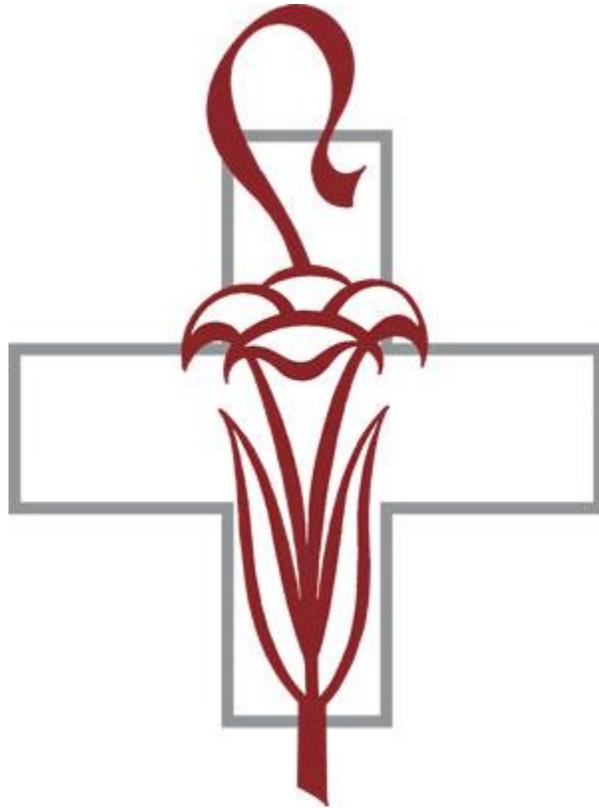


Alive in Christ



Grace Lutheran Church and School

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A guide designed to assist family and loved ones at the time of one's death.
This document does not substitute for, nor take the place of a duly drawn, witnessed and notarized
Last Will and Testament.



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL

Dear Saints and Fellow Heirs of Eternal Life,

The Psalmist tells us to number our days in order to use them wisely. It is wise to talk about your own funeral with your family—especially if you do it long before you expect to die.

This manual has been prepared by the Pastor and approved by the Board of Directors and Council of Elders of Grace Lutheran Church and School to assist its members in planning not only for death, but also for a celebration of the eternal life in which we already have begun to share through our mutual faith in Christ Jesus.

When a believer dies, their soul immediately separates from their body and experiences the joy and peace of heaven as it awaits the Last Day when Jesus will raise that body, make it free of sin and perfect in every way, and reunite it with the soul.

Meanwhile, the loved ones, relatives and friends we leave behind after our death can be consoled greatly if we take the time now to establish some prior funeral arrangements in order to lessen their grief in a time when decision-making is often difficult and traumatic.

We, therefore, ask you to read this manual thoroughly as we commend it to your use, so that we may rejoice together in our eternal future in heaven.

In the Name of our Risen Savior,



Rev. Michael Mueller

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FUNERAL/MEMORIAL SERVICE

What is a funeral? A time to say goodbye? To have a family reunion? To grieve? Yes, we say goodbye to a loved one; families gather more faithfully at funerals than any other time; and we grieve because of the separation that death brings.

A Christian funeral encompasses all of this, but it is also different. For we know that though we are separated temporarily through death, we are spiritually united as one in the body of Christ and shall be physically reunited at our Lord's return.

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep. (I Thessalonians 4:13–14 ESV)

It is important to understand that a funeral is a worship service. We do not worship the person lying in the casket; rather, we worship the One who died and rose again. Jesus Christ is the center of all Lutheran worship—especially a funeral—because Jesus' victory over sin, death, and the devil is clearly proclaimed. The whole funeral service echoes this truth over and over, reminding us of what Jesus did for us at our Baptism.

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. (Romans 6:3–5 ESV)

There are three parts—Bible readings, hymns and sermon—of a funeral service that provide an opportunity to clearly proclaim Christ to the grieving heart.

Where the body of the deceased (either in a coffin or ashes in an urn) is not available for the service, a memorial service is performed, which is just a funeral service without the commendation of the body. This entire funeral manual applies also to memorial services.

BIBLE READINGS

The speaking and hearing of God's Word through the four readings—the Old Testament, a Psalm, Epistle and Gospel—expressed the faith and hope we confess in Christ Jesus. Understanding the purpose of each reading will help in selecting a Scripture passage. Other passages may be chosen.

The **Old Testament** reading reveals God's plan of salvation for His Creation. Like us, God's people in the Old Testament trusted in the Messiah who would come to save them from their sins and raise them to eternal life.

Job 19:25–26	Isaiah 25:6-9	Isaiah 49:13–16
Genesis 28:15-22	Isaiah 54:14-17	Isaiah 40:24-31
Zephaniah 3:14-18	Isaiah 41:9-10	

As part of the church's prayer book, a favorite **Psalm** can express the depth of our feelings, as well as confess our faith in a loving and merciful Savior:

Psalms 23	Psalm 31	Psalm 42
Psalm 121	Psalm 130	Psalm 30:1-6, 11-12

Psalm 103:10-18

Psalm 139:13-18

Psalm 91

The **Epistle** reading can have several purposes. It can give a clear confession of our Christian hope in the Resurrection. It can show that not even death can separate us from God. It can bring out the peace we have with God because of Jesus’ sacrifice for our sins. Or it can state how in death, through Christ, we gain everything.

Romans 8:35-39

Romans 5:1–6

I Corinthians 15:51–52

Philippians 1:19–23

Hebrews 10:16-23

I Corinthians 9:24-27

I Peter 2:21-25

Ephesians 2:5-10

Romans 8:15-21

Revelations 21:1-7

I Peter 1:3-5

I Corinthians 2:6-10

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

In the **Gospel** reading, Jesus comforts us with His own words, deeds, and prayers, so that all who hear and believe may receive assurance from our own Savior that what He promises we can trust in.

John 11:21-26

John 3:16-18

Matthew 11:27-30

John 12:24-26

John 10:27-30

Matthew 25:31-46

John 14:1-7

John 6:63-69

John 2:1-14; 25-31a

MUSIC

The singing of hymns at a funeral service is another part where the comfort of Christ is heard. Like the Psalms, hymns can express the depth of our faith. St. Paul says that through them God’s Word “dwells in us richly” (Colossians 3:16). Your favorite hymn may be beautiful, reflecting God’s work for us in Jesus, but Easter hymns speak so clearly to grieving hearts.

The funeral service music should focus on keeping reverence, observed upon entering the House of the Lord. Therefore, the Pastor must approve all music used during the ceremony. All music must be both Protestant and Christian in character.

The Pastor and/or the organist can provide you with a list of appropriate musical selections for the prelude, processional and recessional. Music may be also be provided using the sound system and a pre-recorded CD (Grace Lutheran Church and School has a large selection of music). The congregation will sing at least the processional and the recessional.

Soloists, musicians and commercial recordings may be used, but must have the prior consent of the Pastor.

Abide with Me	878	I Know that My Redeemer Lives	461
All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name	549	Jerusalem the Golden	672
Amazing Grace	744	Jesus Christ, My Sure Defense	741
By Grace I’m Saved	566	Jesus has Come	533
Crown Him with Many Crowns	525	Joy to the World	387
For All the Saints	677	Just As I Am	570
How Great Thou Art	801	Lift High the Cross	837

Love Devine, All Love Excelling	700	Savior, Again to Your Dear Name	917
My Hope is Built	575	The Church's One Foundation	644
Oh, For a Thousand Tongues	528	The Lord's My Shepherd	710
Rock of Ages	761	What Wondrous Love is This?	543

HOMILY

The Pastor's primary task in the funeral sermon is to preach Christ crucified. His message may be made personal by showing how faith in Christ was revealed in the life of the deceased. But remember that while the Pastor may relate stories of your life during the sermon it is not the reason for his preaching. The proclamation of God's Word at the funeral service is to point those who grieve to Jesus and the hope that is found in Him alone.

The deceased won't care what is done, said, or sung at the funeral. They will be rejoicing in the presence of the Savior. Your funeral is not for the deceased; it is for your family and friends. Your funeral is not about you; it is about Jesus. Those who have gathered will be comforted when they hear all that He has done to give you—and them—eternal life.

FUNERAL TEAM

So that all things may "*be done decently and in order*" (I Corinthians 14:40), the Grace Lutheran Church and School has assembled a funeral team to help with planning the ceremony at the church and to answer any questions. The team consists of:

Pastor	Reverend Michael Mueller
Pastor's Administrative Assistant	Teri Morgan
Organist	Pam Steiner, Joann Thibault, or Barbara Lavoie

Substitutions must be approved by the Pastor. All arrangements must be made through the Pastor.

SCHEDULING

It is advisable to call the Pastor (661.406.0609) immediately upon a death in the family, so that he may be there to comfort the grieving family and to assure that he is involved in the funeral planning from the very start.

Your preferred date and time should be approved by the Pastor to ensure that there will be no conflicts.

The Church normally provides a free meal for immediate family and out of town guests prior to the funeral service, or a free reception following the funeral service. The schedule date for use of the church, kitchen and fellowship hall are not considered "firm" until scheduled through the church office. Any other uses of the church facilities must have special permission from the Pastor.

OFFICIANT

The Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church and School is the official officiant of all funerals at the church. Any rostered Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Pastor may be invited to participate or officiate in accordance with the family's request and with the Pastor's consent.

Clergy from other Christian churches may be used to read the lessons, provided they are not acting in an “official capacity”, e.g. robed or vested. Family members or close friends may also read the lessons. Only the Pastor may preach, read the Gospel and officiate.

EULOGY

The family may appoint a spokesperson to deliver a eulogy for the deceased. It is advised that this be a close friend of the family or a close member of the church. Immediate family is rarely able to perform this function.

A Christian eulogy emphasizes the many ways in which the life of the deceased demonstrated their saving faith in Jesus Christ, a faith which showed itself in a life of service to God and mankind. Revelation 14:13: *“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. ‘Blessed indeed,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them.’”* James 2:18: *“I by my works will show you my faith.”*

Thus, it would appear to be quite appropriate in a funeral service to praise and thank God for the fruits of faith that the Gospel inspired in the lives of the faithful departed. It is suggested that a time be set aside for the family and close friends to gather and share some of these stories with the person giving the eulogy. A eulogy is about 5 to 7 minutes in length.

There is never an open microphone allowed at the funeral service. A time to share stories and remembrances is called a wake. Normally this takes place at the funeral home after the viewing or it can be a part of the reception after the funeral service.

VIDEO MEMORIES

A short (5 to 7 minute) video using photographs or video excerpts accompanied by music may be played at the wake the night before or at a reception. It must be given to the Pastor at least two days ahead of the funeral service and he must approve both the content and the music used. Our Pastor is skilled at producing such videos and may have the time to produce one, if the photos and music are available and he has sufficient time to create it.

INTERMENT

Where the body of the deceased is to be buried immediately following the funeral service, the service is concluded at a gravesite service of 15 to 20 minutes. The Pastor accompanies the body in hearse and leads the procession to the gravesite.

LOGISTICS

The church Nave seats 250 people comfortably. For very large funerals, extra seating may be made available in the Narthex.

DECORATIONS

Our Nave provides a setting for a sacred service. Flowers may be placed on the two sconces on either side of the Chancel, in front of the Communion rail and on the floor surrounding the Chancel. No decorations are allowed on the altar or on the communion rail itself. The pews may be decorated, but no nails, screws, wire or anything that may scratch or damage the pews may be used. The altar cloth and the Officiant’s stole will reflect the season of the church year.

Arrangements for the delivery and placing of flowers may be made through the church office during normal operating hours during week days, or through the Pastor after normal office hours or during weekends.

PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

Christian funerals are to be observed with proper dignity. During the service, it is our policy that no photographs are to be taken under any circumstances. Any photographers present should be aware of this. It is the obligation of the families to communicate this information to all those taking photographs. Posed photos can be taken before or immediately after the ceremony.

Videotaping of the ceremony can be done from the back of the church. No roving videographer is permitted, and no lights.

BULLETINS

Worship service bulletins are provided by the church for all funerals. This requires that all of the music, Bible Readings, eulogy speaker, organist, and all other such arrangements must be finalized at least three days ahead of the funeral service.

FEES

Fees and Honorarium for the Pastor, Music Director, Organist, Wedding Coordinator, building usage and administrative costs should be paid at the funeral service. Please see the fee schedule below for an itemized list of fees.

<u>Who or What</u>	<u>Active Members</u>	<u>All Others</u>
Pastor	discretionary	\$300
Organist	\$100	\$200
Church Secretary	\$50	\$100
Parish Hall	free	\$200
Kitchen	free	\$200

(Pastoral Services: There is no set fee for members. Payment amount is at the discretion of the family as an expression of gratitude for time and effort spent in counseling, preparations and conducting the funeral.)

For active members of the church, our Parish Life Committee would be happy to provide a cake and coffee reception or a light luncheon consisting of sandwiches, salads, chips, cake and beverages prior to or after the service. Please consider making a separate donation of \$3 per person to help cover the cost of the food and paper goods.

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

“WHO MAY HAVE THEIR FUNERAL AT THIS CHURCH?”

We believe that Christian pastors should officiate only at the funerals of professed Christians, as evidenced by their practices and affiliation with the family of God. The very presence of a Christian pastor testifies to the faith of the deceased and implies that the individual has “*fallen asleep in Jesus.*”

We also believe that the pastor of Grace Lutheran Church and School has been called to a specific responsibility to his own parishioners and to sister congregations in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and not to the Christian or secular community in general. Therefore, he is to officiate at the funeral or memorial service of members and their immediate families, thus being assured that the brother or sister who has died had made a public confession of faith in Christ Jesus.

Exceptions are made for professed Christians who were active in the spiritual life of our congregation while contemplating membership, as well as to non-member believers to whom the pastor, elders or those involved in evangelism at Grace Lutheran Church and School had a direct, personal ministry, or they were a close relative of an active member.

Members of Grace Lutheran Church and School who request that their pastor officiate at the funeral of their non-member friend or distant relative place the pastors and elders in a difficult position. Not knowing the individual or the spiritual condition of the deceased may turn many a funeral sermon into an impersonal eulogy.

If you are planning a funeral for a living family member or a friend, share your faith in Jesus with them; ask our pastor to visit them; and bring them to worship if possible. It is never too late to bring Jesus to someone.

“MAY NON-LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD PASTORS OFFICIATE OR CO-OFFICIATE AT OUR FUNERAL SERVICES?”

No. A funeral service is a worship service, so the same LCMS policies apply in order to assure that what is said and preached will be truly Biblical and free of false doctrine.

“MAY FAMILY AND FRIENDS SAY A FEW WORDS AT THE FUNERAL?”

A spokesperson may be appointed to say a eulogy in accordance with this policy, but anything that is to be said must first be screened and approved by the Pastor.

“HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE DAY OF MY OWN CHRISTIAN FUNERAL?”

Continue to trust in Jesus Christ as your only way to heaven. Share your faith with others. Have your attorney write a Christian will for you. Pre-plan funeral arrangements may be made with a local funeral director and cemetery association. Maintain your life insurance. Complete and send to the church office a copy of the Funeral Arrangement Form at the back of this manual. Make sure that your next of kin or caregiver has access and is aware of any written directions.

“HOW CAN THE PASTOR ASSIST THE BEREAVED FAMILY?”

Contact the pastor as soon as possible. In addition to officiating at the funeral, he will first meet and counsel with the bereaved and is willing to accompany the family to the funeral home to help them in making the funeral arrangements. He is well-experienced and an expert in this kind of service.

“WHAT IS A MEMORIAL SERVICE?”

A memorial service does not have the casket or remains present at the service. The interment takes place before the service or at another time. Memorial services have become very popular for Christians, and can simplify the arrangements, but they are still a Worship service.

“WHAT IS A ‘CHRISTIAN’ WILL?”

Every Christian should have a will, but as a final witness to one’s faith, the use of a Christian preamble to your will provides you with the opportunity to give a posthumous testimony of your faith in Jesus to your attorney, relatives, and friends. A sample of such of Christian preamble is found at the back of this manual. We also encourage you to remember God’s church in your will, so that you vicariously can carry on the Lord’s work even after He has called you home.

“WHAT ABOUT MEMORIAL GIFTS AS OPPOSED TO GIVING FLOWERS?”

Many say that cut flowers are a “waste” or ostentatious, but when the disciples said much the same about Mary’s anointing of Jesus with a bottle of precious nard, the Savior took issue with them. Others prefer to give potted plants, which will continue to grow and be enjoyed by the family. Still others prefer to remember their loved ones by donating a gift of money to a memorial fund. They believe this method to be best, because it benefits the most people and is an ongoing way of remembering their loved ones. The church office can furnish you with a number of acceptable choices for a memorial, which would extend the work of God’s Kingdom.

“IS CREMATION ACCEPTABLE FOR CHRISTIANS?”

The Scriptures do not command or recommend any particular funeral practice. Entombment simply was the general procedure. The aversion to cremation by some Christians comes from the fact that the Old Testament forbade the practice because of its use by pagan peoples; the Jewish Mishna also forbade it and the unbelieving Romans burned bodies of Christians in a futile attempt to prevent the resurrection! Some people believe that cremation is a way to deny publicly the resurrection.

However, if God can resurrect the bodies of martyrs burned at the stake or eaten by lions or decomposed to dust after centuries in the grave, He should have no trouble at all with the cremains. Furthermore, direct cremation (no viewing or embalming) may be considered by some Christians to be good stewardship, in that it is far less expensive than other procedures. Finally, the process of the fast combustion of cremation is the same chemical process as the slow combustion of decomposition.

“ISN’T VIEWING A BODY RATHER MORBID?”

Perhaps, and if you prefer a closed casket, that is fine. On the other hand, a viewing helps some people to accept the reality of death and that their loved one is at peace. However, if the casket is brought into the church at a traditional funeral service, the casket is always closed, so that our thoughts will not be centered on a temporal, lifeless corpse, but rather on the message of victory we share in an eternal, living Savior.

“WHAT IS A FUNERAL PALL?”

A funeral pall is a large shroud, usually on which is embroidered a symbol of the resurrection. In place of a floral spray, it is draped over the closed casket during the funeral service at church as a beautiful symbol of the triumph over death of our resurrected Savior and that the believer’s sins have been

covered through Baptism into death. Just as our resurrected Lord passed through His shroud, so also our resurrection is assured. The use of the pall is encouraged.

“IS THE PRACTICE OF DONATING ORGANS ACCEPTABLE FOR CHRISTIANS?”

Again, the Scriptures do not speak to this issue because it was not possible at the time of the writing of the Scriptures. Therefore, it is your own decision. We assure you, however, that there is nothing ghoulish or unchristian in deciding to give the gift of life, sight, etc. to a fellow human being. Pray about such a decision before death and discuss it with your family. If you decide to be a donor, obtain a Uniform Donor Card from your local hospital, and keep the card in your wallet or purse. If you decide not to be a donor, do not feel guilty. There is no obligation for Christians to do this.

“SHOULD THE FUNERAL BE AT THE CHURCH OR AT THE FUNERAL HOME?”

Because a Christian funeral is also a worship service, God’s House seems to be the most appropriate place for a funeral. Due to the convenience (and the extra charge for using the funeral chapel at some funeral homes), the “option” of having the service at the church may not even be presented to many families. Also, funeral chapels are purposely devoid of an altar or Christian symbols that offend Jews, Buddhists, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses and other non-Christians.

Therefore, in place of such a generic environment, we strongly encourage you to utilize the church building as a closing statement of faith by those who have “fallen asleep in Jesus.” We will convey this information and our position to any mortuary upon your request.

“ARE LODGE CEREMONIES OR RITES OF OTHER ORGANIZATIONS PERMITTED AT OUR FUNERAL SERVICES?”

No. A funeral is a Christian worship service and, as such, it is incompatible with secular and semi-religious rites and ceremonies of lodges and other organizations. An exception is made for military honors at the gravesite or after the funeral worship service is over.