



FUNERAL AND MEMORIAL SERVICE GUIDELINES

A guide for understanding options available upon the death of a loved one including planning tools to help you develop a funeral/memorial service and reception

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I. FUNERAL GUIDELINES

This booklet is designed to offer guidelines for the many responsibilities and time-sensitive decisions you will face at the death of your loved one.

The most important element during this time of planning and decision making is to keep channels open for communication and discussion. As Christians, we have the assurance that we have found life—a victory—over death. It is something we accept by faith, faith grounded in the fact that Jesus was resurrected and therefore we also will be one day resurrected to new life.

ARRANGEMENTS

WHEN TO CALL THE CHURCH AND/OR YOUR PASTOR

When death occurs, either the family or the mortuary will call the church funeral coordinator, (209) 847-9428, to make arrangements for a funeral or memorial service. The pastor-on-call will return your call within four business hours. Reserving a room and date for the service will take place during regular church business hours.

In order to plan a personal service that honors your loved one and your family's wishes, it will be necessary to spend a short amount of time with the minister who will conduct the service. This meeting can include not only the family but also others who assist them in planning the service.

Ministers from outside the River Oak Grace Community Church staff must be approved by the River Oak Grace pastoral team.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR

If not prearranged, a funeral director should be called as soon as possible, day or night. He/she and other qualified personnel will be very helpful and reassuring during this difficult time.

Before you decide on a date and time for your Funeral or

Memorial Service, be sure to confirm the details with your Minister or church funeral coordinator.

II. FUNERAL SERVICE

PURPOSE

A funeral is a ceremony that allows family and friends to express their feelings and to receive spiritual support. It also provides an opportunity to acknowledge respect for the deceased and regard for the survivors. The sharing of these feelings is a therapeutic way to gain strength from one another.

A funeral can be a celebration of a life. The life of the deceased lives on in the memories of those who survive. When memories are shared, comfort is provided to the family, knowing how their loved one touched the lives of others he/she knew.

A funeral provides an acceptable atmosphere for grieving. Feeling anger, crying you may not be able to control, and loneliness that seems unbearable are all part of the normal grieving process.

For the Christian (a believer in Christ), a funeral is also an opportunity to celebrate the home going of the loved one and his/her eternal life in Jesus Christ.

TYPES OF SERVICES

There are several types of services to consider.

- Funeral Service with the body present
- Memorial Service without the body present
- Military Service for a person who was in the military *

These are often followed by a brief Graveside Service ... or the family may choose to have a Graveside Service only.

A public funeral or memorial service allows the community to give support and share the sorrow of the immediate family. A private service limits the number of attendees and is at times, only for family and/or close friends.

(*For those persons who have served in our country's armed forces, a military service with a flag-covered casket and military personnel is very appropriate.)

PLANNING TOOLS

Following is a list that can be used as a tool to help you process thru various components of developing a funeral/memorial service and reception for your loved one.

Memory table

church provides table, easels and black tablecloth

Guest book- (strongly suggest one that is not bound but comes as a 3-ring binder)

Flowers

Programs/memory cards

Pictures

Basket for cards

Program handout

Service components

Song word sheets

Memorial contribution suggestions

Before service begins

Music

Family meet in prayer room/Minister lead into Worship

enter

Number of Family members to assure seating together

Ushers/pallbearers

Guest book attendants

Memorial Service

Obituary-Eulogy Read

Music

Prayer

Scripture

Message

Remembrances

Power Point Presentation Sharing Time Closing Prayer

Sound needs

Minister

Music – instrument

Music - vocal

Music – recorded

Prerecorded music

Sound tech - CD recording

of CD copies of service: 1st free, \$5 for each additional copy

Closing service

Minister announces reception

Music while Minister accompanies family to reception

Flowers etc. carried to reception

Clean-up of lobby and chapel

Reception components

Set-up time

Tablecloths/decorations

Paper goods

Food

Drinks

Requesting help for set-up, serving and clean-up

Music

Video

Move flowers/plants and memory table items to reception Distribution of flower gifts

LOCATION

If the deceased has been an active member of a church, it is appropriate for the funeral or memorial service to be in that church. However, you may choose a funeral home chapel because it's a more convenient location with parking and personal services.

Your family will need to make arrangements with the mortuary, or with a friend or family member to:

- greet guests
- attend a guest book

• distribute memorial cards and/or programs.

WHEN SHOULD THE SERVICE BE HELD?

Usually the funeral service is held the third or fourth day after death. This allows for family to gather and for proper local announcements and arrangements to be made. A memorial service can be at any time, although some people feel that sooner is better than later.

If the service is to be held at River Oak Grace Community Church, the church calendar **must be** checked for room availability. The church funeral coordinator, (209) 847-9428 will be happy to assist you. This must be done before confirming the location and date of the service.

MUSIC

Music can be an affirmation of faith and a spiritual comfort for families. It is not required, but encouraged. Many families desire a praise service of contemporary praise and worship songs. Others prefer traditional hymns of the faith.

Special songs requested by the family are appropriate and encouraged. It is suggested that music be provided by a soloist and accompanied by an instrument rather than a cassette tape or compact disc (CD), although the latter is available.

PALLBEARERS

Pallbearers are those persons who carry the casket from the funeral service to the hearse, and at the graveside services from the hearse to the gravesite.

Proper etiquette indicates that relatives, friends, church members, or business associates may serve as pallbearers.

Generally, the family is responsible for contacting these persons. They should be contacted as soon as possible so the persons selected can have time to make necessary personal arrangements.

Honorary pallbearers are optional. They do not actively participate in the funeral service but serve only in an honorary capacity.

WHAT IS REQUIRED IN A FORMAL OBITUARY?

Information published in local newspapers varies according to communities. Your funeral director will advise you of correct procedures. The obituary includes factual information as well as a brief characterization of the person's life.

You should be prepared with the following information when you go to the funeral home to make preparations:

- Full name of the deceased
- Name of spouse and maiden name (if applicable)
- Names of children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren
- Names of brothers, sisters, and in-laws
 - Position in birth order
- Names of father and mother, including mother's maiden name
- Birthplace and birth date
- Date and place of marriage; story of how spouse was met and courtship
- Occupations
- Favorite activities
- Special abilities
- Personality traits
- · Schools from which graduated
- Military service
- Community service
- Fraternal affiliations
- Honors, awards, achievements, etc.
- Time and place of death
- Spiritual/religious history
 - Story of spiritual awakening
 - Baptism—when, where, other details
 - Ministry involvement, volunteer service, etc.
 - Significant people who mentored or discipled loved one
 - Significant people mentored or discipled by loved one
- Anything else of interest
- Memorial Fund (if there is a church or charity to donate to. See Flowers and Memorials on the next page)

CHILDREN ATTENDING THE FUNERAL

Children should be encouraged and permitted, but not forced to attend a funeral. You will want to consider the maturity of a child, but generally if he/she is five to seven years of age, the child should be encouraged to participate with the family in offering expressions of love and devotion to the deceased.

To allow the child to express his/her love in his/her own way can have significant impact for the child's future emotional development.

III. MISCELLANEOUS

FLOWERS AND MEMORIALS

Flowers

Many people wish to express their sympathy by sending flowers. You will want to plan for your family or Mortuary director to collect the floral arrangements after the service.

Memorials

When death occurs, friends wish to express their sympathy in some evident fashion. The church encourages its members to recommend to friends the opportunity to make memorial gifts to the church or some other worthy charitable cause. By specifying one of the established designated funds, individuals may designate where their memorial gifts will be used in the church. In the event that the individual does not wish to designate the gift, the church will determine where the gift will be used within the church ministries.

Memorial gifts given are kept in a separate account from the church budget in the name of the person who has passed away. Our financial secretary will see that the family is made aware of who has given gifts so that family members will be able to acknowledge the contributions. (Please allow a few weeks before expecting a record from the financial secretary as it usually takes a couple of weeks for people to send in memorial gifts).

RECORDINGS AND GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

Recordings

Our sound technician makes a CD of each funeral or memorial service held at River Oak Grace Community Church. You will receive the original master copy as complimentary from ROG. If you wish to receive additional copies, you may order them at a cost of \$5.00 per copy.

Grief Support Group

Our church offers an on-going Grief Support Group in which we use the *GriefShare* Video series. The classes meet for approximately 10 weeks two to three times a year. You and your family members are invited to attend. Contact the Church Office for dates and times, (209) 847-9428, check our website at www.riveroakgrace.org, or watch for details in our weekly bulletin.

VIEWING / VISITATION

Viewing/Visitation is a significant and appropriate time to pay respects to families of the deceased and encourages sharing the experience of death and grieving with your family and friends.

Two common practices for viewing the body are at the funeral home a day or two before the funeral, and/or one hour prior to the funeral service.

If there's been a cremation and a memorial service is planned, providing adequate time to receive guests also allows a healthy grieving process for all involved. This is usually about 90 minutes before the service. A visitation can also occur the day prior to a service.

CASKET

Selection

An important matter which the family must decide is the selection of the casket. Caskets are available in a wide variety of materials, designs, finishes, colors and prices. In making your selection, a straightforward and unbiased consideration of your living standards or those of the deceased, is a good guide.

Another option available is to choose a casket from a wholesale house rather than from a funeral home. This cuts down on the total funeral expense.

Will the Casket be Open or Closed During or Following the Service?

The casket may be open prior to the funeral service or after the service so people attending may pay their last respects. At River Oak Grace Community Church, the casket is usually closed during a funeral/memorial service. The closing of the casket is usually at a time agreed upon with the family, but not usually during the service or when the public is present.

BURIAL VERSUS CREMATION

The Christian concept is that the body, during the earthly life, is a temple of God's Spirit. Regardless of the method of disposal, the body after death is to be treated with reverence and dignity, as a "spiritual body, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1).

Cremation is becoming an increasingly common practice. Perhaps the most important consideration in deciding for or against cremation is not the wish of the deceased (unless specified), but the feelings of loved ones. Burial can be done in a cemetery plot or a mausoleum, or by scattering the ashes at an approved site.

INTERMENT

Interment means place of burial. The interment is usually brief – a reading from the Bible, prayer, and committal of the body.

Some families choose a public service with a private interment (either before or after the service). Others may prefer that both the service and interment be public. Still others may choose a private service as well as a private interment.

GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING A CEMETERY PLOT

Careful thought needs to be given to purchasing a cemetery plot. It is suggested that you personally visit the cemetery. Since requirements of cemeteries vary, the family should check to see if the cemetery meets their religious preference. It would also be helpful to determine the restrictions regarding types of burial vaults and monuments, or the size and design of memorials.

COSTS

Some funeral homes use a one-price system for the complete funeral based on the casket selected. Others charge for each service provided (itemized). Whatever the type, some factors to be considered are:

- Merchandise (casket, memorial folder, acknowledgment cards, etc.)
- Professional services (funeral director and his personnel)
- Use of funeral home facilities
- Cash expenditures (clergy honorariums, musicians, newspaper notices, certified death transcripts, flowers, gratuities, etc.)

If you are a member or regular attendee of River Oak Grace Community Church, there is no charge for use of church facilities for a funeral or memorial service.

Assets of the deceased, based on insurance, social security and other resources are the basis for the family's ability to assume financial responsibility for a funeral of a loved one.

HONORARIUMS

For members of River Oak Grace Community Church, there are no fees for the use of the church building and no honoraria are necessary for the staff.

For non-members of the church customary fees for janitorial services, sound technician and facility usage will be assessed. Please contact the church office for current fees. It is always appropriate to give an honorarium to soloists or others who provide special music

at a funeral. The amount is left up to each family or individual. The Minister can help with suggested amounts.

Please note that our Business Manager prefers that any money given for services rendered (janitorial and sound technician fees) be given directly to the individual and not to the church.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES

CHURCH PEOPLE - FRIENDS

This is a unique opportunity for church people to become servants to the family during a death. It is also a time when the bereaved should allow others to help.

Some possibilities to consider for service are: supplying food and finding persons to assume kitchen chores, assigning someone to answer the telephone or the doorbell as well as keeping the guest list, making cars available for errands, providing a babysitter or child care, providing accommodations for out-of town visitors, cleaning the house, mowing the lawn, laundry, opening the mail, or getting groceries. As you can see, these are very creative ways to make life as comfortable as possible for the bereaved family.

Due to local publicity, burglaries can be a problem. Securing a house sitter during the visitation and funeral times can be a big relief for the bereaved family. You can also notify your local police protection agency of your absence.

FUNERAL RECEPTION

A reception after the funeral or memorial service is an opportune time for the bereaved family to relax somewhat after many stressfilled days and for friends to convey their support and offer expressions of love, respect and grief.

River Oak Grace has space available for a reception. The funeral coordinator is responsible for necessary arrangements. Friends and family may volunteer to bring food to a reception following the service but it is important to communicate that information to the

River Oak Grace Community Church hospitality leader so all can work together and avoid duplication of efforts.

While planning the reception it's important not to forget drinks, condiments, paper products (including large/small paper plates, utensils, napkins, etc.).

FUNERAL HOME

- Arrangements with the Cemetery, or place of disposition
- Certificate of Death (required statistical information)
- Insurance claim procedures
- Transfer deceased, if out-of-state

ATTORNEY

Some legal ramifications regarding the aspects of death are best accomplished by securing an attorney. This could include such things as:

- The Will
- Banking transactions
- Social Security benefits
- Veteran's Administration benefits
- Safe deposit boxes
- Motor vehicle title transfers
- Estate settlement
- Sale or transfer of real estate property
- Sale or transfer of stock and bond certificates
- Others

V. FUTURE PLANNING

Have you discussed with your family and loved ones your wishes in the event of your own death or that of a family member? What kind of final, lasting witness do you wish to offer those who attend your funeral? What kind of understanding of life, dying, and life-beyonddeath do you wish for your funeral to reflect? Is it important to you that your funeral be an affirmation of the Christian faith? We all speak of life and death as a normal occurrence but we seldom talk or think about the inevitable end of life's cycle or matters associated with it. It is healthy to talk about death with your family and loved ones. It is equally important to apply your faith to life.

Making your own funeral arrangements provides comfort to those left behind who must make critical decisions. It is very helpful for family members to know your thoughts and wishes.

Some people have written their own eulogies and/or worship service to memorialize his/her life, thus providing a witness of faith even in death.

A "LEGAL" WILL or TRUST

Making a legal will or trust is as much a part of dying as it is of living. It expresses your final wishes and also denotes the distribution of your property as you designated. Your lawyer will advise you properly of the legal matters within your own state and the best way to handle the situation for your family.

A "LIVING" WILL

A "Living Will" indicates your personal desires at a time in your life when you are of a right mind and capable of making this decision. Later in life it becomes very useful especially if you become incapable of making logical decisions. For those people who may have to care for you, a "living Will" is a useful guide.

BODY AND ORGAN DONATION

Body Donation

The use of one's body after death, either through transplanted organs or as a subject of study, can be beneficial to the community.

Organ Donation

Organ donation includes eyes, tissues, or all vital organs for research and/or transplants. It is very important for an individual requesting a donation to inform and notify their family of their

desires. To aid in the process, it is advantageous to request for a donor card to be sent to the individual requesting the donation.

FINAL INSTRUCTIONS

It is very helpful to your family and loved ones to have your final instructions written out in the event of your death.

CONCLUSION

We hope you have found this funeral manual informative and helpful in order to familiarize yourself with some of the common facets of funerals and memorial services.

To receive more detailed information not included in this manual, seek the confidence of your funeral director, church funeral coordinator or a Minister who will be available to answer any questions you have or assist in any decisions you wish to make.

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