present at the service. The interment takes place before the service or at another time. Memorial services can simplify arrangements. In the case of a stillborn child, parents may wish to have a memorial service and/or committal, since on the basis of Scripture we believe that life begins at conception.

Isn't viewing a body rather morbid?

Perhaps, and if you prefer a closed casket that is fine. As mentioned previously, there may be reasons to have a closed casket. On the other hand, a viewing helps some people to accept the reality of death. Also, some family members or friends may not have seen this person in some time. When the casket is brought into the church at a traditional funeral service, the casket is always closed and is either bare, or covered with a pall which symbolizes our Baptism into Christ, so that our thoughts will not be centered on a temporal, lifeless body, but rather on the message of victory we share in an eternal, living Savior.

What is a funeral pall?

A funeral pall is a large, beautiful, white cloth shroud, usually embroidered with a Christian symbol. It is draped over the closed casket during the funeral service at church as a beautiful symbol of the triumph over death of our resurrected Savior and that the believer's sins have been covered through baptism into death.

At whose funeral does Zion Lutheran Church (as guided by Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions) allow her pastors to officiate?

We believe that Christian pastors should officiate only at funerals of professed Christians, as evidenced by their verbal confession of faith, receiving of the Word and Sacraments, and affiliation with the family of God. A Christian funeral service is a privilege, not a right. Having a funeral in the church does not guarantee a person goes to heaven any more than merely having one's name on a church membership list.

We also believe that a pastor of the congregation of Zion Lutheran Church has been called to a specific responsibility to our own congregation of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and not to the Christian or secular community in general. Therefore, he is to officiate at the funeral or memorial service of members, thus being assured that the brother or sister who has died had made a public confession of faith in Christ Jesus. Exceptions may be made for professed Christians who were active in the spiritual life of our congregation while contemplating membership, as well as for non-member believers to whom the pastor, elders, or others of Zion Lutheran Church had a direct, personal evangelistic contact.

An LCMS pastor does not simply hire himself out to officiate a funeral. Requesting that Zion's pastors officiate at the funeral of a non-member friend or relative puts the pastors and elders in a very difficult position. Not knowing the deceased individual or their spiritual condition makes it difficult for the pastor to determine if the individual died in faith in Christ or if officiating at the funeral would sanction a life of unbelief to the detriment of the church and its confession of Christ. It is better to refer such funerals to a minister of the congregation or denomination to which the individual belonged or to a non-denominational minister or person suggested by the funeral home.

If you are planning the funeral for a living family member or friend, share your faith in Jesus with them! Bring them to the Divine Service, Bible study, or catechism class if possible. While they are living it is never too late to bring the Word of God to them.

May a non-LCMS pastor officiate/co-officiate at our funeral services? May a non-Christian officiate?

No. As stated earlier a funeral service is a liturgical worship service so the same confessional and LCMS policies apply as in any other worship setting in order to assure that what is said and preached will be truly Biblical and free of false doctrine. Clergy of churches/denominations with whom we are not in church fellowship may not officiate with our pastor or in our church facilities.

Under no circumstances would a non-Christian be allowed to officiate. In addition, no non-Christian rites or songs may be used in the funeral service or in any way that gives the impression that they are part of the funeral service.

Are family and friends allowed to speak at the funeral? May we include a eulogy?

Generally speaking the time for family or friends to speak would be at the funeral home either during visitation or prior to the prayer service (if having a prayer service) or during the lunch after the funeral.

A eulogy is not acceptable in a Lutheran funeral service as it contradicts or detracts from salvation by grace through faith for the sake of Christ. Lutheran funeral services are Christ centered. It is important to remember that a funeral is a worship service. We do not worship the person lying in the casket; we worship Jesus Christ, our Savior, who died and rose again. In a funeral, Jesus' victory over sin, death, and the devil is clearly proclaimed. Your funeral is not about you; it is about Jesus.

Are Masonic Lodge ceremonies or rites of other organizations permitted at our funeral services? What about Native American rites?

No. Lodge ceremonies or rites, and those of other secret societies, have no place in a Christian funeral service. They do not clearly proclaim the Triune God in whom we believe. Such organizations do not center on Jesus Christ as *"the way, and the truth, and the life"* John 14:6. In reality they deny the Christian religion by promoting a generic god and one's own good works and moral living instead of salvation through faith in Christ. Members of Zion Lutheran Church are required to abstain from membership in the Masonic or "animal" lodges and their auxiliaries.

Not only is the participation of the lodge and its symbols and rites forbidden during a funeral service, but any lodge rite in addition to or separately from the Christian funeral service is also forbidden. No lodge insignia or clothing is permitted on the deceased. What has been said about lodge rites also applies to Native American rites. As we currently understand them, there is no objection to membership in the Lion's Club or the Kiwanis.

What about Military Honors?

There is no problem with military honors for those who have served in the military, but they remain distinct from the Christian liturgical rites. Military honors typically take place at the cemetery after the pastor has finished the committal rites. The American flag may be on the casket before and after the Christian liturgy, but the casket will remain bare or be covered with a funeral pall during the funeral

service. The pall is then removed at the church and the flag is placed on the coffin for transport to the cemetery and during the committal service.

What about flowers?

In all our services, the altar and cross are to remain the focal point in the Church. An arrangement may be placed on either side of the altar. Others may be placed on wire stands in the chancel area out, away from the altar and communion rail being sure not to obscure the paschal candle or processional cross. Nothing is to be placed on the lectern or pulpit, but may be placed around them. Items on the altar and in the chancel in general are not to be moved. Many say that cut flowers are a “waste” or ostentatious, but when the disciples said much the same about Mary’s anointing of Jesus with a bottle of precious nard, the Savior took issue with them. Some may wish to give potted plants that can continue to grow and be enjoyed by the family for a longer time. Still others may prefer to remember their loved ones by donating a gift of money to a memorial fund or the church.

What about memorial gifts?

Some people prefer to remember their loved ones by donating a gift of money to a memorial fund or the church. This option can have the largest benefit to others and is an ongoing way to remember a loved one. Zion’s pastors, in conjunction with the Elders, can provide a number of ways a memorial gift could be given to Zion that would best fit our mission and purpose. Gifts that relate to worship or education should be approved by the Elders in advance as these impact worship practices and the doctrine of the Church. Memorials should meet the needs of the living, not glorify the dead. The Church is not obligated to accept memorials which may cloud teaching or negatively impact the worship or congregational life of the congregation.

Examples of a Christian Preamble to a Will

Example 1:

I, _____, of the City of _____, County of _____, and State of _____, being of sound and disposing mind and memory and being under no restraint, do make, declare and publish this my Last Will and Testament, hereby revoking all Wills and codicils hereto made by me.

First, realizing the uncertainty of this life I place full confidence and trust in my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who promised: “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.” John 11:25-26.

Second, knowing that the wages of sin is death, I believe that Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, suffered and died to gain me forgiveness, which I neither deserve nor merit, but receive as a free gift of God, who is rich in grace and mercy.

Third, I urge my heirs not to set their hopes on uncertain riches, but to take hold of the life, which is life indeed through faith in Jesus Christ.

Example 2:

I, _____, of the City of _____, County of _____, and State of _____, being of sound and disposing mind and memory and being under no restraint, do make, declare and publish this my Last Will and Testament, hereby revoking all Wills and codicils hereto made by me.

First, I commit myself to God's care, secure in His love for me and trusting in the salvation purchased for me through Christ's suffering and death. I leave those who survive me the comfort of knowing that I have died in this faith and have now joined my Lord in eternal glory.

Second, I commend my loved ones to the protecting hands of God, knowing that He will continue to provide for them despite my absence; and I encourage them to place their faith and trust in Him alone.

Suggested Hymns

- | | |
|--|--|
| 438 A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth | 672 Jerusalem the Golden |
| 878 Abide With Me | 741 Jesus Christ, My Sure Defense |
| 596 All Christians Who Have Been Baptized | 490 Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won |
| 753 All for Christ I Have Forsaken | 743 Jesus, Priceless Treasure |
| 601 All Who Believe and Are Baptized | 708 Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart |
| 477 Alleluia, Alleluia! Heart to Heaven | 484 Make Songs of Joy |
| 744 Amazing Grace | 747 No Saint on Earth Lives Life to Self Alone |
| 633 At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing | 880 Now Rest Beneath Night's Shadow |
| 467 Awake, My Heart, with Gladness | 552 O Christ, Who Shared Our Mortal Life |
| 697 Awake, O Sleeper, Rise from Death | 395 O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright |
| 537 Beautiful Savior | 449/450 O Sacred Head, Now Wounded |
| 676 Behold a Host, Arrayed in White | 679 Oh, How Blest Are They |
| 752 Be Still My Soul | 675 Oh, What Their Joy |
| 725 Children of the Heavenly Father | 727 On Eagle's Wings |
| 509 Christ Is Surely Coming | 598 Once in the Baptismal Waters |
| 458 Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands | 761 Rock of Ages |
| 420 Christ, the Life of All the Living | 671 Sing With All the Saints in Glory |
| 605 Father Welcomes | 508 The Day is Surely Drawing Near |
| 677 For All the Saints | 709 The King of Love My Shepherd Is |
| 742 For Me to Live is Jesus | 710 The Lord's My Shepherd |
| 607 From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee | 464 The Strife is O'er |
| 594 God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It | 758 The Will of God is Always Best |
| 740 I Am Jesus' Little Lamb | 762 There Is a Time for Everything |
| 461 I Know That My Redeemer Lives | 759 This Body in the Grave We Lay |
| 486 If Christ Had Not Been Raised | 482 The Joyful Eastertide |
| 724 If God Himself Be for Me | 516 Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying |
| 748 I'm But a Stranger Here | 730 What is the World to Me? |
| 745 In God, My Faithful God | 760 What God Ordains is Always Good |
| 938 In Peace and Joy I Now Depart | 764 When Aimless Violence Takes Those We Love |
| 755 In the Very Midst of Life | 763 When Peace, Like a River |
| | 483 With High Delight Let Us Unite |



FUNERAL PLAN OF _____

**Making my last wishes known to those I love.
To be used as a guide for my loved ones and pastors.**

Date: _____

"I am the Resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." John 11:25-26

Part 1

Concerning my earthly body:

My choice of funeral home & cemetery: _____

I have a prepaid funeral plan: Yes or No I have purchased a cemetery plot: Yes or No

If yes to either of these, please give details: _____

Other special requests or arrangements desired: _____

Concerning my funeral service (Please refer to Zion's Funeral Practices & Planning Guide):

I would like my funeral service to be held at (church name/address): _____

I would like to have a visitation: Yes or No I would like to have a prayer service: Yes or No

I would like the pastor to preach on this Bible passage: _____

This passage has special meaning to me because: _____

Hymns/musical selections I would like to have (all should be in keeping with our Lutheran teachings/doctrine-Note: Zion's pastors are not required to use these suggestions): _____

I would like to have the funeral pall used: Yes or No

Do you have any special requests regarding the lunch served? If so, please detail here: _____

Oftentimes, people would like to give memorials in your name; where would you like to direct these memorials?

Organization Name: _____

Address: _____

Designated purpose of memorial: _____

Organization Name: _____

Address: _____

Designated purpose of memorial: _____

Organization Name: _____

Address: _____

Designated purpose of memorial: _____

Concerning my life and family information – Part 1:

My full name (including maiden name): _____

Date of birth: _____ Place of birth: _____

My father's full name: _____

Date & place of his birth: _____

My mother's full name (including maiden name): _____

Date & place of her birth: _____

My siblings (use full names): _____

Date of my baptism: _____ Location: _____

Date of my confirmation: _____ Location: _____

My confirmation verse: _____

Date of marriage: _____ Location: _____

My spouse's full name: _____

My children (use full names): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please give a copy of these pages (Part 1) to the church to have on file.

This will help the pastors know your wishes and help them guide your family through the planning process.

You should also give copies of both Parts 1 & 2, to your immediate family to have readily accessible upon your death.

This is a funeral service planning guide only that is not binding and does not take the place of a duly drawn, witnessed, and notarized Last Will and Testament.



FUNERAL PLAN OF _____

**Making my last wishes known to those I love.
To be used as a guide for my loved ones and pastors.**

Date: _____

Part 2

Concerning my life and family information – Part 2:

My education: _____

Places & type of employment: _____

Military branch, service dates & ID number: _____

Organizations I belong to, including my activities in my congregation: _____

Other information you or your family may wish to include in your obituary: _____

Concerning my last wishes and words of encouragement to my friends and family:

I have a will: Yes or No If so, this is where it can be found: _____

Information about any life insurance, pension, or investments, as well as other important documents can be found: _____

Relatives/Friends to notify:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Relationship: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Relationship: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Relationship: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Relationship: _____

To my loved ones: _____

Please give this information to your immediate family. Keep it in a place that will be readily accessible as your family will need it immediately at the time of your death.

I have shared these plans with the following people: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____