



# Preparing for a Christian Funeral Service Atonement Lutheran Church

Following the death of a family member it is often difficult to make decisions. This guide is intended to provide helpful information that will assist those who charged with designing a service for the **Burial of the Dead** that will be meaningful and helpful to your family.

A Christian funeral serves four key purposes. Fellowship is right and good, but the heart of a Christian funeral is worship, which:

1. Offers the opportunity to remember and give thanks for the life of one of God's family;
2. Gives the faith community and friends a vehicle to support and comfort those who are grieving;
3. Lifts up for all of us the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and the promise of resurrection; and, finally,
4. Encourages each of us to continue in our walk with Christ until that day when we too are reunited with the saints who have gone before us in God's eternal kingdom.

The focus of a Christian funeral is the hope that we all have in Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead. Hymns, Bible readings, and sermon shall all reflect the promise of eternal life. Family and friends are invited to help in selection of hymns and Bible verses that will be used in the service. Holy Communion may be a part of every funeral service. Family members or friends may help serve communion.

## When Your Loved One Dies or is Close to Death

**Calling the Pastor:** When death is anticipated or has already occurred, please call one of Atonement's pastors, no matter the hour of the day. The pastor can bring the prayers and presence of the community of faith to the hospital, nursing home or home and can initiate the process of planning and arranging for the funeral. These are often precious memories for the family. Our pastor on-call is available at 320-252-6203.

**Where to Hold the Service:** Consider the church facility for the service. The church is where Christian life begins as the baptized people of God. The church is the sacred space for nourishment through Word and Sacraments. The church is where the community of faith gathers to worship the living God.

**Pastor:** Primary arrangements for the service will be made with one of the pastors at Atonement. Typically, one pastor will officiate the service. Requests for participation of or leadership by a guest pastor in the service require consultation and approval with a pastor serving at Atonement.

**Scheduling:** There is no charge to Atonement members for use of the sanctuary, gathering area or fellowship hall. The time of the funeral service is arranged in consultation with the family members, pastor(s), funeral director(s), and church calendar. In most cases, funerals have priority over other scheduling.

**Order of Worship:** The Service for the Burial of the Dead provides the faith community words of hope, comfort and thanksgiving in the midst of sorrow and grief. This service is printed in the hymnbook and will not be interrupted by the rites of secular organizations.

**Music:** The Director of Music Ministry will arrange for an organist/pianist to accompany the service. All music used in the service must be approved by the pastor and be appropriate for a worship setting. Congregational hymns are encouraged and normally come from a ELCA hymnal. Hymns, solos, and other music should reflect the hope that is ours in the resurrection of Jesus. Familiar hymns are always appreciated because they allow the gathered congregation to sing with confidence.

**Involvement in the Service:** It is very appropriate for family members and friends to be involved and assist in the funeral service as pallbearers, lectors, vocal or instrumental musicians.

**Times of Remembrance/Eulogies:** Funerals and Memorial Services are not extended eulogies of the deceased but a vehicle of hope for the living. A family member may share their remembrances of the deceased, and those remembrances should be concise, written down, and seen as part of the worship. Sharing stories of remembrance can also be done in a very meaningful way at the visitation.

**The Casket, Urn and Pall:** The casket will be closed prior to the beginning of the service and will precede the family into the sanctuary for the service. A funeral pall is available, by request, for use at Atonement to cover the casket for the service. The pall is a reminder that we are clothed in Christ in Holy Baptism and Christ's promise covers us even in death. The pall is also a reminder that before God all persons are equal.

**Cremation:** When the body has been cremated prior to the worship, the urn will be brought to the front of the church for the funeral service. It may be part of the procession or it may be placed in the front of the church prior to the service.

**Memorial Gifts:** Memorial gifts provide a way for the children of God to do those things Jesus Christ would want us to do. The family designates where memorial gifts will be given. Atonement also has a **Legacy Endowment Fund** for families to consider. A perpetual fund, its purpose is used in three areas: New Ministries, Christian Education and Scholarship, and Capital Improvements.

**Lunch/Fellowship:** The church serving group will provide a simple meal for your family and friends. The menu is ham sandwiches on "dollar buns" OR scalloped potatoes and ham, salad, rolls and dessert. It is difficult to estimate the number that will attend, but this is helpful to begin planning. Please feel free to stay and visit with friends and family following the service and lunch.

## **The Service and Visitation**

**Service Times:** Morning services may be at 10:00; 10:30 or 11:00am. Afternoon services may be at 1:00 or 1:30 pm. Other times can be arranged with the pastor and funeral director(s). Atonement can do a single shot livestream of the chancel that can be viewed on YouTube for up to one year due to copyright law.

**Visitation:** The day before at the funeral home and/or an hour before service at church. This is the appropriate place for remembrances and eulogies from family and friends. The family may request the pastor to lead a prayer service during the visitation at the funeral home.

**Prayers with the family:** Take place in the fellowship hall 10 minutes before the service begins.

**Processional:** The family follows the pastor(s) and casket to reserved seating as the service begins.

**Order of worship** is in the hymnal or printed in bulletin. Follow the pastor's directions regarding standing and sitting and receiving Holy Communion.

**Recessional and Burial:** Takes place at the end of the service following the commendation. The family follows the pastor and casket/urn out of the sanctuary. They follow the casket until it is in place in the funeral coach. Family and friends proceed to their cars and follow the funeral coach to the cemetery if the burial is local. If the burial is out of town, or in the case of cremation and a later interment, lunch precedes the burial.

# If a Memorial Service Occurs Without Funeral Home Accompaniment

## Responsibility of the family:

**Contacting the Church:** To inform the Pastor(s) or Office Administrator of the death. Check the church calendar for possible dates for the upcoming memorial/funeral service.

**Meet with a Pastor from Atonement:** To plan the memorial service. The Order of Worship will follow the Service for the **Burial of the Dead** printed in the ELW hymnal. That meeting will address details regarding: music, scripture lessons, family or friend involvement in the service, tributes, luncheon planning, burial plans and other related items. Pastor will contact Atonement's funeral hosts.

## The Family of the Deceased shall:

- Arrange the floral tributes at the service and dispose of them following the service.
- Assemble and arrange photo boards
- Provide a guest register, if desired
- Provide any memorial cards for those attending the funeral/memorial service
- Contact the newspaper to arrange for the obituary/service announcement
- Pay Atonement for the cost associated with the funeral/memorial service lunch
- Be responsible for all honorariums
- Contact the cemetery to make arrangements for burial

## Atonement will provide:

- Pastor and musician
- Greeters/Ushers
- Communion if requested during worship
- Worship bulletin
- Funeral lunch, if desired

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## Honoraria and Fees

<b>Pastors:</b>	At the discretion of family
<b>Organist/Pianist:</b>	\$175 plus an additional \$25 if accompanying a soloist.  Our musicians are often taking off work to be with us.
<b>Soloists:</b>	\$125 for first solo and \$25 for each additional solo.
<b>Lunch:</b>	\$5.00 per plate donation.

On behalf of the pastors, staff, and Atonement congregation, we extend our deepest sympathy to you on the death of your family member and continue to hold you in our prayers in these days of grief and loss.

*Almighty God, source of all mercy and giver of comfort, deal graciously with those who mourn, that, casting all their sorrow on You, they may know the consolation of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## Hymn Suggestions

### Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW)

#759 My Faith Looks up to Thee  
#618 Guide Me Ever Great Redeemer  
#502 The King of Love my Shepherd Is  
#367 Now All the Vault of Heaven Resound  
#376 Thine is the Glory  
#303 A Mighty Fortress is Our God  
#537 On Our Way Rejoicing  
#629 Abide with Me  
#596 My Hope is Built on Nothing Less  
#425 Who is this Host Arrayed in White  
#631 Love Divine, All Loves Excelling  
#632 O God, Our Help in Ages Past  
#623 Rock of Ages  
#619 I know that my Redeemer Lives!  
#660 Lift High the Cross  
#742 What a Friend we have in Jesus  
#779 Amazing Grace  
#781 Children of the Heavenly Father  
#764 Have no Fear little Flock  
#838 Beautiful Savior  
#856 How Great Thou Art  
#377 Alleluia! Jesus is Risen!  
#638 Blessed Assurance

#773 Precious Lord Take My Hand

#613 Thy Holy Wings  
#732 Morning Cry  
#612 Healer of our Every Ill  
#616 Jesus Remember Me  
#723 Blest Are They  
#733 Great is Thy Faithfulness  
#787 On Eagle's Wings  
#595 Jesus Loves Me  
#780 Shepherd Me O God  
#629 Abide With Me  
#630 In Heaven Above  
#592 Just As I Am  
#805 Lead On O King Eternal  
#759 My Faith Looks Up to Thee  
#596 My Hope is Built on Nothing Less  
#581 You Are Mine

### Other Resources

#77 *This Far By Faith* On A Hill Far Away  
#453 *Gather* Shepherd of My Heart  
#430 *Gather* Be not afraid

## Suggested Bible Readings

### PSALMS

Psalms 23 The Lord is my shepherd  
Psalm 90 Lord you have been our dwelling place in all generations.  
Psalm 130 Out of the depths I cry to you.  
Psalm 46 God is my refuge and strength  
Psalm 121 I lift up my eyes to the hills from where will my help come?  
Psalm 139 O Lord you have searched me and known me.  
Psalm 103 Bless the Lord O my soul and that is within me.

### OLD TESTAMENT

Job 19:23-27 I know that my Redeemer lives.  
Isaiah 25:6-9 He will swallow up death forever  
Isaiah 43:1-3a Do not fear for I have redeemed you, I have called you by name.  
Isaiah 61:1-3 The spirit of the Lord God is upon me to bring good news to the oppressed  
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 For everything there is a season and a time for every matter.  
Lamentations 3:22-26, 31-33 The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.

## NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew 5: 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Matthew 6: 9-13 Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Matthew 9: 18-26 My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.

Matthew 11:25-30 Come to me, all you that are weary and I will give you rest.

Matthew 25:1-13 The kingdom of heaven will be like this...you know neither the day nor hour.

Luke 2: 28-32 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word;

Luke 7: 11-17 When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, 'Do not weep.'

Luke 12:35-40 Watch the hour is coming.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world.

John 4: 13-14 The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.

John 5:24-29 Anyone who hears and believes has eternal life.

John 6:37-40 All who see and believe will be raised up on the last day.

John 10: 27-39 My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me

John 11:21-27 I am the resurrection and the life all who believe in me will never die.

John 14:1-6 In my father's house there are many dwelling places.

John 16: 22-23 So you have pain now; but I will see you again.

Romans 5:1-11 We are reconciled to God through Christ.

Romans 5:17-21 We are justified and have eternal life through Christ.

Romans 8:31-35, 37-39 Nothing will separate us from the love of God in Christ

Romans 14:7-9 So whether we live or die we are the Lord's

1 Corinthians 2: 9-10 These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:12-26 The resurrection of the dead

1 Corinthians 15:51-57 Death has been swallowed up in victory.

2 Corinthians 1: 3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 4: 14, 16-18 Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also.

2 Corinthians 5: 1-10 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed.

1 Peter 1:3-9 Living hope through the resurrection.

1 John 3:1-2 We are God's children

Revelations 7:9-17 Those who pass through the great ordeal stand before Jesus the lamb

Revelations 21:2-7 A new heaven and new earth