

Funeral Policy

Grace Lutheran Church | 1730 Old Hudson Road | Saint Paul, MN 55106

When someone dies, loved ones – family and friends, neighbors and church members – need space to grieve, to remember the deceased, and to give thanks to God for their loved one’s life. A church funeral service is an important part of the grieving process that may also include a visitation at a funeral home, family’s home, or at church; a reception where friends and family gather to tell stories through laughter and tears; a public act of memorial, such as planting a tree or donating a park bench in memory of the deceased; and any one of many other possible acts of grieving and remembering the deceased.

The Funeral Service

The Christian funeral service is a chance to come together to hear God’s promises for the deceased and to take comfort that “nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord,” not even death (see Romans 8:38-39).

In the Christian funeral service we remember the baptism of the deceased by draping the remains of the deceased in white, the color of baptism, and splashing the casket or urn with baptismal water. We hear from Holy Scripture words of God’s comfort and promise – comfort for those who grieve, and promise that the deceased is in God’s everlasting care. We sing such promises in hymns and/or hear them sung in a solo music.

Holy Communion, the central act of weekly Christian worship, could be celebrated at funerals, as we believe this sacred meal to be a mystical gathering of God’s people – from the past, present, and future – around our Lord’s table of grace, mercy, and life. The deceased, and all those who have gone before us in faith, are truly in communion with us as we share in this sacred meal. However, when significant portions of the funeral gathering would not receive – i.e., if a large portion of the family is not Christian or cannot receive Holy Communion in a Lutheran Church because of the teachings of their faith – would we consider not celebrating the sacrament.

At funeral services we give thanks to God for the deceased and commend the deceased’s remains to God’s care. One to three remembrances (eulogies) are shared in the service, about 3-5 minutes each. If additional people would like to speak about the deceased, the reception is a very appropriate time to do this. In the sermon Pastor strives to weave stories of the deceased into the story of God’s saving and gracious work in the world, and so in this way to tell the story of God by, with, and through the story of the deceased. A prayer near the end of the service, said with a gesture blessing the deceased’s remains, asks God to graciously receive the deceased into everlasting care.

Selecting Readings and Hymns

Hymns and readings at a funeral service are intended to proclaim the resurrection, and offer spiritual comfort to all who grieve. At the funeral service we remember God’s love and promises for the deceased, and we proclaim that love and promise through Scripture, music, and the sermon. Hymns and readings need not be the deceased’s “favorite” hymns or readings, though if the deceased had selected favorite hymns and readings they can certainly be considered. Pastor is able to work with the family to select appropriate readings and music for the service.

Funeral Service, or Memorial Service?

A **funeral service** is one at which the remains of the deceased are present, and is often – but not always – held within four to eight days of death. A **memorial service** is very similar to a funeral service, though the remains of the deceased are not present. Though there is no religious teaching in our faith that requires funerals to be held within a certain timeframe (as our Jewish sisters and brothers traditionally have the funeral within a day or two of death), funerals taking place within a week of death give family and friends a meaningful and timely opportunity for grief, prayer, and mutual comfort. Memorial services are often held at a later date, when funeral services are not being held closer to the date of death, or when the funeral is held in one location and a memorial service is desired somewhere else.

Full Body Burial, or Cremation?

The Lutheran church teaches that cremation is a perfectly appropriate way to care for the deceased's remains. Remains are appropriately buried at sea or in the earth, giving a dignified final resting spot to the deceased. Burial of remains – cremated or not – often takes place immediately following the funeral service, but may also take place at a later date.

Scheduling

Services need to be scheduled with the church and pastor. Though the church and pastor have schedules that are generally flexible, there will be times when other church events, the pastor's various commitments, or other extraordinary circumstances would prevent the church or pastor from being available at particular dates and times. In these rare circumstances, Pastor will work with the family to find another date for the service, or seek out another location and/or another clergy person for the service.

Luncheon

Our Hospitality Team provide desserts, coffee, set-up, serving, and clean-up of a post-service funeral luncheon. Luncheon food is provided by the family. Please contact the church office for the name and number of the funeral reception coordinator to make luncheon arrangements.

Memorial Gifts

The church is grateful to be remembered by the deceased and loved ones with memorial gifts. Memorial gifts to the church are used for special ministry projects to carry out the mission of the church. Families, and those looking to plan their own estate, are encouraged to speak with Pastor and their financial advisor about their desire and ability to give to the church at the time of a loved one's death or one's own death.

Fees

Funerals require some additional effort by church staff and volunteers, thus a few fees are required. Fees are sometimes collected by the funeral director. At other times they are paid directly by the family. Please contact the church or your funeral director if you have any questions.

Pastor: suggested honorarium of \$300

Organist/Pianist: \$150

Soloist: \$125 (if desired)

Custodian: \$150

Luncheon: \$100 *suggested* donation payable to Grace Lutheran Church for the set - up, serving, and clean - up after a funeral luncheon

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Readings and hymns appropriate for funerals and memorial services
Grace Lutheran Church, St Paul, MN

An important part of any Christian funeral or memorial service is the proclamation of God's Word of promise and comfort – the promise of God's presence with and everlasting life for the deceased, and comfort for those who mourn. Scripture readings and hymns are an important part of proclaiming those words of promise and comfort.

Below is a list of appropriate readings and hymns for funeral services. While other Scripture passages and hymns might be appropriate, especially as relates to the life of the deceased or the season of the year, this list is a great place to start when discerning what readings and hymns to select for a funeral service. A funeral service has anywhere from one to three readings, and a psalm may either be said or sung as a hymn.

Please speak with Pastor about the specifics of selecting readings and hymns. Pastor is glad to work with you to select hymns and readings, or to select readings and hymns on your behalf.

**Although most of the suggested readings and hymns are suitable for a funeral involving a person of any age, those marked with an asterisk may be especially useful at the death of a child.*

Old Testament

Job 19:23-27a: I know that my Redeemer lives
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8: For everything there is a season
Isaiah 25:6-9: God will swallow up death forever
*Isaiah 40:1, 6-11: God will gather the lambs
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 55:1-3, 6-13: Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters
Isaiah 61:1-3: The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me
*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

Psalms

*Psalm 23: The LORD is my shepherd
*Psalm 42:1-5: As a deer longs for flowing streams
Psalm 46:1-7: God is our refuge and strength
*Psalm 121: I lift up my eyes to the hills
*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

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New Testament

Romans 5:1-11: Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ
*Romans 8:31-35, 37-39: Who will separate us from the love of Christ?
1 Corinthians 15:12-26: Christ, the first fruits, has been raised
2 Corinthians 4:6-12, 16-18: Treasure in clay jars
*1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, 18: Teaching about those who have died
Hebrews 12:1-2: Surrounded by a cloud of witnesses
1 Peter 1:3-9: A living hope through Jesus' resurrection
*1 John 3:1-2: See what love the Father has given us
Revelation 7:9-17: God will wipe away every tear
Revelation 21:2-7: I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem
Revelation 22:1-5: The Lord God will be their light

Gospel

*Matthew 5:1-10: Blessed are those who mourn
Matthew 11:25-30: I will give you rest
*Matthew 18:1-5, 10-14: A child is the greatest in the kingdom
*Mark 10:13-16: Let the little children come
Mark 16:1-7: The resurrection of Christ
Luke 24:1-9: The resurrection of Christ
John 1:1-5, 9-14: The light shines in the darkness
John 6:37-40: I will raise them up on the last day
*John 10:11-16: I am the good shepherd
John 11:21-27: I am the resurrection and the life
John 14:1-6: I prepare a place for you
John 14:25-27: Peace I leave with you

HYMNS ELW Hymnal

308: O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright!	
313: O Lord, Now Let Your Servant	
351, 352: O Sacred Head, Now Wounded	621: Jesus Lives, My Sure Defense
377: Alleluia! Jesus Is Risen!	622: Neither Death nor Life
*381: Peace, to Soothe Our Bitter Woes	629: Abide with Me
391: This Joyful Eastertide	636: How Small Our Span of Life
409: Kyrie! God, Father	637: Holy God, Holy and Glorious
422: For All the Saints	639: When We Are Living
423: Shall We Gather at the River	721: Goodness Is Stronger than Evil
429: In Our Day of Thanksgiving	730: Lord Our God, with Praise We Come
447: O Blessed Spring	750: Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart
483: Here Is Bread	759: My Faith Looks Up to Thee
500: Now We Remain	760: O Christ the Same
502: The King of Love My Shepherd Is	770: Give Me Jesus
531: The Trumpets Sound, the Angels Sing	773: Precious Lord, Take My Hand
*595: Jesus Loves Me!	778: The Lord's My Shepherd
*613: Thy Holy Wings	786: O Holy Spirit, Enter In

787: On Eagle's Wings

*815 : I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

826: Thine the Amen

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