

## **Spirit Lutheran Funeral Worship Preplanning**

The intent of this “Funeral Worship Preplanning” is to allow you to make suggestions to your family regarding the funeral service. The word “suggestions” is emphasized, because you should allow your family flexibility in the funeral arrangements they make. Further, it is recommended that you discuss funeral worship plans with family and provide them with a copy of your suggestions. A Funeral Worship Preplanning Worksheet is provided so that you can write down your preferences.

### The Funeral

The funeral or memorial service is first and foremost the worship of the Lord of Life and a celebration of the cross and empty tomb that gives believers in Christ the hope of everlasting life. While the funeral honors, remembers, and celebrates the life of the deceased, the heart of a funeral is always the gift of life that God grants. This good news meets death head-on, provides hope and comfort to all who worship, and proclaims Christ as Lord of both the living and the dead. It is the pastor’s responsibility to ensure that the proclamation of Easter life is strongly present in music, Scripture, message, prayer, and liturgy.

### Worship Considerations

In the brief time leading up to the funeral or memorial service, the pastor will visit with your family about the worship service and attending logistics. The following information will help you make suggestions to your family.

- Location of Worship Service - Although there may be unusual reasons for funerals or memorials to be held at the funeral home, you are strongly encouraged to hold worship in the sanctuary of the church. This is where the people of God regularly gather to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. Holding the service in the sanctuary helps all who attend more clearly understand that what we do at a funeral is worship.
- Tributes - Personal tributes are sometimes delivered at funerals, but are generally discouraged. Too often, those offering remembrances are ill equipped to speak in public, especially during an emotionally difficult time. The pastor will certainly make many personal references during the sermon, but it is important to remember that our worship focuses upon God’s good news of resurrection life, not upon the goodness or achievements of the deceased.
- Pall - For those funerals where a casket is present, a white cloth covering called a “pall” will be placed over the casket before it is brought into the sanctuary at the beginning of the worship. The pall symbolizes the righteousness of Christ with which we are “clothed” or “covered” through our Baptism.
- Luncheon - If your family wishes to have a meal or dessert following worship, Spirit Lutheran's Funeral Luncheon Serving Groups will serve it for a small fee. This fellowship time is very important for families and friends as they support each other and enjoy one another's company. The pastor will ask family to approximate how many people will attend the luncheon. If the funeral is scheduled mid-afternoon, your family may decide that dessert is preferable to a lunch.

If there is a graveside committal at a cemetery as part of the funeral, two options are possible. The committal can be done immediately after the funeral; then, everyone returns to the church for the luncheon. Or, the luncheon can be held immediately after worship with the committal to follow later

(this second option is often done during winter weather as a courtesy to guests or when the cemetery is of considerable distance from the church).

- Visitation - A visitation at the funeral home is frequently held the day before the funeral service. It is also common to have a one-hour visitation at the church immediately prior to the start of worship. Another option that you might consider is having the visitation at the church instead of the funeral home.
- Memorial Gifts - Many choose to designate one or more memorial recipients to which gifts are given in lieu of flowers. There are many worthwhile charities and associations, but we hope you will consider including Spirit Lutheran and/or First Lutheran Foundation as a memorial recipient(s).

#### Other Considerations

- Consult Family - It is important to reiterate that the plans you make for your funeral be done in consultation with family members. It should be your intent to provide guidance only for the decisions they will make, not create strict directives that would be difficult or uncomfortable for family to honor. Allow your family the flexibility they need to make good decisions regarding your funeral. Be in conversation with them about your preferences and the arrangements you suggest.
- Cremation - There are some who worry that cremation might not be a Christian practice. Cremation is a matter of personal preference and is completely acceptable from a Christian perspective. The people of God speak of "dust to dust" and "ashes to ashes;" it makes no difference whether we return to the dust of the ground slowly or quickly. Again, cremation should be talked about with family members if this is your preference.
- Pastoral Assistance - Spirit Lutheran's pastor will be most willing to be in conversation with you if you wish to discuss any of your funeral or memorial arrangements.

## Funeral Music

Funerals are occasions to sing the great music of the church that witness to the Lord of life. The pastor will help you determine if a song is appropriate for a funeral, but a guiding question to ask is, "Does this music give glory to God and witness to our hope in Jesus Christ?"

Congregational Hymns – Hymns that the congregation sings are strongly encouraged. Singing involves the congregation and allows everyone to give expression to the faith we hold. It is usually wise to select hymns that are both singable and more commonly known. Typically, three hymns are sufficient. Listed below are hymns that you might consider. All are from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, the worship book at Spirit Lutheran.

"Abide with Me" # 629  
"Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound" # 779  
"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" # 504  
"Beautiful Savior" # 838  
"Behold the Host Arrayed in White" # 425  
"Beneath the Cross of Jesus" # 338  
"Blessed Assurance" # 638  
"Blest Be the Tie That Binds" # 656  
"Children of the Heavenly Father" # 781  
"For All the Saints" # 422  
"For All Your Saints, O Lord" # 427  
"Great Is Thy Faithfulness" # 733  
"Guide Me Ever, Great Redeemer" # 618  
"How Firm a Foundation" # 796  
"How Great Thou Art" # 856  
"I Know That My Redeemer Lives!" # 619  
"I Love to Tell the Story" # 661  
"In the Cross of Christ I Glory" # 324  
"It Is Well with My Soul" # 785  
"Jerusalem, My Happy Home" # 628  
"Jesus Christ Is Risen Today" # 365  
"Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross" # 335  
"Jesus Loves Me!" # 595  
"Just As I Am, without One Plea" # 592  
"Lift High the Cross" # 660  
"Love Divine, All Loves Excelling" # 631  
"My Faith Looks Up to Thee" # 759  
"My God, How Wonderful Thou Art" # 863  
"My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less" # 597  
"My Life Flows on in Endless Song" # 763  
"Now All the Vault of Heaven Resounds" # 367  
"Now the Green Blade Rises" # 379  
"O Christ, Our Hope" # 604  
"O Day Full of Grace" # 627  
"O God, Our Help in Ages Past" # 632  
"Oh, Happy Day When We Shall Stand" # 441  
"O Jesus, I Have Promised" # 810

"Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me" # 623  
"Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us" # 789  
"Shall We Gather At the River" # 423  
"Soon and Very Soon" # 39  
"The King of Love My Shepherd Is" # 502  
"The Lord's My Shepherd" # 778  
"Thine Is the Glory" # 376  
"What a Friend We Have in Jesus" # 742

Other Music – Soloists or instrumentalists are frequently part of praising God at funerals or memorial services. The church usually arranges for these skilled musicians. While it is acceptable to have a friend or relative provide such music, they should have the music abilities necessary and the emotional strength to sing or play at a time when they may be grieving. Music in addition to congregational hymns is optional and family members should not feel obligated to arrange for it.

Again, only music that reflects our trust in Christ is appropriate at a funeral. One or two anthems are usually done. Below are possible anthems to assist you in communicating preferences to your family. Many congregational hymns can also be done as anthems; if a number is listed after the title, it can be found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

"Behold the Host Arrayed in White" # 425  
"Borning Cry" # 732  
"Drawn to the Light" # 593  
"Eternal Spirit of the Living Christ" # 402  
"God Be with You Till We Meet Again"  
"Give Me Jesus" # 770  
"He Leadeth Me: Oh, Blessed Thought"  
"If with All Your Hearts (Elijah)" – Mendelssohn  
"I Lift My Eyes to the Hills" – Keesecker  
"Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" – Bach  
"Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" – Bach (Instru.)  
"Just a Closer Walk with Thee" # 697  
"Lamb of God" # 336  
"Nunc Dimitis" Pg. 113  
"On Eagle's Wings" # 787  
"O Rest in the Lord (Elijah)" - Mendelssohn  
"Precious Lord, Take My Hand" # 773  
"Sheep May Safely Graze" – Bach (Instru.)  
"Shepherd Me, O God" # 780  
"Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling" # 608  
"The Old Rugged Cross"  
Thine Is the Glory" # 376  
"Thy Holy Wings" # 613  
"You Are Mine" # 581

## **Funeral Scriptures**

The worship service usually has three readings from the Bible; at least one should be a text from one of the four Gospels. A funeral is a gathering of believers who assemble to hear good news from God's Word. The pastor will want to know if you have favorite passages. To assist you, below you will find possible selections.

### Old Testament

Job 19:23-27  
Psalm 23  
Psalm 27:1, 4-9a, 13-14  
Psalm 42:1-7  
Psalm 46:1-7  
Psalm 90  
Psalm 103  
Psalm 118:5-9, 13-17, 19-20  
Psalm 121  
Psalm 130  
Psalm 139:1-12  
Psalm 142:1-6  
Psalm 143  
Psalm 146  
Ecclesiastes 3:1-12  
Isaiah 25:6-9  
Isaiah 26:1-4, 19  
Isaiah 40:1-11, 28-31  
Isaiah 41:10  
Isaiah 43:1-3a, 5-7  
Isaiah 44:6-8  
Isaiah 49:13b-16a  
Isaiah 55:1-3, 6-13  
Isaiah 61:1-3  
Isaiah 65:17-20, 23-25  
Isaiah 66:10-14  
Jeremiah 31:8-31  
Lamentations 3:22-26, 31-33  
Joel 2:12-13, 23-24, 26-29

### New Testament

Romans 5:1-11  
Romans 6:3-9  
Romans 8:26-27  
Romans 8:31-35, 37-39  
Romans 14:7-9  
1 Corinthians 15:12-26  
1 Corinthians 15:51-57  
2 Corinthians 4:7-18  
2 Corinthians 5:1-8  
Ephesians 1:11—2:1, 4-10

Philippians 3:20-21  
1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, 18  
Hebrews 12:1-2  
1 Peter 1:3-9  
1 John 3:1-2  
Revelation 1:17-18  
Revelation 7:9-17  
Revelation 14:13  
Revelation 21:1-7  
Revelation 22:1-5

Gospel Reading

Matthew 5:1-10  
Matthew 11:25-30  
Mark 16:1-7  
Luke 18:15-17  
Luke 24:1-9, 36-43  
John 1:1-5, 9-14  
John 3:16  
John 6:37-40  
John 10:11-16  
John 10:27-29  
John 11:21-27  
John 12:23-26  
John 14:1-6, 25-27  
John 20:30-31