

remembering God's promises

A FUNERAL PLANNING HANDBOOK

Pastor's Guide

REMEMBERING GOD'S PROMISES: A FUNERAL PLANNING HANDBOOK
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References to ELW are from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Augsburg Fortress, 2006).

“Even at the Grave We Make Our Song: A Course Outline” is adapted from *In Sure and Certain Hope: A Funeral Sourcebook*. © 2017 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.

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Introduction

Remembering God's Promises: A Funeral Planning Handbook is a resource for families with a loved one who has died or whose death is imminent, adults attending a course or forum series on death and dying, and individuals making funeral plans in advance. Consider purchasing multiple copies and making handbooks readily available to people.

This guide is available in PDF and RTF formats. The PDF format allows you to use the guide as is. If you'd like to revise and reformat the content, use the RTF format.

Planning a loved one's funeral

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 of *Remembering God's Promises* are especially relevant for families and friends planning a loved one's funeral. Chapter 1 deals with many of the immediate tasks and concerns that follow the death of a loved one. Chapter 2 presents the funeral service as it appears in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, with additional notes and commentary. Chapter 3 provides lists of suggestions for scripture readings and hymns, as well as information on other planning options. When a family meets with you to plan a funeral, the worksheet at the end of chapter 3 is a place for them to write down information as well as any decisions that still need to be made. The funeral planning worksheet is also included in this guide.

Teaching and learning about death and dying

To help adults talk about death and dying in the context of faith and the church, use the handbook as a support piece for an annual course or adult forum series. This guide provides a four-session course outline on end-of-life decisions, hospice care, funeral and burial planning, and funeral liturgy planning. The course outline can be customized to suit your time frame, the resource persons available in your community, and your congregation's needs.

Planning funerals in advance

The handbook is also an excellent resource for individuals who want to pre-plan their own funerals. Chapter 5 includes "A guide for my Christian funeral" to assist with this process. The preplanning worksheet is provided at the end of this guide.

Related resources from Augsburg Fortress

In Sure and Certain Hope: A Funeral Sourcebook (9781506431451)

Melinda A. Quivik, general editor and contributor, et al.

This comprehensive guide for planning, presiding, and preaching at funerals includes a CD-ROM that allows you to customize, print, and distribute selected sourcebook pages within your congregation.

Peace at the Last: Visitation with the Dying (9781506415956)

Paul Palumbo, writer; Wendy Schramm, artist; Rolf Vegdahl, composer

Developed by a congregation as a resource for individuals and groups visiting those who are dying, this richly illustrated liturgy includes texts from the psalms, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, and other sources. The simple musical refrains can easily be sung without accompaniment.

Recommended reading for clergy

Jacobs, Martha R. *Clergy Guide to End-of-Life Issues*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2010.

Karaban, Roslyn A. *Complicated Losses and Difficult Deaths: A Practical Guide for Ministering to Grievers*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006.

Kauffman, Jeffrey. *Loss of the Assumptive World: A Theory of Traumatic Loss*. London: Routledge, 2014.

Mitchell, Kenneth R., and Herbert Anderson. *All Our Losses, All Our Grievs: Resources for Pastoral Care*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

Worden, William. *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner*, 4th ed. Springer Pub. Co., 2009.

Even at the grave, we make our song:

Course outline

In our culture we tend to sidestep conversations dealing with death or dying, thinking the topic is too surreal or morbid. But as people of faith—resurrection people—we need to have these exact conversations. We are called to point to the resurrection that comes from death, as we proclaim in the funeral service: “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” (ELW, p. 280, based on Rom. 6).

Holding an annual course or adult forum series in your congregation is one way to help individuals, families, and the entire congregation engage in important conversations about dying, death, and funerals. This four-session course outline looks at end-of-life decisions, hospice care, funeral and burial planning, and funeral liturgy planning. Consider inviting local experts to lead discussion on these topics. The sessions could be held during the four weeks leading up to All Saints Sunday as a reminder that in life and in death, we are the Lord’s. At the end of the course or adult forum series, invite participants to leave copies of their funeral plans in the church office so that their wishes will be honored upon their deaths.

Week 1: End-of-life decisions and advanced directives

Preparation: Have copies of ELW and *Remembering God’s Promises: A Funeral Planning Handbook* ready to distribute.

Optional: Print copies of the essay “Tending to the dying: A nurse’s view” from the CD-ROM included with *In Sure and Certain Hope: A Funeral Sourcebook*.

Presenter: A lawyer who works in this field

Time frame: 1 hour

1. Opening prayer
2. Opening song: “O Christ the Same” (ELW 760)
3. Introduction of speaker and topic: End-of-life decisions and advanced directives
4. What does the ELCA say about this?
 - A look at “End of Life Decisions” (ELCA social message, 1992), available at www.elca.org (search “end of life decisions”)
 - Small-group dialogue at tables around the presentation and the ELCA’s stance, including the sharing of personal experiences with these decisions
5. Closing questions and answers

6. Distribution of flyers with suggested local resource persons
7. Distribution of copies of *Remembering God's Promises* and recommended reading for the next session
 - *Remembering God's Promises*, introduction
 - Optional: “Tending to the dying: A nurse’s view” from *In Sure and Certain Hope: A Funeral Sourcebook*, pp. 214-217
8. Closing prayer

Week 2: Hospice care

Preparation: Have copies of ELW on hand for the opening song.

Presenter: Hospice chaplain or hospice nurse from local agency

Time frame: 1 hour

1. Opening prayer
2. Opening song: “Day by Day” (ELW 790)
3. Introduction of speaker and topic: Palliative care and hospice care
4. Stages of grief
5. Local options for hospice care and the role of insurance companies
6. Closing questions and answers
7. Recommended reading for the next session
 - *Remembering God's Promises*, chapter 1
8. Closing prayer

Week 3: Funeral and burial planning

Preparation: Have copies of ELW on hand for the opening song.

Presenter: Funeral director from a local funeral home

Time frame: 1 hour

1. Opening prayer
2. Opening song: “Into Paradise May the Angels Lead You” (ELW 222)
3. Introduction of speaker and topic: What is involved in planning a funeral?
 - Relationship between the funeral home and the church
 - Costs associated with the funeral, burial, cremation

- Services such as military honors, Rotary, Free Masons, and so on
 - Other considerations regarding planning: pastor’s availability, church availability, funeral home vs. sanctuary, and others
4. Various options for burial
 - Green burial
 - Cremation
 - Burial of a coffin or urn
 - Other forms: graveside service only, scattering ashes
 5. Local options for funeral homes
 6. Closing questions and answers
 7. Recommended reading for the next session
 - *Remembering God’s Promises*, chapters 2 and 3
 8. Closing prayer

Week 4: Liturgical planning for a funeral

Preparation: Have copies of ELW on hand for the opening song and the funeral rite. Optional: print out copies of “A guide for my Christian funeral” from *Remembering God’s Promises*

Presenters: Pastor and musician of the congregation

Time frame: 1 hour

1. Opening prayer
2. Opening song: “Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song” (ELW 808)
3. The funeral rite in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (see *Remembering God’s Promises*, chapter 2)
 - Shape of the rite—gathering, word, [meal,] sending, committal
 - Scripture—helpful ways to choose texts for the funeral
 - Music—the assembly’s song within the funeral
 - Considering the funeral in light of the liturgical season
4. Planning a funeral liturgy
 - Music
 - Scripture texts
 - The role of family and friends

- Other issues, such as whether and when to include remembrances by friends and family, use of military rites
 - Helpful and unhelpful things to include or omit: the pall instead of the national flag, the role of altar flowers in relation to the funeral flowers, the role of a sermon and the intermixing of a eulogy or personal stories with the gospel proclamation
5. The role of the congregation in the funeral and afterward
 6. Reasons to pre-plan your own funeral (distribute copies of “A guide for my Christian funeral”)
 7. Closing questions and answers
 8. Recommended reading
 - *Remembering God’s Promises*, chapter 5
 9. Closing prayer

Funeral planning worksheet

If your loved one made any arrangements or requests for his or her funeral, use them in making these plans.

About your loved one

Full name

Nickname (if any)

Date and place of birth

Date and place of baptism

Date and place of death

Age at death

Military veteran

- An honor guard will be present at the interment Yes No
- The national flag will be presented to the family Yes No

Family information

Parents' names

Siblings

Spouse's/Partner's name

Children's names (including spouses/partners)

Grandchildren's names

Other significant persons

Funeral planning worksheet 1

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Memories and stories

How would you describe your loved one?

Childhood stories

Favorite activities

Talents and skills

Interests and passions

What will you miss most about your loved one?

The body

___ Burial

- Embalming ___ Yes ___ No ___ Only if legally required
- Name/location of cemetery
- Plot number

___ Cremation

- What will be done with the ashes?

___ Donation of body for research

Visitation/viewing

Provide time for viewing of the body ___ Yes ___ No

- Location
- Date and time

Funeral service

Location

Date and time

The deceased will be present in ___ Coffin ___ Urn ___ Objects of remembrance

Funeral planning worksheet 2

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Baptismal pall

Name of person(s) to place the baptismal pall over the coffin or urn

Thanksgiving/remembrance, eulogy, poem, letter

Name of speaker or reader

Scripture readings

First reading

Psalm

Second reading

Gospel

Person(s) to read scripture

Why these readings have been chosen

Music

Entrance hymn

Hymn of the day

Communion hymn(s)

Closing hymn

Other preferred music

Choir, instrumentalist, and/or soloist

Why this music has been chosen

Holy communion

Will be celebrated Yes No

- Person(s) to process with the bread and wine
- Person(s) to assist with distribution

Funeral planning worksheet 3

"Funeral planning worksheet" from *Remembering God's Promises*. Permission is granted to reproduce this page for local use only. Copyright © 2018 Augsburg Fortress.

Pallbearers

If a coffin will be present at the funeral service, provide names of at least six people to serve as pallbearers

Meal following the interment

Will be provided Yes No

- Location

Memorials

Church memorial fund, specifically for _____

Church endowment fund

Other organization(s)

Funeral planning worksheet 4

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A guide for my Christian funeral

About me

Full name

Nickname (if any)

Date and place of birth

Date and place of baptism

Military veteran

- I would like to have an honor guard present Yes No
- I would like to have the national flag presented to my family Yes No

Family information

Parents' names

Siblings

Spouse's/Partner's name

Children's names (including spouses/partners)

Grandchildren's names

Other significant persons

Obituary information

Important dates, events, accomplishments, and so on

A guide for my Christian funeral worksheet 1

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Church information

Name

Address

Phone number

Pastor(s)

Funeral home information

Name

Address

Phone number

Have prearrangements been made? Yes No

- If yes, when?
- Location of prearrangement documents

My body

Donate my organs/tissues as transplants for research

- Transplant and/or donor documents are complete and attached

Burial

- Embalming Yes No Only if legally required
- Name/location of cemetery and plot number
- Name of contact for green cemetery burial

Cremation

- What would you like to have done with the ashes?

Donation of body for research

- Donor documents are complete and attached

A guide for my Christian funeral worksheet 2

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Visitation/viewing

Provide time for viewing of the body ____ Yes ____ No

- If so, your preferred location

Funeral service

Location

Baptismal pall

Name of person(s) to place the baptismal pall over the coffin or urn

Thanksgiving/remembrance, eulogy, poem, letter

Name of speaker or reader

Scripture

First reading

Psalm

Second reading

Gospel

Person(s) to read scripture

Why these readings have been chosen

A guide for my Christian funeral worksheet 3

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Music

Entrance hymn

Hymn of the day

Communion hymn(s)

Closing hymn

Other preferred music

Choir, instrumentalist, and/or soloist

Why this music has been chosen

Holy communion

Will be celebrated Yes No

- Person(s) to process with the bread and wine
- Person(s) to assist in distributing communion

Pallbearers

If a coffin will be present at the funeral service, provide names of at least six people to serve as pallbearers

If an urn for ashes will be present, provide the name of someone who will carry the vessel into the sanctuary

Meal following the interment

Will be provided Yes No

- Location

A guide for my Christian funeral worksheet 4

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Memorial gift preferences

Use memorial gifts to further support the following ministries and organizations.

___ Church memorial fund, specifically for _____

___ Church endowment fund

___ Other organizations (please provide name and contact information below)

Intent

Dear family and friends,

I have carefully considered these choices and preferences. Use them after my death to guide your decisions and to plan a Christian funeral that comforts you and proclaims the sure and certain hope of the resurrection.

Signed _____

Date _____

Please review and update this document regularly. Give copies to family members and your pastor upon completion and each time a change is made.

A guide for my Christian funeral worksheet 5

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