

Alive in Christ



Funeral Manual

Lutheran Church of the Risen Lord

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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.

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 Church Council of Lutheran Church of the Risen Lord, Odessa, Texas, 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 Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael L. Mueller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Rev. Michael L Mueller

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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 Lutheran Church of the Risen Lord has been called to a specific responsibility to his own parishioners and to sister congregations in the Augsburg Lutheran Churches 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, church council or those involved in evangelism at Risen Lord had a direct, personal ministry.

Members of Risen Lord who request that their pastor officiate at the funeral of their non-member friend or relative place the pastors and church council 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 someone to Jesus.

“MAY NON-ALC PASTORS OFFICIATE OR CO-OFFICIATE AT OUR FUNERAL SERVICES?”

No. A funeral service is a worship service, so the same Augsburg Lutheran Churches 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?”

Anything that is to be said must first be screened and approved by the pastor.

“WHAT CAN I DO TO 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 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 or important.

“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 '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 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.

“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.

"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. Furthermore, 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.

A CHRISTIAN PREAMBLE TO YOUR WILL

When planning your will, you can grow so preoccupied with how to distribute your material blessings that you may fail to share your true wealth: the Good News of forgiveness and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

A Christian Preamble to your will provides a fine opportunity to share this belief with your family and friends. Through the Holy Spirit, this personal statement of your faith will comfort your loved ones in their time of loss and encourage them, too, to place their trust in Jesus Christ.

Prayerfully consider adding one of these sample Christian Preambles to your will or use them as a guide in writing your own.

PREAMBLE 1

I, _____, Of the City of Odessa, County of Ector, and State of Texas, being of sound and disposing mind and memory and being under no restraint, do make, declare and publish this my last Will and Testament, hereby revoking all Wills and codicils hereto made by me.

First, realizing the uncertainty of this life, I place full confidence and trust in my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who promised: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." (John 11:25-26).

Second, knowing that the wages of sin is death, I believe that Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, suffered and died to gain me forgiveness, which I neither deserve nor merit, but receive as a free gift of God, who is rich in grace and mercy.

Third, I urge my heirs not to set their hopes on uncertain riches, but to take hold of the life, which is life indeed through faith in Jesus Christ.

PREAMBLE 2

I, _____, Of the City of Odessa, County of Ector, and State of Texas, being of sound and disposing mind and memory and being under no restraint, do make, declare and publish this my last Will and Testament, hereby revoking all Wills and codicils hereto made by me.

First, I commit myself to God's care, secure in His love for me and trusting in the salvation purchased for me through Christ's suffering and

death. I leave those who survive me the comfort of knowing that I have died in this faith and have now joined my Lord in eternal glory.

Second, I commend my loved ones to the protecting hands of God, knowing that He will continue to provide for them despite my absence; and I encourage them to place their faith and trust in Him alone.

(Then follows the body of the Will.)

FUNERAL ARRANGEMENT FORM

Make copies of your completed form, and then give them to the individuals who will be involved with arranging your funeral. This will include pastor, family members or close friends, funeral director, etc. Be sure to discuss any directions that might need clarifying.

Name _____

Home address _____

Telephone number _____

Date of preparation _____

Date of birth _____

Place of birth _____

Date of Baptism _____

Place of Baptism (church, hospital) _____

Date of confirmation _____

Place of confirmation _____

Date of marriage(s) _____

Location(s) _____

Describe life in local congregation(s) _____

Full name of your father _____

City & state of his birth _____

Full name of your mother (including maiden name) _____

City & state of her birth _____

Your Education _____

Places and types of employment _____

To what organizations do you belong? _____

Social Security Number _____

Military ID Number _____

Family

Spouse _____

Children & Their Phone Numbers _____

Siblings & Their Phone Numbers _____

Relatives/Friends to notify:

1st Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Relationship _____

2nd Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Relationship _____

3rd Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Relationship _____

These directions express how I would like my funeral handled. If possible, I request the following:

A. I request the following service:

Church _____

Address _____

Telephone number _____

Clergy to officiate (if possible) _____

Address _____

Telephone number _____

Biblical texts _____

Hymns and musical selections (choir, solos, etc.) _____

B. I would like my body, or parts of it, to be used for medical purposes. Explain:

Provisions have been made by proper documentation in accordance with the state laws governing this procedure. The documents are located:

C. Burial

I prefer a burial in a casket.

Burial Location _____

Has a plot been purchased? Yes No

Casket desired (describe) _____

I prefer to be cremated

I want my ashes to be located at _____

D. I want memorial gifts designated to the following organization(s), persons, etc.

Name _____

Address _____

Purpose _____

Name _____

Address _____

Purpose _____

Name _____

Address _____

Purpose _____

Name _____

Address _____

Purpose _____

E. Will

I have a will Yes No

The will is located _____

F. I request these additional instructions to be followed:

G. I have shared these plans with the following people:

Name _____

Address _____

Relationship _____

Name _____

Address _____

Relationship _____

Name _____

Address _____

Relationship _____

Put this form in your safety deposit box or another safe place, readily accessible to your family or executor. This is information your family will need immediately at the time of your death. You may also store a copy at the church to facilitate arrangements.

Signature _____

Printed Name _____

Address _____
