

When we were baptized in Christ Jesus, we were baptized into his death. We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new 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.

Entrance rite to the funeral liturgy. Alleluia. Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life.

Alleluia. Alleluia.

from Romans 6: 1-4

THE FUNERAL LITURGY

The primary emphasis in Lutheran funerals is moved from mourning the death to expressing hope in the resurrection. Therefore, the liturgy for the burial of the dead is an Easter liturgy. It finds all its meaning in the resurrection. Trusting in God's promise in baptism that we are claimed by Christ forever, we rest in the sure hope of the resurrection. Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we, too, shall be raised. The liturgy, therefore, is characterized by joy, in the certainty that *"neither death, nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."* This joy, however, does not make human grief unchristian. The very love we have for each other in Christ brings deep sorrow when we are parted by death. Jesus himself wept at the grave of his friend. So while we rejoice that one we loved has entered into the nearer presence of our Lord, we sorrow in sympathy with those who mourn. Grief and sorrow are natural, but the resurrection of our Lord remains the focal point of our worship. The Pastor will go over the liturgy (*from the ELW*) that is used for funeral and memorial services at Wittenberg. Funerals are held at the convenience of the family; however funerals will not be celebrated on Christmas, Easter, or Good Friday.

PURPOSE OF FUNERAL AND MEMORIAL SERVICES

In death, grief and loss are real and not to be minimized. As a Christian community, we are privileged to walk with our brothers and sisters in times of sorrow, pointing to the hope that comes in Jesus and the promise of life everlasting with him.

While loved ones will be remembered in this service, they will be remembered as children of God. Most importantly we will remember and celebrate what Jesus Christ did for them and for us. With that in mind, a funeral or memorial service is **worship** – our worship of the God who

gives us life, binds us in relationship, extends his goodness and grace, and welcomes us into eternal life.

TYPES OF SERVICES

Funeral Service: When remains are present in a casket or as ashes in an urn.

Memorial Service: A memorial service is conducted when no remains are present. This type of service is preferable when remains are unavailable or the service is celebrated a significant time after the death.

Inurnment Service: This is a brief service with readings and prayers that commit ashes to a final resting place. This can be done any time after the death.

Interment Service: A brief service with readings and prayers that commit a body in a casket to a final resting place.

Graveside Service: A funeral service with readings and prayers committing a body or ashes to a final resting place. A committal may precede or follow a graveside service.

Visitation: A visitation is not a worship service. It is a time when family members receive condolences and well-wishes of friends and loved ones. When desired, the body is present for viewing.

WORSHIP LEADERS AND OTHER SPEAKERS

The Wittenberg Pastor will participate in all funeral and memorial services, except during times of pastoral absence or vacancy. If there are other clergy or church leaders you wish to invite to participate in the service, please make arrangements with the Pastor. A homily will be offered at the worship service. The homily will be a time to remember our loved one and to boldly proclaim the Good News of the Gospel.

MEMORIES AND EULOGIES

Occasionally a family member or friend will want to share a few remembrances (*eulogy*) about the one who has died. Although the service is complete without an eulogy, it can sometimes provide helpful context. The eulogy is normally limited to one person and is expected not to exceed five minutes.

MUSIC

The funeral or memorial service is foremost a service of worship and a liturgy of the Church. Musical selections reflect this dimension of public prayer. A thirty minute prelude will be offered prior to the liturgy. Typical examples are:

Processional into the church: A hymn of comfort, baptismal remembrance, or resurrection hope is appropriate.

Hymn after the sermon: A hymn that carries forth the images of the readings and sermon, or is reflective of the life of faith of the deceased is appropriate.

Recession out of the church: A final hymn may be sung as the coffin is carried from the church usually one of resurrection hope.

**** The family will remain in the pews in the sanctuary until the final hymn is finished. ****

If communion is celebrated, hymns may be sung during the distribution.

The hymns you choose may be favorites but should all reflect the hope and promise of the resurrection, as well as the comfort and gifts of grace we receive from God, and the joy we share in the communion of saints. Hymns appropriate for any season may also be sung (*such as favorite Christmas hymns during that season*).

The organist will play for the service. Any outside musicians or vocalists will need to consult with the Pastor as well as the organist to discuss appropriate musical selections and the worshipful nature of the service. In general, secular music is not appropriate during the service.

HOLY COMMUNION

Holy Communion is not a requirement of the funeral service, but can be meaningful for those still on their earthly journey. The sacrament of Holy Communion was given by Christ for the sake of creating and sustaining faith. We believe that in the sacrament Christ is fully present with us, meeting us in our grief, sorrow, sin, and suffering. Further, Holy Communion gives us a foretaste of the feast to come in the kingdom of God. Please arrange with the Pastor if you would like Holy Communion to be a part of this funeral/memorial service. The Altar Guild will make sure that the communion table is set and prepared for the service.

VISITATION

In conjunction with the funeral home, Wittenberg can host visitations. These allow guests to spend time with the family sharing remembrances and saying goodbye. Most church visitations occur the day of the funeral service and lasts usually no more than two hours. Visitations can occur in the fellowship hall. The Pastor can help talk through options with you.

FLOWERS

Flowers can be an important image and symbol of the hoped-for promise of resurrection. Flowers for the altar will be ordered by Wittenberg. Additional flowers may be arranged on the floor below the pulpit and lectern (*no more than four*) and in the visitation room. Flowers are not to be placed on the piano or organ.

FUNERAL PALL: A SYMBOL OF FAITH

For funerals where a casket or cremation urn is present, Wittenberg provides a funeral pall (*a white liturgical shroud*) to be placed over the casket or urn during the service. (*The small original altar in the hallway to the Fellowship Hall will be brought into the sanctuary for the funeral urn placement. The original altar can be moved easily from the hallway into the sanctuary.*) The action of placing the pall over the casket or urn will take place prior to the liturgy...upon the casket or urn entering the church. The pall is the only thing covering the casket or urn while in the church building. The pall will be removed in the narthex following the liturgy, before leaving the church. If the deceased is eligible for such an honor, the national flag may be used as a covering for the casket as it is taken from the church to the cemetery. The Lutheran funeral resonates with the promise that all who are baptized into Christ have “*clothed themselves*” with Christ, and that all who are buried with Christ in baptism will be raised with him in newness of life. The white color of the pall reminds those assembled of their faith in the resurrection and further symbolizes putting on the robe of Christ’s righteousness in baptism, the robe that covers the redeemed that stand before God. It is especially appropriate to recall baptism...the beginning of a Christian life...as the body of someone who has faithfully served Christ during life robed, in the garment of the baptized and enters the church for the last time.

SOCIAL AND FRATERNAL SOCIETIES

The worship service is meant to give glory to God and comfort to the bereaved. The worship service is not an occasion to support, augment, or complement non-church organizations and rituals. Any ritual or rite apart from the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the sacraments is inappropriate within the liturgies of the Lutheran Church. Therefore, no social/fraternal society rituals will be included in the service in the sanctuary or at the graveside committal. Once the committal has been concluded, the family may observe social and fraternal society rites as they deem appropriate. However, Wittenberg Lutheran Church has no problem with the social/fraternal society members sitting together as a group during the funeral or committal.

MILITARY HONORS

If there is a graveside committal as part of the service, military honors are most appropriate at the graveside following the rite of committal.

RECORDING/PHOTOGRAPHY

The service may be videotaped discreetly from the balcony; however, no flash photography is permitted during the funeral/memorial service. The service will be recorded for audio and will be made available to the family.

BULLETINS

The Wittenberg office and worship staff will produce bulletins for the funeral service at no cost to the family. One picture of the deceased may be used in the bulletin.

PHOTOGRAPHS

The family has the option of placing one photo of the deceased in the sanctuary. Additional photos may be placed in the fellowship hall.

FUNERAL MEAL

Gathering with family for comfort and support can be particularly helpful as well as meaningful. Wittenberg Lutheran Church provides a meal for the family of members who have died. The meal will be held in the Fellowship Hall. Therefore, depending on the time of the funeral and visitation (*if held at the church on the same day as the funeral*) the meal will be scheduled before or after the funeral service. The funeral meal is an option to the family members and there is no fee for this service.

FEES AND HONORARIA

The staff and community of Wittenberg Lutheran Church are called by Christ to comfort those who mourn, plan and implement funeral/memorial services. There is no fee for these services, although honoraria are sometimes offered as grateful acknowledgements.

- When WLC has employed a full-time organist part of their contract specifies that they will play for all worship services, special services, funerals that are held at WLC, and attend choir practices. (*If the family requests a qualified organist other than the full-time on staff, the family will be responsible for the full payment for their services.*)
- However, if there is no full-time organist on staff, WLC will hire and pay for a substitute organist to assist in the funeral. Honoraria would be a welcomed acknowledgement to the church in this special situation.

- If the family requests a choir member (*or other member of the church*) to sing a special song, again there is no fee for these services. However, honoraria are grateful acknowledgements.

Suggested starting honorariums (*but are not limited to*) are listed below.

- Pastor - \$150 +
- Organist - \$150 +
- Soloist - \$75 +

GIFT DESIGNATIONS AND MEMORIALS

In response to the goodness of God and in gratitude for the life of the deceased, you may choose to designate financial contributions/memorials be made in honor of the deceased.

This often happens in lieu of flowers. Common choices are:

- **Wittenberg General Fund:** This fund covers our day-to-day operating and ministry expenses.
- **Wittenberg Designated Fund:** A fund that allows the church to use funds for a specific, designated purpose at the family's request. Please consult with the pastor before choosing a designated fund.
- **Other Community Organizations:** (*Lutheran Services for the Aging, Trinity Oaks Changing Spaces Campaign, Rowan Helping Ministries, Community Care Clinic, etc.*)