

FUNERAL MANUAL

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

**A Church of
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod**

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Minot, ND**

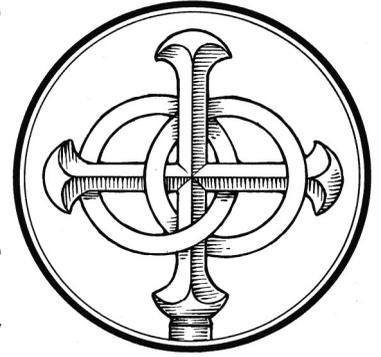
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Almighty God, by the death of Your Son Jesus Christ You destroyed death, by His rest in the tomb You sanctified the graves of Your saints, and by His bodily resurrection You brought life and immortality to light so that all who die in Him abide in peace and hope. Receive our thanks for the victory over death and the grave that He won for us. Keep us in everlasting communion with all who wait for Him on earth and with all in heaven who are with Him, for He is the resurrection and the life, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

✠ A WORD ABOUT FUNERALS ✠

A funeral according to Meriam Webster is the "observances held for a dead person before burial or cremation." We might think of a funeral as a public way of dealing with grief. Grief according to John W. Santrock is, "The emotional numbness, disbelief, separation anxiety, despair, sadness, and loneliness that accompany the loss of someone we love." The funeral is meant to help people come to grips with the reality of grief and accept the reality of death.



Funerals are common in many cultures. Funeral observances in the Bible were far different from those which we are accustomed to in the United States. A common element among them was having an extended time of mourning. For example, when Moses died, "The Israelites grieved for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days, until the time of weeping and mourning was over." Another characteristic was to have a funeral procession where people wailed and the body was carried off to the grave. In fact, it was common to pay people to cry out aloud (professional mourners).

Loss brings pain and crying. Even Jesus cried when Lazarus died, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). It is healthy to mourn the loss of a loved one. Telling stories about the good and bad times we have had with the person may help with grief. It is good to set time aside to talk about the person and to cry together as a group. It is good to remember the loved one through old photographs, videos, and stories. Such time will bring many tears to our eyes as we remember a person. It is healthy to get out and talk with fellow family and to cry together.

As Christians we need not ignore the grieving process or to pretend it does not exist. We should participate, but we have an opportunity to do something different, that no other group of people can do: to have a worship service during this time of grieving. A time to not focus on the person who has died but upon our God who has done something for the person that has died and for us who are still alive.

Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 18, "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. . . Therefore encourage each other with these words." These words describe what Paul would have us say at the time of death, namely encouraging one another with the words of truth that come from scripture concerning the resurrection, etc.

Indeed, funerals are a time for us to acknowledge the death of a loved one, but it is also a time for us to acknowledge and hear about the death of Jesus Christ. Why the death of Jesus? Answer; there is no other death like Jesus' death. Yes, Jesus' death brought death to death. Yes, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have God's solid answer that death's sting is finished and that there is life after death in Jesus; a resurrected life. Thus, funerals are a time where our grief is met by the comfort of God's forgiveness of sins and the promised resurrection through Christ.

✠ **WHAT ABOUT DEATH AND DYING?** ✠

What is death?

The Bible teaches that death is not annihilation in which we cease to exist. Instead, the Scriptures teach that death is the separation of our eternal soul from our mortal bodies. Our bodies rest in the grave, awaiting the final day when soul and body shall be reunited. At the moment of death, our souls, and the souls of all those who die in the faith, are immediately in the presence of Christ.

Is death natural?

It is easy to think of death as a natural part of life. However, death is not natural. We were never created for the purpose of death. Instead, death is a horrible reality. It is the enemy we each face at the end of our lives. Death is a result of sin—the awful curse that fell on creation through the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Therefore, death is never our friend—we never welcome it. Even when death stops the suffering of a loved one, deep down, we would rather that they be alive without suffering.

What is the Christian's response to death and dying?

*"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil."*

These familiar words of Psalm 23 give guidance to Christians facing the reality of death. Here God identifies our greatest enemy in such times — fear. Since none of us among the living has ever experienced death, we respond to the prospect of death (whether our own or that of someone we love) with fear.

Now, if fear is the enemy, who is our ally? The Psalmist continues:

"For thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."

Jesus, our Good Shepherd, the One who laid down His life for the sheep, is our companion on the dark, winding road that leads through the valley of the shadow of death.

Sooner or later, each of us, no matter how old or young, will walk through the valley of death. But here is the important part: we walk through the valley with the One who is with us in that journey. We walk with One who leads us on, One who tasted death Himself but was raised from the dead. And so, all who believe and are baptized will be saved; they have victory over death because Jesus was victorious over death. Christians, therefore, are able to see death not merely as an unfortunate reality to be endured but as a defeated enemy. The resurrection of the body and eternal life are a certain reality promised to those resting in the accomplished work of Jesus.

What happens after we die?

For unbelievers, there is the "second death" (Revelation 20:14) in which their souls are immediately in the presence of Satan and immediately begin to suffer the torment of eternal punishment in hell, from which there is no possibility of escape. On the day of judgment, their bodies join their souls where the Bible says there will be 'gnashing of teeth.'

Those who trust in the redemption won by Christ, though, pass from death to life. This is why the Bible uses so many comforting images to describe the death of a Christian. Here are some of the phrases: departure in peace; being with Christ; a turning away from the evil to come; sleep; rest; passing from death to life; deliverance from all evil; and, finally, "gain."

Gain? How can death be gain? When a baptized child of God passes through death, the Christian leaves this vale of tears and passes into an eternity of joy and peace with God almighty.

Each Christian, therefore, may rejoice in the life that Christ has won. Even though death stings, the Christian can rejoice knowing that the departed in the faith await the final consummation of all things where they will receive glorified bodies that are free from tears, pain, sickness, and age.

In these new and glorified bodies, Christians shall spend all eternity in heaven, enjoying the presence of God and all the His saints, forever and ever. The overwhelming joy of this truth is almost too much for us to even begin to comprehend, but it is true!

How do Christians face death?

Christians face death as they face life, with their eyes fixed firmly on Jesus. We cling to the promises of His Word in good times and especially the valley of tears. One of the most beautiful promises our Lord gave to us is found in John 14:2-3, where He says, *"In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may also be."*

We realize that no matter how our lives may end, there is one thing of which we can be absolutely certain. We shall pass from death to life, from this life to the life beyond, with our Lord. And there we shall rejoin all our loved ones and others who have gone before us, trusting in Christ.

How does the Christian deal with grief?

Lazarus was a friend of Jesus. No, he was more than just a casual friend; he was like a brother to Jesus. Lazarus had died, and as Jesus approached the tomb of Lazarus, we hear that Jesus wept and was deeply moved; that is to say, He was angry and sorrowful with death.

But why the tears from Jesus? Jesus had sorrow, and He shed tears in a silent manner because He had witnessed the effects of the wretched and deadly grip of sin on mankind.

Not only did our Gospel reading say that Jesus wept over death, but it also said that He was 'deeply moved.' Otherwise stated, as Jesus approached the tomb of Lazarus, He not only wept but He 'snorted at death.' In a literal sense, he was 'ticked off' with death. He grunted at death, He was

disgusted at death, He sighed at death, He mumbled in anger towards death, and He expressed hatred and anger towards the tomb of Lazarus.

And so, it is proper to weep and anger at death, for Jesus wept and angered as well. Indeed, when we anger and shake our fists at death and cry out in pain, we have a Savior who angered at death too. When we punch at death or weep over death, we have a Savior that understands us. When we grind our teeth, or we want to collapse inward on ourselves, Christ knows, for He angered and wept as well.

While our emotions are limited, Jesus' weeping and anger moved Him right to the center of the jaws of death and the sting of sin. Otherwise stated, His tears led Him to the lair of death and a collision with sin. There at the cross of Mt. Calvary, the Son of God was not some sort of sissy-mansy-pansy Savior; He was not a victim that we should feel sorry for. No, His tears and anger led Him to do that which we could not do... to confront sin and death on our behalf.

Do our loved ones become angels?

Well-intentioned people often say that we humans become angels when we die. However, we human beings are 'greater' than the angels. Keep in mind that God created angels to be messengers and His servants to wait on Him and to look after us. They are spirit beings without bodies. We humans, though, were created with bodies. Our Lord and Savior came in the flesh of our bodies to redeem both our soul and bodies to live forever as they were meant to be. We do not die to become something less than what we were created to be.

Do our loved ones look down from heaven and see us?

Again, this is a common false thought and belief. The Bible says that Christians have no more tears, pain, or sorrows. And so, it is difficult to assume that they would be looking down on this earth with all of its sadness, sin, and troubles.

Do our loved ones talk to us after they die?

Once again, this is a common false thought. Our loved ones do not communicate to us from heaven, and they certainly do not live amongst us in this world of sadness, sin, and troubles. Their souls are in paradise, which is good, while they await the glorious resurrection of their renewed bodies.

✠ THE FUNERAL SERVICE ✠

The Funeral Service is intended for the burial of those who departed this life in the Christian faith.

Funerals at St. Paul's are Christian Church Services. They are intended to confess the hope of Christ to those still in life's pilgrimage. It is difficult, though, to conduct a Christian Funeral for a deceased non-Christian. Furthermore, it is difficult to change a Christian Funeral to accommodate to deceased non-Christians or worldly customs. (Note: This does not mean that the pastor would not make accommodations at the Funeral Home to aid and assist a family.)

The death of a member of the church should be reported immediately to the pastor. No arrangements should be made without consultation with him.

Death is meant to stop everything in our lives to remind us that it could be us next. Death stops most everything in the church - with the exception of prescheduled weddings and/or large events, Holy Week, and regularly routine Divine Services.

Whenever possible, the Funeral Service of Baptized members is conducted at the church.

The church is the place where God's children are baptized, confirmed, married, communed, and buried. It is the safe ark where the Lord keeps His children until life's end.

Hymns and music in the Funeral Service should reflect Christian confidence, trust, and hope in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.

Due to Copyright Laws and LCMS Doctrinal Conditions, only hymns from the "Lutheran Service Book" may be used for congregational hymns at St. Paul's Lutheran Church. Exceptions may be made by the pastor for special music songs.

A eulogy is not in the best Christian tradition. An obituary may be read which focuses on the Gospel promise of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ our Lord and not on the good deeds of the deceased.

Upon request, the pastor and church administrator can help create an obituary for the service to be read by the pastor during the service.

Can family members participate in the church service with special readings?

Families are invited to participate in the funeral services from the pew through their prayers, confession of faith, singing, grief, etc. At St. Paul's, the services are conducted by clergy only for the purpose of letting family and friends receive the comforting message of the hope of the resurrection.

Additional Comments:

The liturgical colors for funerals are the colors of the church season.
Floral arrangements should be fresh cut.

Cremation?

Among Christians, burial has long been the accepted practice, as it was for the Jews. The Jews didn't burn the bodies of their dead. In their practice, the bodies were washed, anointed with spices, wrapped, and entombed within a period of 24 hours. Bodies matter to God, for our mortal bodies will be raised incorruptible.

Even Christians have never universally condemned cremation, and even though cremation has been common during wars or plagues due to the danger of disease or contamination, Christian burial is still highly suggested. The reason for the encouragement of a burial with a body is that a physical body at a funeral helps loved ones process their grief more than a mere picture. There is something about loved ones seeing a physical body in a coffin that allows them to accept the reality of death and work through grief, more so than a picture in a frame. Touching the physical body, stroking the shoulder of the body, kissing the deceased, saying goodbye, and closing the casket are all forms of grief – letting go and accepting the reality of death.

So, is it wrong for a Christian to choose cremation?

"Yes." and "No."

"Yes" if it is done solely to 'save money for more inheritance money."

"No" if this is all one can afford.

"Yes," if this is what you want, but your family is uncomfortable with it, and they would prefer burial.

"No" if this is what you want and it has been discussed with your family.

"Yes" if cremation is done so that the funeral can be at everyone's convenience of time. Death is supposed to stop everything. It should remind us that death can happen at any time, and we need to be reminded and ready for that at all times.

"No" if the funeral and the committal are done right after death.

Help the Pastor:

If you have loved ones that are sick or nearing death and they do not have a pastor or church taking care of them, and you will want a St. Paul's pastor to do a service, please contact one of St. Paul's pastors before your loved one has passed away. It is very difficult for a pastor to do a funeral service for someone he has never met and never done pastoral care for. Since St. Paul's only conducts funerals members, exceptions can be made for pastoral care of non-members – if the pastor(s) has had the time to administer pastoral care to a non-member in a time of need.

Planning Your Funeral:

At the time of the loss of a loved one, those left behind can be vulnerable, and it is a hard time to deal with something that really shouldn't be an issue, such as hymns. The church has a list of some suitable hymns for a funeral (which the funeral homes also have). This helps the family and loved ones choose hymns, but still, they have their own favorites that they may insist on being used. Often these hymns or songs have a theology within them that isn't appropriate for what you have believed, been taught, and confessed in Jesus Christ here at St. Paul's Lutheran Church. Therefore, the church's desires (and we hope your desire also) would be that your loved ones would know what you want or would like used at your funeral.

Please take this opportunity to fill out the following questionnaire and turn it into the pastor's office or the church office. Then, at the time of death, the pastors can come to your loved ones and say this is what we have been asked to honor when it comes to music and the funeral service. Also, this gives you an opportunity to let us know your favorite Scriptures, baptismal date, and confirmation date.



Popular and Suggested Hymns at St. Paul's Lutheran Church



At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing No. 633
Beautiful Savior No. 537
Be Still, My Soul No. 752
Behold the Host Arrayed in White No. 676
Blest Be the Tie That Binds No. 649
Children of the Heavenly Father No. 725
Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia No. 466
Crown Him With Many Crowns No. 525
Father Welcomes No. 605
For All the Saints No. 677
Go, My Children, with My Blessing No. 922
God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It No. 594
Great Is Thy Faithfulness No. 809
Guide Me Ever, Great Redeemer No. 918
How Firm a Foundation No. 728
How Great Thou Art No. 801
I'm But a Stranger Here No. 748
I am Jesus Little Lamb No. 740
I Know That My Redeemer Lives! No. 461
In the Cross of Christ I Glory No. 427
Jerusalem, My Happy Home No. 628

Jesus Christ Is Risen Today No. 457
Jesus Live! The Victory Won No. 490
Jesus Loves Me! No. 588
Just As I Am, without One Plea No. 570
Lift High the Cross No. 837
Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart No. 708
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling No. 700
My Faith Looks Up to Thee No. 702
My Hope is Built on Nothing Less No. 575/576
Now All the Vault of Heaven Resounds No. 465
O Christ, Our Hope No. 553
O Day Full of Grace No. 503
O God, Our Help in Ages Past No. 733
Precious Lord, Take My Hand No. 739
Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me No. 761
Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us No. 711
The Church's One Foundation No. 644
The King of Love My Shepherd Is No. 709
The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want No. 710
When Peace, Like a River No. 763
When I Survey The Wondrous Cross No. 425

My Funeral Suggestions

I confess to you, my family, that I know, trust, and believe that I am assured of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ and am therefore able to face the time when I die by letting you know my wishes. Aware of the fact that, that the day will one day come, this form is intended to serve as a guide for you, my family, as you plan my funeral. This is not meant to be followed by the letter. My family and pastor may feel free to use this information in any way they see proper, as long as the music and service are done in and with the correct confession of my church, which is my confession of what I believe. I also ask that my family would not eulogize me but rather hear what God has done for me and you through Jesus Christ, my Savior, your Savior, and the Savior for all.

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Place of Birth: _____

Baptismal Date: _____

Marriage Anniversary Date: _____

Confirmation Date: _____

Confirmation Verse: _____

Favorite Bible verses/stories: _____

Favorite Psalms: _____

Favorite Hymns: _____

Suggested Soloist: _____

Suggested Organist: _____

Suggested Funeral Home: _____

Suggested Memorials: _____

