

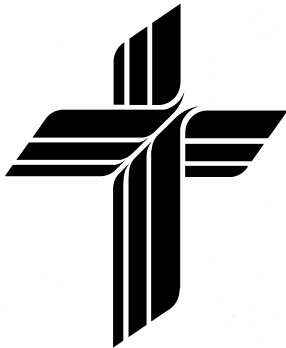
To God Alone 'Be' The Glory

These Funeral guidelines are offered to the congregations of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod in the Minnesota North District.

They have been prepared by the Worship and Music Task Force of the Minnesota North District.

May God richly bless your work for the Lord and may these words bring aid and counsel to you in your life and through your struggles with death.

Funeral Guidelines





Funeral Guidelines

When Jesus arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Martha went out to meet Jesus and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask " The comforting words which Christ said to Martha were, "Your brother will rise again. . . for I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:21-25 NIV). So, too, will all rise who, by the grace of God, believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

In the spirit of this promise of our Lord these guidelines have been prepared for: the bereaved family, who may have questions with the preparations for a Christian funeral and other related subjects; the Christian community as they serve the bereaved and assist them in their grief; and for the pastor who heralds the message of the resurrection to the people of God.

These guidelines then are prepared with this fivefold purpose:

- 1) To benefit the bereaved by giving them the assurance of the promise of eternal life in Jesus;*
- 2) To clearly define that a funeral is a service of worship, and explain those elements that are significant in this worship;*

Spouse (with maiden name if applicable) _____

History of residence _____

History of employment _____

Date of death _____ *Place of death* _____

General cause of death _____

Survivors:

Father _____ *Mother* _____ *Spouse* _____
(please list the following and note spouse where appropriate)

Sons _____

Daughter _____

Brothers _____

Sisters _____

Grandchildren _____

Others _____

Those who preceded the person in death

Father _____ *Mother* _____ *Spouse* _____
(please list the following)

Sons _____

Daughters _____

Brothers _____

Sisters _____

Others _____

Other information _____

Appendix D

General Information Sheet

The Funeral Service

Date_____Time_____Place_____

Scripture Texts_____Sermon Theme & Text_____

Hymn(s)_____

Special Music_____

Organist_____Other Musicians_____

General

Place and Site of Burial_____

Funeral Home_____

Pall Bearers_____

Honorary Pall Bearers_____

Concerning The Child of God

Full Name_____Date of Birth_____

Place of Birth_____

Father_____Mother(with maiden name)_____

Baptism date_____Baptism place_____

Confirmation date_____Confirmation place_____

Confirmation verse_____

Marriage date_____Marriage place_____

- 3) To help those who have experienced the death of a loved one understand the necessary preparations for a funeral and to explain what will take place during the time that leads up to the funeral worship;
- 4) To provide some information on caring for the bereaved;
- 5) To provide liturgical guidelines, orders of worship, and appropriate music for funerals.

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What Is A Christian Funeral Service?

The six topics that follow in this document will help us come to a clearer understanding of the Worship that takes place at a Christian funeral.

A Christian Funeral Is

A Service Of Worship

The word 'worship' means 'worthy.' God the Heavenly Father is worthy of our praise at death because He created the person who died. God the Son is worthy for He has redeemed this person. God the Holy Spirit is worthy since by Holy Baptism He has sanctified this created, redeemed person. The Triune God gave physical life to this person and gives eternal life even now (John 11:25 NV). So God is to be the center of our worship at this service, as at any worship service, for He is worthy of it.

Because this service is clearly Worship of God, we must be careful not to overemphasize the life of the Christian with special eulogies, floral arrangements, memorial gifts, or musical renditions, especially if we do so at the expense of God's Word and the prayers we offer Him. Several sections of Scripture concerning death and God's worthiness are Matthew 22:29-32, Luke 9:59-62, and Acts 10:39-43.

As the casket passes, the honorary pallbearers follow it in columns of twos and then occupy the pews to the left front of the chapel. When pallbearers are friends selected by the family, they occupy the pews to the left front of the chapel. Otherwise, the pallbearers remain in the rear of the chapel.

Exiting The Chapel

After the service, the funeral director or ushers come forward and signal the pallbearers to take their positions outside the chapel. The honorary pallbearers again take their positions outside the chapel. The honorary pallbearers again form an aisle from the entrance of the chapel to the caisson/hearse and uncover or salute. The chaplain moves to the end of the casket near the door and faces the casket. The ushers/pallbearers turn the casket. The chaplain turns and leads the procession from the chapel. When a church truck is used, the chaplain stops in the vestibule/narthex, turns and faces the casket. This allows the pallbearers to get into position and the ushers to remove the church truck and replace the flag (if a funeral pall has been used prior to bearing the casket to the front of the chapel). The family follows the casket.

The chaplain turns and leads the procession out of the chapel. Outside the chapel, the chaplain resumes his original position at the chapel door or curb until the casket has been placed into the caisson/hearse. If the chaplain wants to change out of vestments, the change may be made after the casket is taken out of the chapel and placed in the caisson/hearse. Thereafter, the chaplain joins the procession.

The Procession To The Cemetery

In the event of a vehicle procession, local custom and military ceremonial policy will dictate the order of procession. The family and friends follow the official party, allowing the official party time to assume their positions for the grave side service. In most cases an advanced party will proceed to the grave side. In all cases, the military participants, to include firing party and bugler, are prepositioned at the grave side, awaiting the arrival of the caisson/hearse and the family.

All deceased soldiers(E-1 to E-8) at a minimum, are entitled to military pallbearers, firing party, bugler, and military chaplain.

.Arrival of The Casket

The caisson/hearse arrives at the chapel/church a few moments before the service starts. During this time the Officer in Charge/Non Commissioned Officer in Charge checks the casket to ensure that the flag has been properly placed with the blue field covering the left shoulder of the deceased. At no time will flowers be placed on the casket while it is flag draped.

Upon arrival of the casket the chaplain will be in position at the curb or chapel door. The casket is normally covered by the flag. When the casket is ready to be moved into the chapel, the procession moves with military band playing, or without a band without music or with the chapel organ playing.

Entrance Into The Chapel

The active pallbearers handle the casket in a dignified, reverent, and military manner, ensuring that the movement of the casket is feet first at all times. When the casket reaches the curb or chapel door, the chaplain leads the procession into the chapel.

When honorary pallbearers are present, they form two ranks, each facing the other, creating an aisle from the caisson/hearse to the entrance the chapel.

Positions Inside The Chapel

After the casket has been placed on the church truck, the casket will be prepared for movement into the chancel. The flag will be checked for proper placement and alignment. If a funeral pall will be used, the flag will be removed, folded and placed on a shelf or table. The pall will then be placed on the casket. Once this is accomplished, two of the pallbearers push the truck to the front of the chapel while the others move to the vestibule. The chaplain precedes the casket and stands in front of the altar.

The pallbearers position the casket according to the chaplain's instruction. Some traditions desire the casket to remain in the aisle directly in front of the chancel area.

A Christian Funeral Is

A Service Of Clear Proclamation

A Christian Funeral Service centered around God's Word states very significant aspects about the Christian life. We are to announce with clarity God's wrath and judgment upon sin and the love, peace, and forgiveness we receive on account of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. We are to announce our hope for eternal life and the resurrection of the dead. We want to say this Gospel message clearly - Jesus saves. Let everyone know it.

A Christian Funeral Is

A Public Worship Service

The Christian Funeral Service is a public act of the church. Even if the service is "private" with only the pastor and a few family members, it is still subject to the public ministry of God's Word.

As part of the public ministry, the church has the responsibility to see that the service is carried out for the praise and worthiness of the Lord. Appropriate hymns, Scripture lessons, and prayers, are to be used in consultation with the pastor.

A Christian Funeral Is

A Corporate Service

The Christian Funeral Service is not for the deceased but in praise to God. With "angels and archangels and all the company of heaven", jointly we are united in worshiping God. The service is corporate. "Corporate" means united in the Body of Christ. ALL in attendance are present to worship the Lord for saving this soul. ALL are to pray, praise, and give thanks. ALL are to bear witness of our hope for eternal life and the resurrection at the end of time. For these reasons, no member of the spiritual family, the Christian congregation, should be excluded. Together fellow Christians want to honor God for His grace, bear witness of His glory, and pray for the bereaved.

The Christian Funeral Is

A Time To Mourn

A Christian Funeral Service is a time to mourn. We cannot hide the fact that in death there is a separation; there is a need to say a final farewell. But we do not mourn as those who have no hope as the Apostle Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4: 13. We have hope that a Christian's soul is now in the realms of heaven. Though a body rests in the earth, a believer's spirit is with the angels, archangels, and all the saints in heaven, praising God. So although we experience grief we have the assurance of the forgiveness and salvation of Jesus Christ.

A Christian Funeral Is

A Time of Celebration

A Christian Funeral Service is a time to celebrate God's faithfulness to His people. It is a time to lift up the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the victory He has won for us over sin and death. The Apostle Paul writes, "When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:54-57) So with all of God's Children, we confess and celebrate the forgiveness of sin, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

Organ Music Collections

Music for Funeral & Memorial Services Parish Organist - Part 10

Thomas Gieschen, Concordia Publishing House

Organ Music for Funerals & Memorial Services

Wilbur Held, Augsburg Publishing House

Appendix C ***Military Funerals***

(Taken from the RELIGIOUS SUPPORT TO CASUALTIES, MEMORIAL AND FUNERAL SERVICES,
TRAINING CIRCULAR, December 1991, Headquarters, Department of the Army)

The Order Of Service

The Funeral Service in a Lutheran Church is a Lutheran Service, and the order of the service used in the congregation for the burial of the Dead is ordinarily used for the funeral service of a service member.

Uniforms And Vestments

Weapons are not worn or carried in the sanctuary. Soldiers may wear empty pistol belts and doing so fulfills the requirements of being under fire arms while simultaneously showing respect for the sanctuary. All military personnel except active pallbearers (those actually carrying the casket) uncover (remove their hats) inside the chapel and cover outside the chapel.

Seating Family Members

Before the casket is taken into the chapel, the family, relatives, and friends are asked to enter the chapel. The family is seated in the right front pews.

Hymns For Funerals Continued

<u>Hymns</u>	<u>The Lutheran Hymnal</u>	<u>Lutheran</u>
<u>Worship</u>		
<i>The Strife is O'er The Battle</i>	210	143
<i>The Willof God is Always</i>	517	425
<i>This Joyful Eastertide</i>	-	140
<i>What A Friend We Have</i>	457	516
<i>What God Ordains is Always</i>	521	422
<i>When I Suffer Pain</i>	-	423
<i>When in the Hour of Deepest</i>	522	428
<i>When My Last Hour is Close</i>	594	-
<i>Who Knows When Death May</i>	598	-
<i>Why Do We Mourn Departing</i>	593	-
<i>With High Delight</i>	-	134

Additional Hymns For Funerals

<i>Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine</i>	Crosby & Knapp
<i>Children of the Heavenly Father</i>	Lina Sandall Berg
<i>Have Thine Own Way, Lord</i>	Pollard & Stebbins
<i>In the Garden</i>	C. Austin Miles
<i>I Was There To Hear Your Borning Cry</i>	John Ylvisaker
<i>Softly and Tenderly Jesus is Calling</i>	Will L. Thompson
<i>The Old Rugged Cross</i>	George Bennard

Other Vocal Music

<i>Go Now In Peace</i>	Don Besig & Nancy Price
<i>On Eagle's Wings</i>	Michael Joncas
<i>The Lord Bless You and Keep You</i>	Peter C. Lutkin
<i>Vocal Solos or Funerals & Memorial Services</i>	
	Wilbur Held, published by Augsburg

Organ Music

<i>Air on a G String</i>	Johann Sebastian Bach
<i>Jesus Lead Thou On</i>	Johann Sebastian Bach
<i>Jesu, Joy Of Man 's Desiring</i>	Johann Sebastian Bach
<i>Largo</i>	G. F. Handel
<i>O World, I Now Must Leave Thee</i>	Johannes Brahms



Issues Concerning The Christian Funeral

Pastoral Care of the Dying

Whenever a serious illness occurs, specifically when the illness is life threatening, the pastor should be notified immediately. The pastor will offer the comfort and aid the Lord provides us in His Word and Sacrament. The family members, out of consideration for their loved one, will give the pastor opportunity for personal and private counseling. A very useful meditational tool the pastor may use at this time is called "The Commendation of the Dying"¹. This brief devotional can be found in the Lutheran Agenda.

Arranging The Funeral

Following the death of one of God's loved children, we might ask,

"What should be done?" or, "What is appropriate?" These are not empty questions. Everyone who experiences the death of someone they love considers them. To help us in this endeavor, we must remember a few important things.

First, we remember that the love of God in Jesus Christ guides and directs our words and actions. This is significant to remember as we make the arrangements for the funeral and plan those things that surround this service of worship and praise to our risen Lord

1. Lutheran Worship Agenda. Concordia Publishing House, (c) 1984 pp. 162-168.

Secondly, it is not always appropriate to spend vast sums of money on the funeral of one whom we love. It is easy to be moved by feelings of love or guilt and overcompensate after death. As in many things in the life of God's child, our feelings of loss can be laid at the foot of the cross of Jesus whose forgiveness and love frees us.

Finally, there are many who can and will help you in those things that are necessary as well as appropriate.

Specifically, the family should notify the pastor and the funeral director as soon as possible. The pastor will meet with the family and comfort members. They will select the time and place of the Christian Funeral Service together with the funeral director.

The family and the funeral director will decide on specific hours when friends may come for visitation.

Public Visitation

When a body of a child of God is presented for public visitation, there are many ways that we can celebrate his/her faith in Christ. It is of no little significance to acknowledge before the world, the Christ who loves His child. A cross or crucifix attached to the casket lid, a Bible, appropriate music, a lighted candle, meditational aids, will highlight the God who has brought life and immortality to light for all people, and especially for the loved one whose body lies before us.

A Service Of Prayer And The Word

It is possible to hold a brief devotional service to close the time of Public visitation. This service serves the purpose of bringing the comfort of God's Word, and the encouragement of prayer, to those who are grieving. It is an appropriate way to close this day of mourning. A possible resource that the pastor may use for such a service could be the service for the Burial of the Dead at the Home or Mortuary in the Lutheran Agenda.²

2. Lutheran Worship Agenda, Concordia Publishing House, (c) 1984 pp. 169 - 173.

Hymns For Funerals Continued

<u>Hymn</u>	<u>The Lutheran Hymnal</u>	<u>Lutheran Worship</u>
<i>I Leave All Things To God's</i>	529	429
<i>I Would Not Live Alway</i>	588	-
<i>Thou But Suffer God To Guide</i>	518	-
<i>If You But Trust In God To Guide</i>	-	420
<i>I'm But A Stranger Here</i>	660	515
<i>In the Midst of Earthly Life</i>	590	-
<i>In the Very Midst of Life</i>	-	265
<i>It is not Death to Die</i>	602	-
<i>Jerusalem My Happy Home</i>	618	307
<i>Jesus Christ Is Risen Today</i>	199	127
<i>Jesus Christ My Sure Defense</i>	206	266
<i>Jesus I Live To Thee</i>	591	-
<i>Jesus Lead Thou On</i>	410	386
<i>Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won</i>	201	139
<i>Jesus Savior, Pilot Me</i>	649	513
<i>Just As I Am</i>	388	359
<i>Lord Take My Hand And Lead</i>	-	512
<i>Lord Thee I Love With All My</i>	429	413
<i>My Course Is Run</i>	599	-
<i>My Faith Looks Up To Thee</i>	394	-
<i>My Faith Looks Trustingly</i>	-	378
<i>Nearer, My God, To Thee</i>	533	514
<i>Now All The Vault Of Heaven</i>	-	131
<i>O Lord, My God I Cry To Thee</i>	600	-
<i>O Son's and Daughters</i>	208	130
<i>Oh How Blest Are Ye (You)</i>	589	268
<i>Rejoice My Heart, Be Glad</i>	535	424
<i>Salvation Unto Us Has Come</i>	377	355
<i>Sent Forth By God's Blessing</i>	-	247
<i>Tender Shepherd, Thou Hast</i>	595	269
<i>This Body in the Grave We Lay</i>	596	-
<i>The Day of Resurrection</i>	205	133
<i>The God of Abraham Praise</i>	40	450
<i>The King of Love, My Shepherd</i>	431	412
<i>The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll</i>	436	416
<i>The Lord's My Shepherd, Leading</i>	-	417

Appendix B

Hymns & Other Music

Hymns For Funerals

<u>Hymns</u>	<u>The Lutheran Hymnal</u>	<u>Lutheran Worship</u>
<i>A Pilgrim and A Stranger</i>	586	-
<i>Abide With Me</i>	552	490
<i>All Men Living Are But Mortal</i>	601	-
<i>All Praise To God Who Reigns</i>	19	-
<i>Amazing Grace</i>	-	509
<i>Asleep In Jesus! Blessed Sleep</i>	587	-
<i>At The Lamb's High Feast</i>	-	126
<i>Awake My Heart With Gladness</i>	192	128
<i>Be Still My Soul</i>	651	510
<i>Beautiful Savior</i>	657	507
<i>Behold A Host, Arrayed In White</i>	656	192
<i>By All Your Saints in Warfare</i>	-	193
<i>By All Your Saints in Warfare</i>	-	194
<i>Christ Is Arisen</i>	187	124
<i>Christ Jesus Lay In Deaths</i>	195	1230
<i>Christ The Lord Is Risen Today</i>	193	142
<i>Christ The Lord Is Risen Today</i>	191	137
<i>Dear Christians, One and All</i>	387	353
<i>Entrust Your Days And Burdens</i>	-	427
<i>For All The Saints</i>	463	191
<i>For All the (Your) Saints, O Lord</i>	468	195
<i>For Me to Live is Jesus</i>	597	267
<i>God Moves In A Mysterious Way</i>	514	426
<i>Good Christian Friends, Rejoice</i>	-	129
<i>Hail Thee, Festival Day</i>	-	125
<i>He's Risen, He's Risen, Christ</i>	198	138
<i>How Great Thou Art</i>	-	519
<i>I Am Content! My Jesus</i>	196	145
<i>I Fall Asleep In Jesus' Wounds</i>	585	-
<i>I Know of a Sleep In Jesus' Name</i>	592	-
<i>I Know That My Redeemer Lives</i>	200	264

Memorial Gifts

Today many families are designating worthy agencies to receive memorial gifts instead of flowers. This practice may be encouraged by the pastor and congregation. Many worthy organizations can be suggested by the pastor. Also an approved list of items for memorial monies on behalf of the church, may be attained from him. Memorials should meet the needs of the living and avoid glorifying the dead.

Flowers

Flowers are symbolic of the resurrection since they come from a seed or bulb and sprout up from the ground. Their presence at a Funeral Service gives witness to the hope we have in ruling with our Risen Lord Jesus Christ. However, extravagant floral arrangements distract from the service and should be avoided. Also a small amount of flowers at the service should in no way imply a weak faith upon the bereaved. (Perhaps a memorial gift was given instead.) Flowers used in moderation is a good rule to follow.

Concerning The Care Of The Body Of God's Child

Throughout the life of the Christian Church great consideration and thoughtfulness has been given to the care of the bodies of those whose souls now rest in God's keeping. Excessive displays of grief or lavish funeral displays are not an outgrowth of our understanding of the Christian's final service. Likewise, we do not encourage the other extreme of using the least bothersome way of disposing of the dead.

We will not rise as Jesus our Lord, within three days. Yet, encouraged by the scriptures, we do confess our belief in the 'resurrection of the body.'

Because of our faith and confession, we will naturally give careful consideration to the care we give the bodies of our loved ones. Our faith also realizes that we will have a restored body at the Last Day, a glorified, holy body, made pure and whole by our Lord and God.

With our understanding of this gift of God's everlasting love, we are not interested in all manner of techniques or procedures which bring about long-lasting preservation of the present body. On the other hand, since God takes such good care of the soul at death, should we not also take good care of the body, the only thing He leaves us to care for? Without excesses, but with loving care, we lay the bodies of loved ones in the earth and there they shall remain until they are given new life on the day of the resurrection of all flesh.

Concerning Autopsies

Our Christian attitude about the human body does not preclude granting permission for an autopsy, if the physician will give assurance that the body will be made available to the funeral director soon and in good condition.

Cremation

Cremation, as a form of care for the body of the dead, does not violate our principles of faith as long as the resurrection of the body is not denied by implication or intention.

Medical Research

For those who desire to give their bodies to qualified institutions for medical research or for those who desire to donate their bodily organs for transplantation, we give our commendation. Such practices do not conflict with our faith but rather are a means of sharing a gift of life and health with others. This stewardship of tissue donation can be the Christian's 'faith filled' response to help and befriend the neighbor even after death.

Appendix A

Orders Of Service

Lutheran Worship Agenda

The First Order of Service for Funerals we would suggest is found in the Lutheran Worship Agenda. The title under which it may be found is, "Burial Of The Dead, At The Church". This Service begins on page 173 and contains all of the significant elements of a Funeral as we have discussed it in this booklet. We also find in this Agenda many significant Rubrics that aid us in leading this Worship.

Lutheran Worship Agenda. The Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1984)

The Lutheran Agenda

Another excellent resource for the formal liturgy is The Lutheran Agenda. Again the title of this service is "Burial Of The Dead, At The Church". This service begins on page 80 and also has all the elements of an appropriate funeral service.

The Lutheran Agenda. Authorized by the Synods Constituting The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House)

Creative Worship

The resource called, "Creative Worship For The Lutheran Parish" also has many helpful, ready-to-edit service outlines that serve for a funeral as well. They have many suggested litanies and responsive readings that aid a congregation to participate in the service.

Creative Worship For The Lutheran Parish (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House)

A General Comment

It is also possible to use liturgies such as Matins and Vespers and adjust them to fit for a funeral service.

What Is Before Us

In short, what is before the entire church is an enduring task, a task grounded in our Lord's love, a love mediated by the eternal promises of our Lord in Word and Sacrament, promises which are received by faith, a faith assured in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Thomas Oden sums up the task well, "The fabric of effective pastoral work [and Christian care] involves the constant interweaving of the scriptural wisdom, historical awareness, constructive theological reasoning, situation discernment, and personal empathy".¹⁰ May God grant us His grace in Christ, our Lord, to confront by faith the death of friends, family members and our own.

Children Attending a Funeral Service

Parents often wonder if a young child should ever participate in such a worship service. In general, this depends on the circumstances of the loved one's death, age of the child, and the child's attitude. Parents know their own children better than anyone else and they must prayerfully decide what to do. Perhaps, the Funeral Service may be the best time for parents to express their faith in Jesus to their children, explain how we'll see "Grandma or Grandpa" again, and illuminate the fear of death. Remember "death has been swallowed up in victory" (I Corinthians 15:54 NIV). Share the victory we have in Jesus Christ with your children.

Expressing Christ's Compassion

Christians will want to make use of the time surrounding a funeral to give spiritual comfort and strength to the bereaved with a brief call. We as believers come with love and empathy to encourage the bereaved with the comfort of Christ's love and the promise of eternal life. We, through our words and actions, can reflect God's love and compassion to those who mourn. Some Scripture passages for us to consider at this time are: Psalm 46:1, 55:22, 116:15; Isaiah 41:10; Romans 5: 1-11, 8:28; John 5:24, 6:40, 10:27-28, 14:1-6.

To Officiate Or Not to Officiate

The relationship of a person to the Lord Jesus Christ determines, as far as humans can know, whether a pastor may or may not officiate. A pastor will officiate at the Funeral Service for faithful members of the congregation. The Funeral Service is the privilege of the elect who have crossed over into heaven. A pastor does not officiate merely to please the bereaved but to minister to the living.

However, he may officiate for non-members of the congregation who called him during their illness, confessed their sins and their faith in Christ, and gave reason to assume they were Christian. The pastor may also

10. Thomas C. Oden, *Care of Souls in the Classic Tradition* (Fortress Press: Philadelphia, 1984) p. 12

officiate at a suicide or an inactive member's service depending on the circumstances. Such situations will require a full inquiry by the pastor and demand putting "the best construction on everything." Nevertheless, he should politely decline services which:

- 1) involve clergy from other denominations, [see Synod's Constitution Article VI 2b.]*
- 2) involve lodges or secret societies,*
- 3) glorify people rather than God, and*
- 4) when after careful consideration it becomes evident that a service would sanction the life of unbelief of the person who has died to the detriment of the church and its confession of Christ.*

Concerning Lodge Ceremonies

Lodge ceremonies or other practices of secret societies, have no place in a Christian Funeral Service. They do not have a clear proclamation of the Triune God in whom we believe. Such organizations do not center on Jesus Christ as "the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6 NIV). In reality, they deny the Christian religion by promoting a "generic" god verses our risen Lord. The Christian Church has the responsibility of publicly proclaiming the one true God over such false teachings. The Holy Scriptures are not to be distorted by any means lest our proclamation of the Gospel becomes lost.

Anger And Blame Are A Set Up For Separation

People in grief may fasten blame on others in the family. Blaming behaviors detour the grieving process from reorientation. What is more helpful is to trust God and 'let go' of the need to strike back and to lay blame. In trusting God we use tragic situations to make us better, not bitter.

Some Practical Advice

As difficult as bereavement is, for both those who experience it and those who witness it, as Christian people, we are called upon to act compassionately toward the bereaved. It is not a common or shared pain that binds us together with the bereaved but rather our common baptism in Christ our Lord. St. Paul admonishes the baptized to, "rejoice with those who rejoice and to mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:15). In light of such advice, the following are some helpful suggestions any member of the church can do for the bereaved.

- * Invite the bereaved out for dinner or to some event. There is always that tendency to become a recluse especially of a surviving spouse. Couples do things together as couples. When one in a marriage has died, there is less chance of going out with old friends and enjoying those kinds of activities as once before.*
- * Send a card letting the bereaved know you are thinking of him or her.*
- * Stop at the house for a visit.*
- * Establish a widows or widowers care program with the widows or widowers of the congregation as the basis of the group. Support and encouragement is their task.*
- * Pray for the bereaved and their family.*
- * Make a phone call to the bereaved.*
- * Always be ready to listen*

Dealing With Grief

Linda Shepherd has written all the subject of how Christian people can help and assist others who are grieving. She writes of five major hindrances that keep Christians from reaching out to the bereaved. They are:⁹

Their Grief Makes Us Feel Vulnerable.

"Some Christians are under the mistaken assumption that bad things don't happen to good people. When calamity struck my family, these people suddenly faced their own vulnerability. "

Their Tragedy Revives Our Unresolved Pain.

"Some family friends avoided our trauma because of unresolved pain in their own lives - grief over a still-born or the death of a parent. Barely coping themselves, exposure to our tragedy dragged them back into unbearable feelings of despair. "

Their Profound Struggles Shake Our Faith.

"When some of our friends did face our tragedy, they asked, 'How can a loving God do this?' Others coped with this unanswered question by avoiding us and anyone who reminded them of what they saw as God's failure." God does not call Christians to explain away tragedy. In fact He may call us to struggle through tragedy. The struggle calms when we learn to relax and trust our Heavenly Father. (Romans 8:28,31-32)

Their Pain Tries Our Patience.

"Some people lose patience with a friend caught in the grief process. Tired of seeing their friend hurting, they just want to push past the pain." Instant recovery and lessening of that pain is what many seek because the pain of the grief process unsettles them.



The Service of Worship & Praise At The Church

1. It is appropriate for the family to encourage others to consider giving memorial gifts, designated for religious and charitable endeavors, rather than flowers. Following the worship service the family may request that the flowers used during the service be given to the church, a nursing home, or the local hospital in honor of the resurrection of Jesus that those flowers symbolize.
2. A funeral pall may cover the casket while it is in the church. It may be provided by the local congregation or the area funeral home.
A funeral pall is used to recall Holy Baptism. It is a brocade or damask cloth, churchly in pattern, with a Christian symbol of the resurrection or eternal life on it. Generally, it is six by nine feet and white in color (though other colors following the church year may also be appropriate). The pall is placed over the casket (in the place of flowers) before the Funeral Service.³
Other paraments (e.g. the altar cloth) should not be altered for the funeral of any congregational member. The color of the church season takes precedence over any other color use. The Christian's life, even in death, circles around the seasons of the church.
3. The pastor should have a short service or prayer for the immediate family before the service.

3. The pall should be available where the coffin enters the church, usually the narthex or near the last pew. It is placed over the coffin as the procession forms and removed as the procession leaves the nave on the way to the grave site. The text of Romans 6:3-5 may be read as the pall is placed over the coffin.

9. Linda Shepherd, "Helping Friends through Deep Water of Grief." *Virtue*, September/October (1994). pp 37-39

4. *Communication between the Pastor and the musicians (organists, soloists, choir, etc.) is necessary so that all might be done in good order during the worship service. Financial remuneration for musicians is appropriate.*
5. *The funeral director will notify the pastor, or church office, as to when they will arrive at the church for the worship service.*
6. *The casket may be placed open in an appropriate location in the church for a time of viewing. Before the service begins the casket shall be closed and placed in the front of the church. ⁴ This is done so that during worship all glory can be given to God. This practice is appropriate in services that take place in the funeral home as well.*
7. *The Pallbearers (or casket bearers) and the family shall enter the church for worship immediately behind the casket.*
8. *The Order of Service calls for active participation of the congregation and the family for all worshipers need to offer their thanks and praise to our Savior and Lord. There are several options of services that can be found in Appendix A at the end of this booklet.*
9. *The final service for a child of God is a service of thanksgiving and praise. Hymns and songs expressing the joyful confidence of salvation and the hope of everlasting life should be chosen. A list of these hymns and songs can be found in Appendix B at the end of this booklet.*

4. The casket may be placed in the front of the church in either of two ways. It may be placed parallel with the Altar in which case it is appropriate for the head of the casket to be on the right of the pastor as he faces the congregation. The casket may also be placed parallel with the Aisle. The foot of the casket would be placed toward the Altar unless the casket holds a pastor. With a pastor, the head of the casket would be placed toward the Altar.

Support & Encouragement

Listening & Vocation

While the pastor's ministry of Word and sacrament continues, close family and friends of the bereaved are well suited for the on-going and necessary daily, weekly, and monthly support and encouragement to those experiencing loss. For the care giver this means, at its most basic level, that two very significant and important acts of care are to take place:

- 1) *active listening to the story of the bereaved, and*
- 2) *encouraging the bereaved to a full participation in the activities of life.*

First, the care giver must actively listen to the story of the mourner. In other words, let the bereaved talk about his/her loss. The bereaved may speak of the deceased in very personal terms and how the events of the day may have triggered particular memories. The bereaved may share intimate feelings about the deceased and/or the difficulties and challenges each day brings with it. Thus the care giver ought to listen to the story, and encourage the bereaved to express his/her thoughts and emotions in an honest and God-pleasing manner.

Secondly, at the appropriate time, the care giver is to encourage the bereaved to carry on his/her daily tasks of life. God has still called the bereaved to a number of activities and vocations. The death of a spouse, parent, or child may alter one's station in life, (i.e. when a spouse dies, the bereaved is no longer married) but death has not terminated the remainder of the other callings. A Christian's basic calling is still to serve God and his fellow man. The bereaved may be tempted to wallow in self-pity or self righteousness but it must remain just that - a temptation. As difficult as it may sound, life goes on. This is not a statement of disrespect for the deceased but rather an affirmation of Christian life - a life lived under the grace of God which seeks to serve Him in the midst of great distress. In short, as Norman Hutton writes, "a sorrowful soul is therefore helped. . . by being strengthened to bear what he has to bear, and to face life again with fresh courage and renewed hope."⁸

8. Norman Hutton. *The Pastor Care of the Bereaved* (London: SPCK, 1967). p. 56

Motivation

All care toward the bereaved flows from God's love and care toward us. We imitate what He has done for our benefit. Love becomes the motivation for all action among the bereaved. Thus "love your neighbor as yourself" is more than a prescription to us (law); it is a description of what God is doing through us (gospel). God has entered into our world in the person of Jesus Christ to manifest to us His love toward us. Likewise, as imitators of Christ, we enter the lives of the bereaved to show them our Lord's love through ours.

Word and Sacrament

Pastoral care is chiefly seen in offering the mourner "the peace of God which passes all understanding". The Holy Scriptures, God's promises to His people in Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and prayer serve as priorities in the kind of care the pastor will give. The forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus, the resurrection of the dead without a trace of sin or death, life eternal with our risen Lord, and the unending reunion with all the saints in heaven, is the message that alone can give consolation and hope to the bereaved. Only this can be the answer to the questions of, "Where is God?", "Does He care?" and "What about His judgments?".

Discernment

This is not to suggest that the needs of the bereaved are only spiritual or that the church should only and exclusively offer aid to the same. The needs of the bereaved vary in degree and kind. Some may need financial help, emotional support or basic encouragement. It requires of the care giver to discern what the need is and whether the bereaved actually seeks or wants help. Sometimes the bereaved simply wishes to work on his/her grief in a much more private fashion. A desire for privacy is not necessarily unhealthy. The care giver must be reminded that care ceases to be just that when one's concern is no longer with the mourner but rather the-doing-of-something simply to show concern. Discernment as to when, how, or not to act, is of great importance.

- 10. The sermons and meditations that are done at the final service are proclamations of what God in His love for us has done for His children. As the message is centered in Christ, you will not hear a eulogy on the person who has died. There are many passages from the Scriptures that can be used at this time. You may find that the confirmation verse of the deceased makes an excellent passage.*
- 11. Following the worship service, the casket will be taken out of the church to the funeral car. Pallbearers and family will follow the casket.*
- 12. The funeral service and the committal service is complete in itself. It is desirable that God's benediction would conclude the rites. The Committal Service may follow the Funeral Service in the Church as extreme climactic or extenuating circumstances dictate.*
- 13. If the child of God who has been called to glory has been a member of the armed services of the United States, it would be appropriate to have the pastor confer with the military commander or chaplain prior to the committal service. More information concerning military funerals is contained in Appendix C at the end of this booklet.*
- 14. To assist those involved in the preparations surrounding a funeral, it is helpful to have an idea of what might be helpful to the Pastor and funeral director. The form in Appendix D gives you a general overview of those things which would be appropriate.*

As each congregation has special concerns or considerations it is good to contact the pastor for these special instances or guidelines.

The Care of the Bereaved by the Christian Congregation

Defining Time and Scope

Dr. Glen Davidson describes mourning as a complex set of emotions by which we adapt to the disorientation of major change in our lives.⁵

Death, and especially the death of a loved one, brings about this effect to its greatest degree. For the mourning family member, this means that significant emotional, physical, and spiritual adjustments and adaptations are required, and that the application of these adjustments and adaptations into new habits of life will require time. The generally suggested time frame for the formation and implementation of these new habits:

Is eighteen to twenty-four months.

This is usually true. Some of the exceptions are the following:

If death results from an accident, then on average three years;

If a suicide in the family occurs, then four years;

A homicide, five years;

If the loss is that of your own child it may be indefinite.⁶

It is in these time frames that pastoral and Christian (laity) care are needed so as to help and assist the bereaved toward re-orientation.

Aftercare

Aftercare is framed specifically in the context of re-orientation rather than recovery. Recovery possesses therapeutic traits which suggests that within a specific time frame, the life of the bereaved is returned to full normalcy with full emotional acceptance of the death of the deceased. That may occur in some cases. But when the bereaved was quite close to the deceased, thoughts, feelings, and emotions experienced at specific times and events (i.e. holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, etc.) can still vary with the intensity of previous disorientation (i.e. preference for the old habits of life prior to the significant death). Thus mourning may very well continue throughout the life of the closely affected bereaved. Full recovery will occur only when sin has lost all of its power, death is swallowed up forever, and the dead are raised to life eternal. In short, what we live with now is re-orientation - a life coping with sin and death by hoping in Christ Jesus our Lord who will, one day, bring about the revelation of the sons of God and the complete restoration of creation (Romans 8: 19-21).

Mourning And Repentance

Mourning is more than simply a matter of expressing the emotions of sorrow, grief and anger, but also a recognition of our own mortality and sin. The people of God in the Old Testament knew this well. The words of the prophet Ezekiel rang out, "the person who sins shall die" (Ezekiel 8:20). These words are reminiscent of the Creator's warning to Adam and Eve regarding the forbidden fruit, "when you eat of it you will surely die" (Genesis 2:17). In response to death, the people of God in the Old Testament wept, beat their breasts, lifted up their hands, wore sackcloth, and fasted as signs of repentance.

One of the troubling aspects of a funeral which makes mourners apprehensive toward death is not simply the death of the deceased; it is the recognition that each of us too shall die. Our sin places us under the same judgment of God as that of the deceased. Understanding that we too shall stand before the Almighty Judge, our response is that of repentance - a confession of our own sinful nature and a faith that believes we are forgiven for Christ's sake. It is by no accident that one of the prayers in the Lutheran Worship Agenda to be spoken at a funeral reads, "Grant to your faithful people pardon and peace that we may be cleansed from all our sins and serve you with a quiet mind."⁷

5. Dr. Glen Davidson, *Understanding Mourning* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), p.6.

6. Linda Shepherd. "Helping Friends through Deep Water of Grief." *Virtue*, September/October (1994). pp 37-39

7. *Lutheran Worship Agenda*, The Commission on Worship of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House. 1984). p. 191.