



# Funeral Guidelines

A Guide for Mission Lutheran Church

The Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod

# Funeral Guidelines

## The Christian Funeral- A Christ-Centered Service

As with any liturgical service, Christ is the central focus of worship. This is especially important as a pastor and congregation seek to bring the comfort and peace of our Lord's Resurrection to families grieving at the death of a loved one. It is the earnest prayer of the Mission Lutheran Board of Elders that these guidelines will be of service to our congregation in preparing funerals that bear witness to the salvation we have in Christ and the joy of His Resurrection.

### The Role of the Pastor

The pastor is the called shepherd of the local congregation. He has a deep concern for the spiritual wellbeing of the souls under his care. Normally, the pastor will be involved during the course of an illness bringing comfort through the Word and Sacrament. The pastor should also be present when death is near to offer consolation to the dying and their family. He will want to be in contact with the family before, during and after the funeral.

A family which desires to have a funeral in our church should begin by contacting the pastor to discuss the arrangements. The pastor, in concert with the family and funeral director, will make preparations for the Christian funeral in accord with these congregational guidelines and with sound pastoral practice.

### Parish Policies

The family seeking a funeral and burial from our church should understand the following practice at Mission Lutheran Church. Any request for exceptions should be brought before the pastor and the Board of Elders.

1. Ordinarily, the deceased must have been a member in good standing of the congregation. It is not appropriate for the church to provide a Christian funeral for a person who did not confess Jesus Christ as their Savior during their lifetime.
2. Occasionally, a pastor may provide ministrations toward the end of a person's life that are used by the Holy Spirit to bring them to faith in Jesus Christ, and thus the hope of heaven, without formal church membership before death. If the pastor has been involved with such pastoral care, he will confer with the Board of Elders and, possibly, other LCMS clergy before giving consent to the funeral.

3. Members of the church whose non-member spouses and/or children have died should not *assume* a funeral at the church. A Christian Funeral is a public testimony of saving faith in the same way the public affiliation with a Christian congregation is such a testimony. Our Lord says, "Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33). The pastor may speak to members in regard to a service at the funeral home.
4. This congregation understands every funeral to be a Divine service which takes place in the sight of Almighty God. As such, all funerals held at the church should conform in all particulars to the revealed Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions, which are a true exposition of the Word of God. Therefore, music selections for each funeral should include hymns from the approved hymnals of the Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod. All other vocal and instrumental selections shall be reviewed with the pastor in conformity with the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. It is appropriate that the music proclaim what God has done for us in Christ through His death and resurrection.
5. Clergy other than pastor(s) of this congregation may participate in a funeral provided that they are rightly called and are on the ordained roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, or another church body with which we are in altar and pulpit fellowship.
6. Eulogies are not in the best Christian tradition and are therefore not to be a part of the funeral service. Good words about the deceased are best shared at a reception or meal following the service.
7. All military or civic rites (i.e. police, fire, or armed forces) do not relate to the deceased's faith but to his commitment and loyalty to community and country. Therefore, if such rites are desired, they should take place at the funeral home or cemetery separate from the church unless approved by the pastor. The military honors normally follow the committal service and are separate from the funeral service of the church.
8. Photography of any kind, including video, should not be taken during the funeral liturgy except as permitted by the pastor after consultation with the photographer. Other photography, if desired, may be posed before or after the funeral liturgy.

9. When the funeral is to be conducted with the deceased present in a casket, the family will decide whether to have an open or closed casket for the visitation. The casket should be closed during the funeral service. When the funeral is to be conducted with the deceased having been cremated, the family may place the remains on a table at the front of the sanctuary along with an appropriate picture of the deceased.
10. Organists and singers/soloists should be approved by the pastor. The pastor will provide the family with suggestions for hymns.
11. Except in extraordinary situations, only one funeral will be scheduled on any particular day.

## Funerals at the Funeral Home

It is to be preferred that the funerals of congregation members be conducted in the church. However, situations vary and a funeral may be held at a funeral home. All funerals conducted at the funeral home will be done for those individuals who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and conform to the guidelines set above. Other funerals may be conducted at the discretion of the pastor and the Board of Elders as situations warrant.

## The Funeral Pall

To make the good confession of our Christian faith (that is, the holy, apostolic, faith to which we cling for the hope that lies within us) a funeral pall may be used as a visible reminder of Holy Baptism.

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