**Planning a Christian Funeral**

*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*

This material is designed to:

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

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. This guide will walk you through a series of questions. Your responses can be marked on the worksheet at the end. The Chisago Lake pastor is available to discuss any items with you. When you are finished, 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 our pastor to share your worksheet so that it can be held in safekeeping for the future.

The Goal of the 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. Lutheran Christians 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 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.

*Some questions you might have…*

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

Simply put, at a funeral service the body of the deceased is present, whereas at a memorial service either the deceased’s ashes or no remains are present. Both services provide an opportunity to proclaim God’s death defeating acts in Christ as we remember all that God has given us in the life of our loved one.

**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 or memorial service take place?**

Funeral services are generally held within three to five days following death, thereby allowing appropriate time for family members and friends to gather for the service. Memorial services can be held at any time. However, waiting for weeks or even months after a death will have a bearing on finding a sense of closure, and this will impact the grief work that follows the death of a loved one. Therefore, it is recommended that a memorial service be held within a few weeks after death. Funeral or memorial services on Sunday are highly discouraged, as Sundays are reserved for the worship services of the congregation.

**What fees are associated with a funeral or memorial service at Chisago Lake?**

There are fees for the people involved in providing the worship service. Those are determined in consultation with the Funeral Home. Payment of these fees is coordinated through the Funeral Director.

**Who makes arrangements for the musician(s)?**

CLLC’s Director of Music Ministry serves as the pianist or organist for all funerals, unless otherwise determined in consultation with the pastor. A vocalist may be selected by you or your family, or the vocalist can be arranged by the Director of Music Ministry or the Funeral Director.

**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 at Chisago Lake the afternoon or evening before the service if there are no other events already scheduled that would pose a conflict. A visitation time is 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 CLLC or other organizations?**

This is an honorable thing to do. Chisago Lake Lutheran 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 CLLC will generate an acknowledgment to you and be listed in the monthly newsletter.

**Funeral Planning Worksheet**

When planning your funeral or a funeral for a loved one, there are many choices to make. Facing some of those choices now will make the process less demanding for your loved ones later. This Funeral Planning Worksheet will lead you through a variety of decisions. After death, a pastor will meet with family members and review your worksheet to form the funeral or memorial service.

This worksheet may be used by:

* an individual making their advance plans known
* a family planning the funeral of a loved one nearing death or recently deceased

Please supply as much information as you wish to share on any parts of the worksheet.

Guide for the Funeral of: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Last Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**For the Person Making Advance Plans:**

When you have completed this worksheet, please consider sharing it with the CLLC pastor. Your information will be kept in a confidential file available only to the pastor. It will be used in consultation with your family or whomever you have directed to carry out these wishes upon your death. Also, after completing the worksheet, consider telling someone you trust about it. You may wish to discuss with them what you have written to be certain that it is clear.

Consider providing copies:

1. To your Family
2. Attached to your Will or Trust Plan
3. To a Funeral Home of your choice
4. Or simply give it to someone you trust with a note that says,

*I have recorded my desires regarding my death and burial. I keep this information in the following place: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*(i.e. on file at the church, with my will, etc.). At the time of my death, I ask that you use this information to provide guidance for my family and my church in making arrangements for the funeral I desire. Although this information is being left for safekeeping, I understand that it is not legally binding or enforceable. This worksheet does not make the church or anyone obligated or responsible for the execution of these instructions. With gratitude, Signature and Date*

**Scripture Readings:**

Typically, 2-3 scriptures are chosen for a funeral service. They can, but do not have to be, an Old Testament, Epistle, and Gospel reading(s). There is a list of possible readings included in this packet.

Other Readings or Poem Chosen:

Who would you like to read the lessons? Typically, 1-2 people.

**Congregational Hymns:**

Typically, 2-3 congregational hymns are chosen for a funeral service. One for the entrance, one right after the sermon, and one as the sending hymn as the family exits. There is a list of possible hymns included in this packet.

**Soloist/Song or Special Music Requests:**

**Eulogy Remembrance:** *Often done by a family member or friend, about 3 min in length.*

**Processional Cross:** \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

Who would you like to carry it?

**Funeral Pall:** \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

Would you like someone specific to lay the pall over the casket before the service?

**Sprinkling Casket/Urn as a reminder Baptism:** \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

**Communion:** \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

*Communion can be a powerful way of gathering those who are grieving around the hope and promise of God’s redeeming love. It is always open to whomever desires to receive it, no one is excluded.*

If yes, 3 people to help assist with communion:

2-3 additional hymns during communion:

**Casket \_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Cremation \_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Casket for funeral, Cremation for burial \_\_\_\_\_\_**

If a burial of an urn, would you like family members and friends to bury the urn by placing it in the ground and anyone who is interested placing a shovel of dirt into the hole?

\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

If you are a farmer or have a specific plot of land that is meaningful to you, would you like your family to collect some soil from that place and be used symbolically at the burial?

\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

If military, would you like military rites at the burial?

\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

If burial is on the same day as the funeral, would you like people to await the family’s return from the cemetery to begin lunch? Or should those who may need to leave begin lunch and the family join them when they return?

\_\_\_\_ Wait to Eat \_\_\_\_\_ Eat immediately following service, family joins when they return

**Names of Pall Bearers:** *Six Pall Bearers are needed when there is a coffin for burial. In the event of cremation, honorary pall bearers may be names.*

**Where would you like memorials sent?**

**Obituary Details:**

*It’s encouraged that you write your obituary ahead of time or put down the details you wish to have included to someone else to write at the time of your death. Also consider what papers you would like to have the obituary published.*

Full Name (including Maiden Name):

Birth Date and Location:

Parent’s Names (including Mother’s Maiden Name):

Baptism Date, Church, and Location:

Confirmation Date, Church, and Location:

Marital Status, Marriage Date, and Name of Spouse:

Other Marriages/Divorces/Spouse(s):

Names of Children:

Additional Next of Kin:

What biographical information would you like shared in the obituary? Feel free to write on another page. For example:

* Place(s) of residence
* Hobbies/interests
* Schools attended and degrees received
* Accomplishments, memberships
* Employment history
* Volunteer activities, military service, etc.
* Where would you like memorials sent?

Include as many full names, city of residence, birth and death dates, etc. as possible. All this information is important to your family. This does not need to be prepared in paragraph form, though you certainly could write your own obituary prior to your death.

**Important Documents and Advisors**

It is important that survivors be able to locate vital records and important documents. Before your death, you should have a current will/living trust and related health care directives which express your wishes on important personal, financial, medical, and charitable issues for your survivors. If you need information regarding estate planning, planned giving, and/or the inclusion of a Christian preamble for your will, please consult your legal or financial advisor.

**Additional information is available at:**

Location and Date of Will/Living Trust:

Attorney/Will Preparer:

Power of Attorney/Financial:

Power of Attorney for Health Care:

Executor of Will/Estate:

Guardian (for Minor Children):

Additional Comments:

**Funeral Scriptures**

*These are just a few to choose from. If there is another scripture or Confirmation verse that you want included, please make sure you include that.*

**FIRST READING**

Job 19:23-27a *I know that my redeemer lives.*

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 *For everything a season.*

Isaiah 25:6-9 *The Lord will swallow up death forever.*

Isaiah 40:1-11, 28-31 *Comfort my people, says your God*

Isaiah 43:1-3a, 5 – 7 *I have called you by name*

Isaiah 43:1-3a, 18-19 *I am about to do a new thing*

Isaiah 61:1-3 *God comforts all who mourn.*

Isaiah 65:17-20, 23-25 *A new heaven and a new earth*

Isaiah 66:10-14 *As a mother comforts her child*

Jeremiah 31:8-13 *I will turn their mourning into joy*

Lamentations 3:22-26, 31-33 *The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.*

**PSALM**

Psalm 23 *The Lord is my shepherd*

Psalm 25:1-10 *To you I lift up my soul*

Psalm 42:1-7 *As a deer longs for flowing streams*

Psalm 46:1-7 *God is our refuge and strength*

Psalm 63 *Eagerly I seek you*

Psalm 84 *How dear to me is your dwelling place*

Psalm 90 *You have been our refuge*

Psalm 116 *You have rescued my life from death*

Psalm 121 *I lift up my eyes to the hills*

Psalm 122 *Let us go to the house of the Lord*

Psalm 130 *Out of the depths I cry to you*

Psalm 139:7-12 *The gracious omnipresence of the Lord*

Psalm 142:1-6 *I cry to the Lord with my voice*

Psalm 143 *Lord, hear my prayer*

*See the hymn section for psalm paraphrases of psalms 23, 90 and 91*

**SECOND READING**

Romans 5:1-11 *Justified by faith, we have peace with God.*

Romans 6:3-9 *Baptized into Jesus death and resurrection.*

Romans 8:14-23 *We groan while we wait for the redemption of our bodies.*

Romans 8:31-35, 37-39 *Nothing can separate us from the love of God.*

Romans 14:7-12 *Whether alive or dead, we belong to the Lord.*

I Corinthians 15:12-26 *In Christ shall all be made alive.*

I Corinthians 15:51-57 *Death is swallowed up in victory.*

II Corinthians 4:6-12, 16-18 *Treasure in clay jars*

II Corinthians 4:14-5:1 *What is seen is transitory; what is unseen is eternal.*

II Corinthians 5:1, 6-10 *We have an everlasting home in heaven.*

Philippians 3:20-21 *Jesus will transfigure our bodies to be like his glorious body.*

I Thessalonians 4:13-4, 18 *We shall stay with the Lord forever.*

II Timothy 2:8-13 *If we have died with him, we shall live with him.*

I John 3:1-2 *We shall see God as God really is.*

Revelation 7:9-17 *God will wipe away every tear.*

Revelation 21:2-7 *Behold, I make all things new.*

Revelation 22:1-15 *The Lord God will be their light.*

**HOLY GOSPEL**

Matthew 5:1-10 *Blessed are those who mourn.*

Matthew 11:25-30 C*ome to me and I will give you rest.*

Matthew 25:1-13 *The bridegroom is coming; come out to meet him.*

Mark 16:1-7 *The resurrection of Christ*

Luke 2:25-32 (or 2:25-40) *Simeon is able to die in peace.*

Luke 23:33, 39-43 *Today you will be with me in paradise.*

Luke 24:13-35 *The road to Emmaus.*

John 1:1-5, 9-14 *The light shines in the darkness.*

John 6:37-40 *All that the Father gives me will come to me.*

John 6:51-58 *All who eat this bread will live forever; I will raise them up on the last day.*

John 10:11-16 *I am the good shepherd.*

John 11:21-27 (or 11:32-45) *I am the resurrection and the life.*

John 12:23-28 *If a grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies, it yields a rich harve*st.

John 14:1-6 *In my Father's house there are many rooms.*

John 14:25-27 *Peace I leave with you.*

**Funeral Hymns for any time of the year**

*Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW)*

***Funeral Hymns During Particular Liturgical Seasons***

*The Easter hymns listed below are especially appropriate for a funeral at any time during the year*

**Advent**

Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying 436

Oh, Come, Oh, Come Emmanuel 257

My Lord, What a Morning 438

Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers 244

Prepare the Royal Highway 264

**Christmas**

Let All Together Praise Our God 287

Your Little Ones, Dear Lord 286

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice 288

Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming 272

Away in a Manger 277, 278

Once in Royal David’s City 269

All My Heart Again Rejoices 273

**Epiphany**

O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright 308

As with Gladness Men of Old 302

I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light 815

We are Marching in the Light of God 866

**Lent/Holy Week**

On My Heart Imprint Your Image 811

In the Cross of Christ I Glory 324

God Loved the World 323

My Song Is Love Unknown 343

O Sacred Head, Now Wounded 351, 352

**Easter**

Awake, My Heart with Gladness 378

The Strife is O’er the Battle Done 366

With High Delight Let Us Unite 368

Now All the Vault of Heaven Resounds 367

Thine Is the Glory 376

Now the Green Blade Rises 379

Alleluia! Jesus Is Risen 377