



*A guide to assist family and loved ones  
in preparing one's funeral.*

## **Grace Lutheran Church**

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Funeral Policy and Guidelines  
June 2019



## Grace Lutheran Church

Mobile, Alabama

*“Receiving and Sharing God’s Grace since 1867.”*

Dear Saints and Fellow Heirs of Eternal Life,

This guide has been prepared to assist 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. As Christians, we look forward with joy and anticipation to the day when our Lord calls us to Himself.

When a believer in Jesus Christ dies, he or she is immediately experiencing the joy and peace of heaven as it awaits the Last Day when Jesus will raise that body, making it free of sin and perfect in every way.

While by faith, we are prepared “spiritually” for our death, many are not prepared for their death in terms of arrangements and wishes once they are departed. The loved ones, relatives, and friends who are left behind can be given more peace if time is taken now to establish some prior funeral arrangements in order to lessen grief in a time when decision making is often difficult and traumatic. Most importantly, someone’s Christian witness can still be proclaimed even in death.

We, therefore, ask you to read this guide thoroughly as we commend it for your use, so that we may rejoice together in our eternal future in heaven. As you consider your own death, burial, and life everlasting as well as arrangements for others, may the Lord bless you and give you His peace.

In the Risen Lord,

Rev. Wayne J. Miller

## Notifying the Pastor

The Pastor should be called in the early stages of any illness that leads to death or when death is imminent, in order that he may minister to the dying person, strengthen and comfort him or her in the faith, and prepare him or her for death. Time for personal and private counseling with the dying person as well as anyone close to that person in need of comfort is important.

When a death does occur, the Pastor should be one of the first to be notified along with the funeral director. The spiritual ministry of the Pastor to the family can bring comfort and strength to trying and grievous times. The Pastor will also provide assistance in the plans for the funeral or memorial service.

Church Office: 251-433-2749

Pastor Miller's Cell: 251-230-1886

## The Purpose of a Christian Funeral

What is a funeral? Is it a time to say goodbye? Is it a time to reunite with family? Is it a time to grieve? Yes, we do say goodbye to a loved one. Yes, families gather more faithfully at funerals than at any other time, and we grieve because of the separation that death brings.

A Christian funeral or memorial service encompasses all of this, but it is also different...

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*But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep.*

*(1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 ESV)*

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It is important to understand that a Christian funeral or memorial service is a worship service. In this worship service, we do the following things: hear the comfort of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a time of grief and trouble; proclaim the power of God and grace which redeems and saves His children; witness publicly to the joy of our faith in God and to the victory we have through our loving Savior; receive comfort in the knowledge of a joyful reunion with our loved ones in the resurrection; face death knowing Jesus Christ has delivered us from sin, from the power of death and the devil, giving eternal salvation to all who believe in Him; and praise God from whom all blessings flow as He, our Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter has shown us in His eternal Word.



We do not worship the person who has died. Rather, we worship the One who died and rose again. Jesus Christ is the center of all Lutheran worship, especially at a funeral, because Jesus' victory over sin, death, and the devil is clearly proclaimed. The whole funeral service echoes this truth over and over, reminding us of what Jesus did for us at our Baptism.

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*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of 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. (Romans 6:3-5)*

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Funerals are for the living and they are about Jesus and His work given to you in your earthly life. Those who gather will be comforted when they hear all that He has done to give you, as well as them, eternal life.

### **Funeral vs. Memorial Service**

Technically speaking, a funeral service is one where the body or cremains of the deceased is present, whereas a memorial service is one where the body or cremains of the deceased is not present, either by prior burial or because the service is in a different location. Memorial services have become popular in the recent years, and can simplify arrangements. The terms can also be used somewhat interchangeably; however, a memorial service is still a worship service, but for the sake of this guide, the term funeral will be used.

### **Death of a non-Christian**

Sometimes loved ones die without us knowing if a saving faith was present. Despite how good that person may have been, we also cannot look to any good works for evidence of saving faith. Therefore, if a loved one dies and the Pastor suspects that a saving faith was not present, the funeral is used as an opportunity to proclaim the Gospel. Words proclaiming God's grace, salvation, and life everlasting over the deceased will be replaced with a committing of the deceased to God's mercy. Unfortunately, we can do nothing more and the Pastor will not make judgement either way if a person is saved or not. If there are any questions over this, please consult the Pastor.

## Bible Readings

The speaking and hearing of God's Word through four readings – the Old Testament reading, a Psalm, an Epistle reading, and a Gospel reading – expresses the faith and identity we confess in Jesus Christ. You have the privilege of selecting 4 Scripture passages to customize the already Christ-centered funeral service. Pastor may choose readings if you desire. The Scripture passages that are chosen may be read by designated family and friends. The Pastor should be informed about this in advance.

The Old Testament reading reveals God's plan of salvation for His Creation. Like us, God's people in the Old Testament trusted in the Messiah who would come to save them from their sins and raise them to eternal life. Please choose one:

Genesis 28:15-22

Job 19:25-26

Isaiah 25:6-9

Isaiah 40:24-31

Isaiah 41:9-10

Isaiah 49:13-16

Isaiah 54:14-17

Zephaniah 3:14-18

Lamentations 3:22-33

Other \_\_\_\_\_

As part of the Church's prayer book, a favorite Psalm can express the depth of our feelings, as well as confess our faith in a loving and merciful Savior.

Psalm 23

Psalm 41

Psalm 130

Psalm 30:1-6, 11-12

Psalm 91

Psalm 130:10-18

Psalm 31

Psalm 121

Psalm 139:13-18

Other \_\_\_\_\_

The Epistle reading can have several purposes in funerals: it can give a clear confession of our Christian hope in the Resurrection; it can show that not even death can separate us from God; it can bring out the peace we have with God because of Jesus' sacrifice for our sins; or it can state how in death, through Christ, we gain everything.

Romans 5:1-6

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Romans 8:15-21

1 Corinthians 15:51-58

Ephesians 2:4-10

Romans 8:35-39

Philippians 1:21-23

Hebrews 10:16-23

1 Corinthians 2:6-10

1 Peter 1:3-5

Revelations 21:1-7

Other \_\_\_\_\_

In the Gospel reading, Jesus comforts us with His own words, deeds, and prayers, so that all who hear and believe may receive assurance from our own Savior that we can trust in what He promises.

Matthew 11:28-30	John 6:63-69	John 12:24-26
Matthew 25:31-46	John 10:27-30	John 14:1-7
John 3:16-18	John 11:21-27	John 14:25-31a
Other _____		

*Designated Readers, if any:* \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Music**

The singing of hymns at a funeral service is another part of where the comfort of Christ is heard. Like the Psalms, hymns can express the depth of our faith. Paul, in Colossians 3:16, says that through Psalms and hymns alike, the Word of God dwells in us richly. A favorite hymn may be beautiful, reflecting God’s Word for us in Jesus, and Easter hymns speak so clearly to grieving hearts.

Funeral service music should be kept reverent and Christ-centered. Three hymns are normally sung with preservice music. A hymn from the Lutheran Service Book should be chosen for the processional and the recessional, and the Pastor will choose a hymn for the sermon. Additionally, soloists, musicians, and/or commercial recordings may be used, but they must have the prior consent of the Pastor and may be subject to a fee. In the event that the organist is unable to play for the funeral, a guest musician, or pre-recorded music may be used. The Pastor must be notified of all musical decisions for approval.

Abide with Me	878	Lift High the Cross	837
Jesus Christ, My Sure Defense	741	By Grace I’m Saved	566
All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name	549	The Lord’s My Shepherd	710
Jesus Has Come	533	The Church’s One Foundation	644
Amazing Grace	744	Love Divine, All Love Excelling	700
Just As I Am	570	Crown Him with Many Crowns	525
Be Still My Soul	752	My Hope is Built	575

For All the Saints	677	I Know that My Redeemer Lives	461
Oh, For a Thousand Tongues	528	Savior, Again to Your Dear Name	917
How Great Thou Art	801	Jerusalem the Golden	672
Rock of Ages	761	What Wondrous Love is This	543
Other _____			
Other _____			
Other _____			

### **Sermon**

The Pastor’s primary task in the funeral sermon is to preach Christ crucified. His message may be made personal by showing how uniquely God created the person and how their faith in Christ was revealed in the life of the deceased. However, remember that while the Pastor may relate stories of the deceased during the sermon, it is not the reason for his preaching. The proclamation of God’s Word at the funeral service is to point those grieving to Jesus and the hope that is found in Him alone.

### **Interment and Committal Service**

When the body of the deceased is to be buried immediately following the funeral service, the Pastor accompanies the family, close friends, and the deceased, to the gravesite. A short committal service of about 5 to 10 minutes is performed at the graveside. Cremations can be inurned by the Pastor later. Please contact the funeral director or Pastor regarding questions on seasonal preparations for interment, inurnment, scattering, etc.

### **Scheduling**

Inform the Pastor immediately upon the death, so that he may be there to comfort the grieving family and to ensure that he is involved in the funeral planning. It is common practice at Grace that funerals are 3-4 days after the death has occurred. If there is a cremation, a few weeks may pass before the funeral service. All funerals take place during the week or Saturday. In the Lutheran Church, funerals never take place on Sunday because Sunday is reserved for the resurrection and worship of our Risen Lord. The family of the deceased, along with any funeral home that is involved, may decide on a preferred date and time for the funeral. However, this date and time must be approved by the Pastor to ensure that there will be no conflicts with the organist, weddings, funerals, events, etc.



## **Officiant**

The Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church is the official officiant of all funerals and memorial services at Grace Lutheran Church. Any rostered Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod Pastor may be invited to participate or officiate in accordance with the family’s request and with the Pastor’s approval.

Clergy from other Christian denominations or non-Christian religions may be used to read the Scripture readings, provided they are not acting as a representative of their denomination or religion in any official capacity, such as being robed or vested. Family members or close friends may also read the Scripture readings. Only a rostered Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod Pastor may preach, read the Gospel, and officiate.

## **Eulogy**

While family members and close friends have great and noble intentions in desiring to give a eulogy, all too often eulogies focus on the good works or memories of the deceased which conflicts with the true Gospel and provides no real comfort, because salvation is by faith and not by works (Ephesians 2:9).

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*I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel - not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:6-8)*

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To prevent the presentation of a false or watered-down Gospel, eulogies are not allowed during funerals at Grace Lutheran Church. The time to share stories and remembrances would be at the visitation before and the reception afterwards.

## **Rites of Other Organizations**

Christian worship is incompatible with the secular and semi-religious rites and ceremonies of lodges and other organizations/societies and are therefore not permitted. An exception is made for military honors done after the service or after the graveside.



## **Visitation**

A visitation, often called a “wake”, can happen the evening prior to the service at a funeral home and/or the next day in the church before the service begins to receive family and friends. The visitation/s give multiple options for family and friends to extend their condolences. For a morning visitation at the church, the body may lay in state, open or closed, in the back of the church or in the front depending on a projected attendance. Visitations are also appropriate for cremations as well. Visitations at the church are normally 1-2 hours prior to the time of service.

## **Guest Register**

Those attending the visitation and service might look for a guest book to sign in order to give the immediate family a keepsake and record of those who came to appreciate and thank. These are often provided by a funeral home service. Grace Lutheran Church does not provide this amenity. If one is not purchased through the funeral home, it is the family’s responsibility to bring one for their guests if desired. Grace does have a podium that can be used for the book.

## **Displaying Photos**

Displaying pictures and videos is a great way to remember the life of the deceased. Before and during the funeral, pictures may be placed in the Narthex or the back of the church. A single 8x10 picture may be placed near the body or the cremains.

## **Photography and Video**

Out of respect for the family and friends, flash photography, camera noises, and moving photographers or videographers are not allowed. Video recording can be done from stationary locations from the back of church or in the balcony. All aisles should be kept clear for ease of movement for those attending the funeral. Connecting a loved one by video phone, such as Skype or FaceTime is permitted. Any mobile device or laptop may be used, though power cords to these devices are not allowed because close outlets are not available. Testing should be done to ensure that the device is silenced and working properly. The church’s Wi-Fi can be used, and the password can be obtained from the Office Assistant or the Pastor.

## **Decorations**

Flowers and decorations may be placed in the rear of the church or on the floor between the front pews and the chancel steps. Flowers for the altar may be ordered or arranged by the family. Flowers are not to be billed or charged to Grace Lutheran Church. The baptismal font, lectern, pulpit or any chancel furniture will not be moved without Pastor’s approval. No nails, screws, wire, or anything that may damage pews or walls may be used. The altar paraments and the Officiant’s stole will be dictated by the season of the church year. Arrangements for the delivery and placement of flowers or decorations may be made through the Church Office.

## Reception

Grace Lutheran Church, with the assistance of the Church Ladies, normally provides or hosts a complimentary light meal for the family and guests either following the service or before the visitation. This meal normally consists of soup, sandwiches, chips, veggies, desserts, coffee, water, and tea, and is limited to no more than 100 guests.

The family may also cater a meal if so desired. However, the family will be responsible for scheduling and compensating the caterer. If catered, the kitchen may be used and the family is responsible for setup and cleanup. Please contact the Pastor or the Office Assistant to coordinate the reception.

## Bulletins

Worship bulletins are provided by the Church for all funerals. Any special cover must be purchased and delivered by the family prior to printing. The content and order of service, however, is solely the responsibility of the Pastor. All Bible readings, music, and all other such arrangements for the bulletin must be finalized and approved by the Pastor. Please notify the Pastor or the Office Assistant with how many bulletins to be copied.

## Logistics

The Church seats 200 people comfortably with a maximum attendance of around 225. If a very large funeral is being planned, please notify the Pastor and the Office Assistant so better accommodations may be made.

## Fees

Fees and honorariums, established by the Church Council, for the Pastor, organist, facilities or others should be made prior to the funeral service or at the time of the funeral service. Fees for facilities are to be submitted to Grace Lutheran Church.

<i>Who or What</i>	<i>Members</i>	<i>Non-Members</i>
Pastor	Discretionary (recommended \$200)	\$250
Organist	\$175	\$175
Soloist or Musician (if available)	\$100	\$100
Office Assistant	\$50	\$75
Sanctuary	free	\$250
Reception Area	free	\$350
Reception Luncheon (Church Ladies)	Discretionary	\$250

## A Christian Preamble to Your Will or Trust

When planning your will or trust, you can grow so preoccupied with how to distribute your material blessings that you may fail to share your true wealth: the Gospel of forgiveness and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. A Christian Preamble to your will or trust 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 also to place their trust in Jesus Christ. Prayerfully consider adding one of these Christian Preambles to your will or trust, or use them as a guide in writing your own. If you are able, consult a lawyer or the manager of your will or trust for a proper addition.

### Preamble 1

I, \_\_\_\_\_, 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.

*(Then follows the body of the current Will or Trust.)*

### Preamble 2

I, \_\_\_\_\_, a resident of \_\_\_\_\_, being of sound mind and disposing memory, realizing the uncertainty of this life, and with full confidence and trust in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in His death for my sins on the cross and in His shed blood as an atonement for my soul, and knowing that by faith in His sacrifice on the cross for me I have eternal life, do hereby make, publish and declare this to be my Last Will and Testament, and I revoke all other Wills and Codicils that I may have made, and make this my Will.

*(Then follows the body of the current Will or Trust.)*

## Funeral Arrangement Form

The form at the back of this manual can be used in planning your funeral. Make copies of your completed form, and put one with your will or trust. As well, give one to any individual who will be involved with arranging your funeral, such as your pastor, family members or close friends, and your funeral director.

### Important Financial Information Needed at Death

In addition to your funeral arrangement form, each person's spouse, or another significant person, should have a letter containing financial information in the event of the death or disability of the other. A letter should also be included with your will or trust. The letter should be updated every year and should include the following:

<i>Bank Accounts</i>	List checking and savings accounts with number, names of banks, etc. and all T-bills and certificates of deposit.
<i>Insurance Policies</i>	List by company, policy number, face amount, owner, beneficiary, and location of the policies.
<i>Investments</i>	List names and locations of certificates of any stocks, bonds, and mutual funds, including purchase dates, number of shares, costs basis, and other pertinent data.
<i>Safe Deposit Boxes</i>	List location, contents, where the key is kept, combination of lock, etc.
<i>Real Estate</i>	List real estate holdings, location of mortgages, deeds and other documents.
<i>Retirement Plans</i>	Provide a detailed listing with all pertinent data and the contact person regarding each plan.
<i>Other Investments</i>	List all other investments and include detail on ownership documents, account numbers, contact persons, and location of files containing the data, as well as any notes or accounts receivable with due dates, interest rates, etc.
<i>Other Data</i>	List the location of Wills, titles to automobiles, and any other documents not listed elsewhere.
<i>Loans</i>	Amounts and due dates should be listed, as well as the names and address of lenders.
<i>Tax Returns</i>	Provide the location of federal, state, and local tax returns for the three prior years.
<i>Advisors</i>	List the names and telephone numbers of your attorney, CPA, insurance agent, stockbroker, and bankers.



**Funeral Arrangement Form**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Date of preparation \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Baptism \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Baptism \_\_\_\_\_

Date of confirmation \_\_\_\_\_

Place of confirmation \_\_\_\_\_

Confirmation Verse \_\_\_\_\_

Church of Funeral \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

Clergy to officiate \_\_\_\_\_

Funeral Home \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

Biblical Texts \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Hymns \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other music \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Flowers desired? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Burial in a casket? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Body to be viewed? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Cremation? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Burial/ashes location \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I would like my body, or parts of it, to be used for medical purposes: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Explanation \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Provisions must be made by proper documentation in accordance with the state laws governing this procedure.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I want my memorial gifts designated to the following organization(s), person(s), etc.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Purpose \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Purpose \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I request these additional instructions to be followed:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Sign this document and don't forget to give a copy to the church, to a significant family member or to family members, your funeral director, and attach it to your trust or will.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_