

Funeral Planning Guide/Worksheet Evangelical Lutheran Church

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.

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)

The Evangelical Lutheran Funeral Planning Guide and Worksheet are designed to:

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

This guide will walk you through a series of questions. Your responses can be marked on the worksheet at the end. Our pastor is available to discuss any items with you. If these decisions are made in advance, 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 your pastor to share your worksheet so that it can be held in safekeeping for the future.

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. We 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 tears 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

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 service take place? Funeral services are generally held within three to five days following death but can take place anytime that works for the family.

What fees are associated with a funeral service? There are fees for the people involved in providing the worship service as well as those who prepare and clean up following the service and reception. A fee schedule is available from the church office as well as area Funeral Directors. Payment of these fees is coordinated through the Funeral Director.

Who makes arrangements for the musician(s)? Our church may be able to assist with your music needs. Usually, a pianist or organist is needed and a vocalist may be selected by you or your family. The church office can provide contact information for the music professionals you wish to hire.

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 the afternoon or evening before the service. A visitation time is also typically offered at the church 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 ELC or other organizations? This is an honorable thing to do. Evangelical Lutheran Church 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 ELC will generate an acknowledgment to you and be listed in our monthly newsletter.

Resources for planning your Christian Burial
(These are suggested resources. You are not limited to only these options.)

Scripture options for funerals:

Old Testament lessons:

Job 19:23 - 27a

Isaiah 25: 6 - 9

Isaiah 35: 3 - 10

Isaiah 40: 1 - 11, 28 - 31

Isaiah 61: 1 - 3

Lamentations 3: 22 - 33

Ecclesiastes 3: 1 - 8

For I know that my Redeemer lives

Then the Lord God will wipe away all the tears

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened

Comfort, O Comfort my people...

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases

For everything, there is a season

Psalms:

Psalms 23

Psalms 27

Psalms 42

The Lord is my shepherd

The Lord is my light and my salvation

As a deer longs for the flowing stream, my soul...

Psalm 45	God is our refuge and strength
Psalm 90	Lord, you have been our dwelling place...
Psalm 91	You who live in the shelter of the Most High...
Psalm 116	I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice
Psalm 118	O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good...
Psalm 121	I lift my eyes to the hills-from where will my help come
Psalm 130	Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord
Psalm 139	O Lord, you have searched me and know me
Psalm 143	Hear my prayer, O Lord.....

New Testament readings:

Romans 5: 1 - 11	Since we are justified by faith, we have peace
Romans 5: 17 - 21	One man's act of righteousness lead to life for all
Romans 8: 14 - 19	We are children of God
Romans 8: 24 - 28	We know that all things work together for good
Romans 8: 31 - 39	Nothing separates us from the love of God
1 Corinthians 15: 12 - 26	Since death came through a human being...
2 Corinthians 4:15 - 5:10	For we walk by faith and not by sight
Philippians 2: 5 - 11	Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus
Philippians 3: 7 - 16	Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward...
Thessalonians 4: 13 - 18	For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again...
Peter 1: 3 - 9	By God's great mercy he has given us a new birth
Revelation 7: 9 - 17	And there was a great multitude...
Revelation 21: 1 - 7	Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth...
Revelation 21:22 - 22:7	There will be no more night...for the Lord God will be light

Hymns for funerals:

A Mighty Fortress	504	My Faith Looks up to thee	759
Abide with Me	629	Neither Death nor Life	622
All of Us Go Down to Dust	223	Now all the Vault of Heaven Resounds	367
Amazing Grace	779	Now Rest beneath Night's shadow	568
Beautiful Savior	838	Now Thank We All Our God	839
Behold the Host	425	Now the Green Blade Rises	379
Blessed Assurance	638	O Blessed Spring	447
Borning Cry	732	O Come, O Come Emmanuel	257
Bring Peace to Earth Again	700	O Christ the Same	760

Children of the Heavenly Father	781	O Day Full of Grace	627
Come, Thou Long Expected	254	O God, Our Help in Ages Past	632
Come, We That Love the Lord	625	O God, Why are you Silent	703
Day of Arising	374	On Eagles Wings	787
For All the Saints	422	Once We Sang and Danced	701
Give Me Jesus	770		
Guide Me Ever, Redeemer	618	Peace to Soothe Our Bitter Woes	381
Healer of Our Every Ill	612	Praise to the Lord, the Almighty	858
How Great Thou Art	856	Precious Lord, Take my Hand	773
How Long, O God	698	Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me	623
I am the Bread of Life	485	Shall We Gather at the River	423
I Know That My Redeemer Lives	619	The Church's One Foundation	654
In All Our Grief	615	The King of Love My Shepherd	502
In Deepest Night	699	There is a Balm in Gilead	614
In Heaven Above	630	Thine is the Glory	376
Into Paradise May the Angels Lead	222	Through the Night of Doubt/Sorrow	327
Jerusalem, My Happy Home	628	You, Dear Lord	702
Jesus Christ is Risen Today	365	We are Baptized in Christ Jesus	451
Jesus Loves Me!	595	We Know that Christ is Raised	449
Jesus, Priceless Treasure	775	What a Friend we Have in Jesus	742
Jesus, Still Lead On	624	When Memory Fades	792
Just a Closer Walk with Thee	697	When Pain of the World Surrounds Us	704
Lift High the Cross	660	When Peace like a River	785
Lord of All Hopefulness	765		
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling	631	My Hope is Built on Nothing Less	596

A Guide for Christian Burial Worksheet for _____

Intent To my family and friends:
I record these wishes to guide your planning and ease your struggle during these painful days. Use them as they were intended as a guide. Do not feel strictly bound to them, if in your wisdom and love, you would make other decisions that are more helpful in your grieving and in your celebration of the resurrection.

Signed

Date

My Body

_____ I wish to donate my organs (complete other documents)
_____ as transplants _____ for research

_____ I wish my body to be donated for research (complete other documents)

_____ I wish to be embalmed.

_____ I wish to be cremated.

_____ I wish to be buried.
Name of Cemetery _____ Plot no. _____
City _____ State _____

_____ Other: _____
(might include: ashes spread, contents when buried, etc)

Expressions of sympathy

_____ In the form of flowers

_____ In lieu of flowers, I would prefer: _____

Memorials I wish memorial gifts to be used to further support the following ministries and organizations.

_____ Evangelical Lutheran Church Gifts and Memorial Fund
_____ Other organizations (please specify):

Funeral Home

You are encouraged to make specific arrangements at the funeral home of your choice. In this way, all of the details and prices for your funeral can be pre-arranged.

Preferred Funeral Home _____

Have pre-arrangements been made? _____ yes _____ no

Visitation

Location: _____ funeral home _____ church _____ home

Time: _____ day of funeral _____ evening before funeral

Casket: _____ open _____ closed

Burial Clothing: _____

Jewelry/glasses: _____

_____ remove for family to retain _____ bury with body

Include in the casket: _____

The Funeral

Location: _____ church _____ funeral home _____ cemetery

Time: _____ morning _____ afternoon _____ evening

Body present: _____ yes _____ no (a memorial service)

Holy Communion celebrated: _____ yes _____ no

Favorite Biblical theme or image: _____

Scripture: _____

Hymns: _____

Participants: _____

Other specific requests: _____

Luncheon ☐ yes ☐ no
 ☐ at church ☐ Other location (specify) _____

Menu or specific requests: _____

Obituary Be sure to include the following events, accomplishments, and people who are important to me. (List full name for siblings, parents, date of marriage, etc)

Legalities

Name of Attorney: _____ Phone #: _____

Location of Will/legal documents: _____

Birth date: _____ Place of birth: _____

Social Security #: _____ - _____ - _____ Are you a veteran? ☐ yes ☐ no

Other pertinent information (bank accounts, pension accounts, etc)

Please feel free to attach/include additional notes to this document (IE: complete obituary, list of pallbearers, video/photographs used, etc)

If interested, bring this completed document to the church office and we will make copies for you, your family, and the funeral home. This document can be kept at the church until your time of death. All information will be kept confidential.

