

Purpose

Christian funerals and memorials held at Faith Lutheran Church or officiated by the pastor of Faith Lutheran Church are to be governed by the Scriptures, our Lutheran Confessions, and the received liturgical practices of our congregation and synod. The service is a public confession of the faith concerning death, burial, resurrection, and the life to come. It is the public proclamation of the gracious work of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, applied to this specific situation. And it is a gathering around the Lord's Word so that those who mourn may do so in the hope and promise of Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:13). While divergent practices exist in other Lutheran congregations, we endeavor by God's grace to hold to the best and most faithful of our church.

Pastor and Congregation

The involvement of a Christian pastor is to proclaim the comfort and peace of the death and resurrection of Jesus but also to testify to the faith of the deceased in the same. For this reason, we believe that Christian pastors should officiate only at the funerals of professed Christians, as evidenced by their verbal confession of the faith, receiving of the Word and Sacraments and affiliation with the family of God.

We also believe that the pastor of Faith Lutheran Church 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, the pastor of Faith Lutheran Church will be bearing a proper and positive witness to the Gospel when he officiates at the funeral of

- Those who died as members in good standing of Faith Lutheran Church of Highland.
- Those who died as members in good standing of a sister congregation provided the request is made by the deceased's pastor and/or there are valid reasons for the deceased to have a service officiated by Faith's pastor.
- Those believing, non-members who were contemplating membership, or those to whom the pastor or congregants have personally ministered and who seem to have departed this life in the Christian faith.

Beyond these criteria, it is best to refer such funerals to a minister of the congregation or denomination to which the individual belonged or to a non-denominational minister suggested by the funeral home.

Members of Faith Lutheran Church who request that their pastor officiate at the funeral of their non-believing friend or relative place the pastor and elders in a very difficult position. A pastor does not merely hire himself out to officiate a funeral. He has been called to keep watch over the souls entrusted to his care and having to give an account (Hebrews 13:17). Where faith in Jesus is not professed, where sin is unrepentant, and when the public use of the means of grace have been denied, there is no comfort that can be offered as to the eternal outcome of the deceased (John 14:6). God alone will judge according to what he has revealed in scriptures. To try and say otherwise invites false assumptions among the hearers and is not a faithful application of Law and Gospel.

Whether or not the policy of the Faith Lutheran Church permits the pastor to conduct a funeral in a given situation, the congregation and the pastor must realize that the bereaved, whether members or non-members, are in great need of personal and loving ministry. The congregation will be bold to minister to all who come for help with admonition and comfort of God's Word.

If you are planning a funeral for a living family member or a friend,
share your faith in Jesus with him and bring him to the Divine Service and/or
Bible Study or catechism class if possible.

It is never too late to bring the Word of Jesus to them.

Other Clergy

Clergy from other congregations not in altar and pulpit fellowship with the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod will not be permitted to participate in worship services at Faith Lutheran Church.

Normally the called pastor of Faith Lutheran Church will officiate at all funerals of Faith. Other clergymen of congregations in fellowship with the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod may be permitted to assist in the service if there is compelling reason for doing so. The pastor of Faith Lutheran Church would be responsible for extending such an invitation.

Worship

The service is first and foremost a liturgical service of worship centered on Christ. Even if just a private service with the pastor and family, a Christian's funeral or memorial is a public act of the church and is subject to the public ministry of God's Word and our Lutheran Confessions. As part of the public ministry, the congregation has the responsibility to see that the service is conducted to the praise and worthiness of the Lord. The order of service will typically include hymns and songs of praise and faith, scripture lessons from the Old and New Testaments, a message centering on Christ crucified for the forgiveness of sins in the life of the deceased and of the eternal hope of resurrection for all who believe, prayers of intercession and thanksgiving and a benediction.

Other elements such as remarks from family and friends, or "eulogies," are generally not permitted in connection with the worship service as it is important that what happens in and around the service not detract from the Gospel. If desired, please consider incorporating these elements during the visitation or reception.

The officiating pastor will make the final determination on the elements of worship.

Music

Faith's organist is the primary musician for all services in the church. If you wish to have another musician play for the service, it may only be with the advice and consent of the pastor and organist of Faith Lutheran Church.

All songs used in the service should be Christ-centered and focus on our salvation in Christ, His grace, the resurrection, and the consolation of the Gospel. As such, secular songs will not be permitted. The pastor and organist are available to provide guidelines for choosing appropriate music and songs.

Bulletin

Service bulletins can be provided by the church, if desired. Bulletins will contain an outline of the service, participants, reception and committal announcements as applicable, memorial information, and an obituary of the deceased. **There is no fee for this option.**

Memorial Gifts

Memorial gifts may be made to Faith Lutheran Church or designated to another charity. Gifts pertaining to specific use within the congregation should be approved in advance so as to support the ongoing mission, practices and doctrines of the church.

Flowers and decoration

Around the altar we ask that decorations be kept to a minimum. This is usually limited to two vases of cut flowers on the provided stand. Family photos and memorabilia may be displayed in the fellowship hall and narthex.

Luncheon/Reception

When a funeral or memorial service occurs at Faith, a luncheon of sandwiches and sides can be provided following the service for family, friends, and guests. The pastor of Faith Lutheran Church will provide contact with the Bereavement Committee to make appropriate arrangements.

In some circumstances, a luncheon *may* be provided when the service occurs without the direct involvement of Faith Lutheran Church or her pastor. (E.g. offsite service for a non-member who is a member's spouse, parent, or child.) **This is at the sole discretion of the Bereavement Committee.**

Because most of the meal will be provided by members of the congregation, a minimum notice of 4 days must be given. The bereaved will be asked to pay for the main dish, an amount usually between \$50-150 depending on the number of anticipated guests.

No alcoholic beverages will be permitted.

If desired, a meal can be provided at home for the family in lieu of a public reception.

Committal

The pastor is available to lead a brief committal service at the site (within reasonable distance) where the remains are to be interred. This service typically includes scripture, prayers, words of committal, and a benediction.

Military Honors

Military honors are certainly appropriate for the Christian deceased so long as such civil ceremonies are kept distinct from the Christian liturgical rites and not interspersed. It is customary that such ceremonies occur at the place of committal after the pastor has concluded the committal rites.

Social and Fraternal Societies

We firmly hold to the confession that apart from Jesus "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven...by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12 *ESV*) The worship service is intended to give glory to God alone, and comfort to the bereaved by making this confession clear. The service is not an opportunity to augment or support the rituals of societies and lodges, especially if such organizations require oath-bound insistence that man is saved through morality and conduct of life. No social or fraternal society rituals or rites will be included in the service or at the graveside committal.

Fees - see also Luncheon/Reception above.

There is no fee for the use of Faith facilities for a funeral service.

There are no fees for the services of the **called pastoral/church** staff in connection with a funeral.

Honoraria may be made to the pastor and/or organist at your sole discretion. **It is not required, nor is it expected to do so.**
