

*Ascension Lutheran Church*  
*Funeral Guidelines*

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The Reverend Christina Auch, Pastor

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

A Christian funeral is a celebration of baptism, resurrection, and new life in Christ. Our baptismal covenant reminds us that we are bound to life in Christ and united with him in death and resurrection! A funeral or memorial service provides family and friends with an opportunity to remember one of God's own children and find hope in God's Word and eternal life-giving power. Christians will strive to keep the gospel hope of the resurrection at the center of all observances associated with the death of a Christian.

## WHY A CHURCH FUNERAL?

*At a person's death, the church shares the grief of those who mourn and remembers the brevity of life on earth. At the funeral we give voice to sorrow, thank God for our loved one, and entrust this companion of ours into the hands of God. Trusting in God's promise in baptism that we are claimed by the cross of Christ forever, we rest in the sure hope of the resurrection. When the church gathers to mark the end of life, Christ crucified and risen is the witness of worship, the strength of mutual consolation and the hope of healing.*

*—Evangelical Lutheran Worship. Augsburg Fortress Publishers. 2006.*

## INITIAL PROCEDURES

- 1) Contact the pastor or church office as soon as possible following the death of your loved one.
- 2) The pastor will schedule an appointment to meet with the family to discuss the service date, time and arrangements. If the family is working with a funeral home, the pastor will want to be present to assist the family when meeting with the funeral director.

## WORSHIP PLANNING INFORMATION FORM

The pastor can provide the family with a Worship Planning Information Form which will aid in gathering information needed for the service and obituary.

## FUNERALS FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Conducting funerals for people who have no connection with the church is a normal part of the ministerial obligation. Generally these services will be held in a funeral home chapel, and the service will be adapted for such funerals.

## SOCIAL & 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.

## 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.

## VISITATION

In conjunction with the funeral home, Ascension is fully prepared to host visitations. These allow guests to spend time with the family sharing remembrances and saying goodbye. Church visitations may occur the day before or the day of the funeral service and last no more than two hours. Talk with the pastor about the options.

## VISITING CLERGY

Visiting clergy may be present upon the consent of Ascension's pastor.

## NURSERY

There is a nursery available for use during the service, but the church does not provide attendants.

## ORDER OF WORSHIP FOR CHRISTIAN BURIAL OF THE DEAD

Customarily, the funeral service as set forth in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* is what is used. Generally speaking, it follows this format:

- **Gathering** – The pastor(s) and family gather in the Narthex with the coffin or cremains for the opening prayer and Thanksgiving for Baptism. After a pall is placed over the coffin or cremains, the first hymn begins and the pastor and family process into the nave. We have a wooden ossuary in which to set the cremains, if the family would like to have them preset.
- **Procession** – as follows: Cross, Presiding Minister, Assisting Minister, pallbearers with the coffin, the bereaved, The symbolic intent of this order of the procession is that the symbols of Christ go first – cross, paschal candle, minister – and then the dead and the living follow where "Christ has led the way," as the final prayer at the grave puts it.

The coffin is to be placed in the position with the feet toward the altar. The position reflects the accustomed role of the deceased in the church -- facing the altar as part of the congregation. The paschal candle is placed on its stand at the head of the coffin.

- **Greeting and Prayer of the Day**
- **Sharing of Remembrances (optional)**  
It may be appropriate for relatives or associates of the deceased to comment briefly on the meaning of the life of the deceased for the community at this point in the service. If you would like to appoint a family member or friend to speak at the service, the pastor asks that they write down what they will say ahead of time.
- **Scripture Readings**
- **Homily**  
This message by the presiding minister may include a recognition of the life of the deceased, but its purpose is not eulogy but a proclamation of hope and comfort in Christ.
- **Hymn**
- **Apostles' Creed**
- **Prayers**
- **Holy Communion (optional)**
- **Lord's Prayer**
- **Sending** – After the words of Commendation, the final hymn begins and the coffin or cremains, pastor(s) and family members process out to the cemetery, columbarium or reception.
- **Committal (at the graveside)**
- **Benediction**
- **Military Honors for Veterans**

## FUNERAL PALL

For those baptized in Christ, it is customary to use a funeral pall to cover the casket or vessel containing the cremains. Ascension will provide the appropriate pall and be in charge of its use.

## COMMUNION

The funeral service may include the celebration of Holy Communion if the family so chooses. All baptized participants are invited to commune. If Holy Communion is to be celebrated, the pastor will notify the Altar Guild to make preparation.

## MUSIC

Ascension's organist is the musician for all funerals in the church. If the family wishes to have another organist play for the funeral, it may only be with the advice and consent of Ascension's organist.

Secular music is not permitted in the church. Music selections should embody high standards of quality, to reflect the praise of God. Unless specific music is requested, the organist will provide music of his/her choice that is appropriate for a worship service. The use of recorded music is strongly discouraged.

If the family chooses to have the service in a funeral home chapel, the service and response may be by the pastor and not include music or singing, depending on the facility and the availability of appropriate instruments.

## CRUCIFER

The family is encouraged to designate a family member or friend who will serve as Crucifer to lead the processions. The pastor or a designated person will provide instruction as needed. However, if no one from the family is available, the church will provide a Crucifer.

## SANCTUARY

The seating capacity of the church nave is approximately 178.

## FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS

The church will provide its regular (artificial) flowers for the service. Arrangements may be ordered by family members if live flowers are preferred. Additional arrangements may be placed in the narthex or in the fellowship hall if there is a reception. If a casket spray is being used, it will be removed in order to place the pall on the casket. After the funeral, flowers may be left at the church, buried at the grave site, or taken by family members.

## BULLETIN

Service Bulletins will be provided by the church. Bulletins will contain an outline of the service, participants, reception announcement (if applicable) and an obituary of the deceased.

## MEMORABILIA

If the family wishes to provide a display of family photos and memorabilia, we recommend placement on the credence table which can be set near the piano. Please coordinate the display space needed and location with the pastor.

## RECEPTION

When the death of a member, a member's spouse, a member's parent or child occurs, a meal will be provided for the bereaved family, if desired. No alcoholic beverages are permitted on the church premises.

If desired, a meal can be provided at home for the family in lieu of a public reception.

## COLUMBARIUM

Ascension has a lovely columbarium with single and double niches available for purchase. If the family is interested in learning more about this option for cremains, please contact the church office.

## MEMORIAL GIFTS

Memorial gifts may be made to Ascension's Unified Fund (General support) or be designated to another charity or specific purpose. Please discuss the possibilities with the pastor. All donations will be managed according to the congregation's memorial gift policy.

All memorial gifts to Ascension will be acknowledged to the donors and the family will be provided with a list of names and addresses. Please designate to whom the list of donors should be sent.

#### HONORARIA

Gifts to the pastor(s) and staff is customary and should be commensurate with the time and effort required. Honoraria should be given directly to the individuals.

**Pastor** – There is no set fee. It is up to the family's discretion as to the amount. The check should be made payable to the pastor. (Suggested amount: at least \$200)

**Organist** – There is no set fee. It is up to the family's discretion as to the amount. The check should be made payable to the organist. (Suggested amount: at least \$150) If rehearsal time is required for other music (soloists, instrumentalists, so forth), additional fees should be negotiated directly with the organist. Fees for auxiliary musicians are to be negotiated directly with them.

**Use of building** – No charge to members.

*If church members have concerns with the above financial obligations, please consult with the pastor.*

#### SUGGESTED FUNERAL SCRIPTURES

##### Old Testament

Job 19:23-27a	<i>I know my redeemer lives</i>
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8	<i>For everything there is a season</i>
Isaiah 25:6-9	<i>God will swallow up death forever</i>
Isaiah 43:1-3a, 5-7	<i>I have called you by name</i>
Isaiah 55:1-3, 6-13	<i>Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters</i>
Isaiah 61:1-3	<i>The spirit of the Lord God is upon me</i>
Jeremiah 31:8-13	<i>I will turn their mourning into joy</i>
Lamentations 3:22-26, 31-33	<i>Great is your faithfulness</i>
Ezekiel 37:7-14	<i>I will put my spirit in you and you will live</i>
Micah 6:6-8	<i>Do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God</i>

##### Psalms

Psalms 23	<i>The Lord is my Shepherd</i>
Psalms 42	<i>As a deer longs for flowing streams</i>
Psalms 46:1-7	<i>God is our refuge and our strength</i>
Psalms 62:1-2, 5-8	<i>God alone is my rock and my salvation</i>
Psalms 90	<i>Lord, you have been our dwelling place for all generations</i>
Psalms 118	<i>God's steadfast love endures forever</i>
Psalms 121	<i>I lift up my eyes unto the hills</i>
Psalms 130	<i>Out of the depths I cry to you O Lord</i>

##### New Testament

Romans 6:1-14	<i>We will be united with Christ in a resurrection like his</i>
Romans 8:26-30 or 31-35 or 37-39	<i>Who will separate us from the love of God?</i>
1 Corinthians 13	<i>Love is patient...</i>
2 Corinthians 15:12-26	<i>Treasure in clay jars</i>
Hebrews 12:1-2	<i>Surrounded by a cloud of witnesses</i>
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	<i>through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died</i>
2 Timothy 4:6-8	<i>I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race</i>

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1 Peter 1:3-9 *A living hope through Jesus' resurrection*  
1 John 3:1-3 *We should be called children of God*  
Revelation 7:9-17 *God will wipe away every tear*  
Revelation 21:1-5(6-7) *I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem*

### **Gospels**

Matthew 5:1-10 *Blessed are those who mourn*  
Matthew 11:25-30 *I will give you rest*  
Matthew 25: 31-46 *Come, you whom my father has blessed*  
Luke 15:1-7 or 8-10 *Parables of Lost Things*  
Luke 15: 11-32 *Prodigal Son*  
John 1:1-5, 9-14 *The light shines in the darkness*  
John 3:16-17 *For God so loved the world*  
John 11:21-27 *I am the resurrection and the life*  
John 14:1-7 *I prepare a place for you*

### **SUGGESTED HYMNS**

Any of the Easter hymns (ELW 361-394)

Any of the Hope, Assurance hymns (ELW 618-639), especially 'Abide with Me' (ELW 629)  
plus the following:

Beautiful Savior	ELW 838
A Mighty Fortress is Our God	ELW 504
My Hope is Built on Nothing Less	ELW 596, 597
Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee	ELW 836
For All the Saints Who From Their Labors Rest	ELW 422
Now Thank We All Our God	ELW 840
Let All Things Now Living	ELW 881
I Was There to Hear Your Borne Cry	ELW 732
Love Has Come	ELW 292
Goodness is Stronger than Evil	ELW 721
O God Beyond All Praising	ELW 721
Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross	ELW 335
Holy, Holy, Holy	ELW 413
Oh, Happy Day When We Shall Stand	ELW 441
The Church's One Foundation	ELW 654
Amazing grace, How Sweet the Sound	ELW 779
Softly and Tenderly Jesus is Calling	ELW 608
Eternal Father, Strong to Save	ELW 756
The King of Love My Shepherd Is	ELW 502
Lift High the Cross	ELW 660
Blest Be the Tie that Binds	ELW 656
What Wondrous Love is This	ELW 666
My Faith Looks Up to Thee	ELW 759
Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart	ELW 873
For the Beauty of the Earth	ELW 879