

**HANDBOOK
OF
FUNERAL/ MEMORIAL
POLICIES AND GUIDELINES**



**ZION ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH
SHEFFIELD, IOWA**

The funeral policies outlined in this handbook were approved
by the Church Council of Zion St. John Lutheran Church
August 2019, updated 2025

PREFACE

This guide is intended to be a source of information for your family and to detail what the church can and cannot do. As every person is an individual the Pastor and Church Council reserve the right to amend this guide or depart from these guidelines as needed.

We as the family of Zion St. John Lutheran Church wish to support you as you grieve and remember your loved one. A funeral or memorial service is an opportunity to worship God and give thanks to him for our loved one as we recognize the fulfillment of the promises made to us by God at our baptism.

A funeral or a memorial service is a worship service that allows the family and friends to express their feelings and to receive spiritual support. It provides an opportunity to acknowledge and respect the deceased person, and to surround survivors with love and care. The sharing of these feelings is a therapeutic way to gain strength by being surrounded by God's love.

There are two main purposes for a funeral or memorial service. The first is to honor the life and celebrate the memory of the person who has died. The second purpose is to proclaim the Resurrection and celebrate the promise of life eternal in Christ. While the church provides an Order of Service for funerals it may be customized to fit your needs and personalities. With assistance of the Pastor you will receive direction concerning the appropriate service for your loved one. The duties of the Church, Pastor, staff and musicians of the church are to provide an appropriate worship service and meaningful funeral. There are many details that bring the service together to honor your loved one. It is our desire to be as helpful as possible within our scope of service. Funeral and memorial services are provided for members and non-members alike. Services may be held in the church, at a funeral home, graveside, or other venue.

What is the difference between a funeral and a memorial service? A service with the body present in a casket is referred to as a funeral. A service where the body is not present is referred to as a memorial. A funeral often includes an in-ground burial at a cemetery. A memorial often follows a cremation. In some cases, a family may choose to have a funeral with a casket and then have a cremation. This is an option to discuss with a funeral director. As a service to the families we suggest you contact a funeral home to help with the 'other details' so that we may focus on serving your family. If you choose to have the body, Iowa law requires a licensed funeral director be involved.

CONTACTING YOUR FUNERAL HOME

Often before a death occurs the Pastor is with your family to walk with you prior to a death. On occasion, the funeral home informs the Pastor of the death. In any event, a funeral home is able to coordinate different participants, line up non-church tasks, such as placing notices in newspapers, coordinating with the cemetery, providing guidance on laws and rules relevant to your situation. They will also be able to provide you with services that by law require a licensed funeral home and funeral director. The laws do not require you to purchase specific merchandise or services from the funeral home except in specific cases. Your funeral director will be able to counsel you in this area. Please note that whenever a physical body is involved a licensed funeral director must be in charge, according to Iowa law.

IF A FUNERAL HOME IS NOT COORDINATING THE SERVICE

A family may choose not to have a funeral director assist them, but be aware that the following items will be the responsibility of the family:

- ◆ Burial— including contacting the cemetery and arranging for the digging of the grave and vault
- ◆ Military Honors
- ◆ Procession to the cemetery
- ◆ Transport and handling cremains. (The church or the Pastor will not handle or transport cremains, and are not responsible for cremains that are lost or spilled.)
- ◆ Flowers-All flowers and gifts delivered to the church need to be organized and displayed by the family. The church has limited plant stands that may be used.
- ◆ Memorial folders- The church will provide bulletins, for an additional fee, but does not provide memorial folders.
- ◆ Easels to display photos or memorabilia. This includes any digital formats
- ◆ Obtaining any special or recorded music. Church policy states that all music is obtained according to copyright law. This also includes coordinating musicians and rehearsals.
- ◆ Obituary and death notices- this includes advertising of the funeral or memorial
- ◆ Guest book

- ◆ Card box
- ◆ Death certificate
- ◆ Social Security Administration notification
- ◆ Provide the church and Pastor with ONE contact person who will work to coordinate all services.
- ◆ Arrange for pall bearers, if desired.
- ◆ Provide a representative to be at the church 90 minutes prior to the service to coordinate these responsibilities.
- ◆ Provide payment of honorariums and fees.
- ◆ General church clean up

SETTING AND CONFIRMING THE TIME AND DATE FOR THE FUNERAL AND/ OR VISITATION**

Many factors come into consideration when setting the time and date for a funeral and/or visitation. Traveling family, church/clergy availability, women's group for luncheon, cemetery preparation time, the funeral home schedule, and the weather influence when to have a funeral. We, in the church, strive to meet your family's needs and will work with both your family and/or the funeral home and the needs of our church members, to schedule a time for the service. We respectfully request that only one funeral or visitation be scheduled per day.

VISITATION**

A visitation with the family may be scheduled preceding the funeral or memorial. Generally this is time for the community to visit with family members and to "pay respect" for the life of the deceased. The family can choose to include picture displays and momentos of the deceased person's life. This could include in digital format. The family could also choose to include a prayer service or a time of sharing remembrances. Some families choose to have visitation the night preceding the funeral/ memorial, others immediately preceding the service. The length and amount of time is the family's preference.

**Funeral Director Responsibility

GUEST CLERGY AND SPEAKERS**

Normally the Pastor of this congregation will preside over all funerals. There may be a family member or friend who is a clergy member that you would like to have participate in the funeral. The guest speaker or clergy member should be invited by the presiding pastor and they will coordinate their roles based on the requests of your family and appropriateness for the worship service. You may also choose to have a family member write and/ or give the eulogy, with prior approval of the Pastor.

ORGANIST/VOCALIST/SPECIAL MUSIC**

It is the custom of this congregation that live music be part of the funeral service held in the church building. This may be with the organ or piano or both. You may also choose congregational singing or a soloist. Recorded music can be used at the service with prior approval of the pastor. Zion St. John Lutheran Church has a list of musicians and vocalists that may be asked to perform at the service, others may be asked with approval of the Pastor. (See Appendix C)

FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS**

The church has a limited number of stands for flower displays. When flowers are arranged care must be taken to allow access to the altar area for the clergy and speakers. Also if communion is to be served space must be left for the efficient flow of traffic during communion. The family may wish to direct where flower arrangements are placed but the Pastor has final say on placement. Church staff will be preparing for the services they provide your family and will not be able to set up flowers for the funeral. After the service, the family will need to determine transportation and dispersment of the flowers and/ or arrangements.

USHERS**

The church has members who may be available to usher during the funeral service. In addition to directing people to their pews they will be responsible for assisting with use of the elevator. If you would like to have ushers from the congregation please let your funeral director and/ or Pastor know so these people may be contacted. You may have family members or friends who wish to usher. This should be coordinated with the Pastor and these people should be available to be instructed in the operation of the elevator and exits.

FUNERAL BULLETINS/GUEST BOOKS**

Zion St. John Lutheran Church will provide bulletins, for a fee, upon request. (See Appendix B) Zion St John, will not provide a guest book. You may choose to have your funeral provider provide an appropriate bulletin or memorial booklet.

SOUND AND VIDEO OPERATORS**

Our church has been blessed with a variety of audio and video capabilities. Due to the complexity of this equipment we can only allow persons trained in their use to operate this equipment. Funeral services may include a video or slide show to play before and/or after the funeral, recorded music, internet streaming of a service and recording of the audio and video, as well as having video and audio available in the fellowship hall for overflow seating. All Power Point presentations should be reviewed by the Pastor prior to use. The Pastor will have a list of operators who may be available to operate the sound and video equipment.

FEES**

As part of our ministry at Zion St. John Lutheran Church we serve all members without cost. There are minimal fees for non-members. If there is financial hardship, please consult with Pastor. It is also customary to extend honorariums to certain participants in a funeral as a thank you for their time. Suggestions are found in Appendix B but are not required as fees.

**Funeral Director Responsibility

FUNERAL SERVICE**

It is important to personalize each funeral service to the needs of the family while creating an appropriate worship service. The Lutheran funeral liturgy, found in the ELW hymnal, provides a guide for the flow of the service. It has been the custom of our congregation to have the obituary read during the service. You may request this not be read. Scriptures may include an Old Testament reading, a New Testament reading and a Gospel reading. A psalm may be included as well. (See Appendix A) Typically 3 or 4 songs or hymns are part of the funeral service but there may be more or less as the family chooses. (See the Appendix C) Holy Communion is a part of the funeral liturgy and may be part of the service if you choose. As a Sacrament of the church the Pastor can inform you of the options for having communion at a funeral.

FUNERAL LUNCHEON**

An important part of a funeral is a time for food and fellowship. WELCA, the Women of the ELCA, will provide a luncheon if desired. The Pastor has a list of guidelines for a luncheon. Typically the family will be responsible for the cost of food purchased and an additional honorarium will be extended to WELCA. You may choose to have the luncheon catered from outside the church. The WELCA may be able to assist with serving a catered luncheon. Speak with the Pastor for more information. (See Appendix D)

BURIAL**

Although the Zion St John congregation owns and operates St. John (Zion) Lutheran Cemetery, it is a separate entity. The records and burial spaces are maintained by the St. John Cemetery Committee. The committee is responsible for determining fees for burial plots, excavation and internment. The Pastor will provide the names of the contact persons. The funeral director (or family) will coordinate with the grave digger. Due to record keeping requirements and to reduce errors, only the designated grave digger is allowed to open and close graves in our cemetery. Grave markers or headstones may be placed with the approval and direction of the Cemetery Committee.

SCRIPTURE AND OTHER READINGS

Selection of Holy Scripture for a funeral is coordinated with the Pastor. This may include favorite passages or readings that reflect the life of Christ in your loved one's life. You may also include other readings not from scripture for the service, these will need to be approved by the Pastor. A way to include family or friends may be to ask them to do the readings for the funeral. You may also wish to have personal memories shared during the service, it is best to have these written so the reader stays on task or if they cannot continue during this emotional time, another reader, or the Pastor, may take over. (See Appendix A)

FUNERAL PALL

The Funeral Pall is a cloth used to cover the casket or the urn during the funeral service. This represents the new garment we put on when we are baptized into Christ's family. The use of the Pall is optional but is a visual reminder of the promise of salvation we received at baptism. The pall is placed on the casket or urn at the beginning of the funeral service and removed before we leave the church. Your family may choose to be part of this 'dressing of your loved one'.

APPENDIX A

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUNERAL READINGS

PSALMS:

Psalm 23:1-6	Psalm 27:1-13	Psalm 34:1-9, 17-22
Psalm 42:1-5	Psalm 46:1-7	Psalm 73: 23-29
Psalm 84:1-12	Psalm 90:1-17	Psalm 109:1-22
Psalm 118:1-9, 15-29	Psalm 121: 1-8	Psalm 130: 1-7
Psalm 139:1-18	Psalm 143: 1-12	Psalm 145:1-21
Psalm 146:1-9		

LESSONS: OLD TESTAMENT

Deuteronomy 30:19-20a	“choose life...”
Job 19:23-27a	“I know that my Redeemer lives...”
Ecclesiastes 3:1-14	“A time for everything under heaven...”
Song Of Solomon 8: 6-7	“love is stronger than death...”
Isaiah 25:6-9	“he will swallow up death forever...”
Isaiah 43:1	“you are mine...”
Isaiah 61:1-3	“the Spirit anointed me to bring good tidings”
Lamentations 3:22-26, 31-33	(child)

LESSONS: NEW TESTAMENT

Romans 5:1-11	“While we were yet helpless...”
Romans 5:17-21	“by one man came death, ...and life...”
Romans 8:31-39	“Nothing can separate us from ...God...”
Romans 14:7-9	“Whether we live or die we are the Lord’s”
I Corinthians 15:12-26	“Resurrection of the body”
I Thessalonians 4:13-18	“the dead shall rise first...”
I Peter 1:3-9	“Born anew to a living hope..”
I John 3:1-2	(child)
Revelation 7:9-12, 9-17	“Who is this host arrayed in white...”
Revelation 14:13	“Blessed is the dead who die in the Lord...”
Revelation 21:2-7	“New Jerusalem...”

GOSPEL

Matthew 9:18-19	Jairus’ daughter
Matthew 11:28-30	“Come to me all who labor...”
Matthew 25: 1-13	Ten maidens
Mark 10:13-16	“Let the little children come to me...”
Luke 2:25-38, 29-35	“let your servant depart in peace”
Luke 7:11-17	Widow’s son
Luke 12:35-40	“Be ready, ...”
John 5:24-29	“He who believes has eternal life...”
John 6:35-40	“I will raise them up on the last day...”
John 11:25-27	“I am the Resurrection...”
John 14:1-6	“I go to prepare a place for you...”

APPENDIX B
SCHEDULE OF SUGGESTED FEES AND
HONORARIUMS

(If no funeral director is used, separate checks should be payable to the individuals or the group @ the time of service)

	<u>Member</u>	<u>Non- Member</u>
Use of Church (funeral/visitation)	No Fee	\$100
Pastor Suggested Honorarium	\$100-250	
Assisting Clergy Suggested Honorarium	\$50-100	
Organist	\$75	\$75
Special Musicians	\$50	\$50
Secretarial – bulletin prep/other (family pays for paper and printing)	No Fee	\$50
Custodian	No Fee	\$75
Sound System Engineer	\$75	\$75
WELCA – Luncheon prep/serving (family is responsible for food costs)	\$100-250	\$100-250

APPENDIX C MUSIC

These lists are not intended to be all inclusive. They are here to assist in your selections. You may choose scripture and hymns/ songs that are not on this list. For instance, you may choose to include your loved one's favorite scripture or song. That might include a confirmation or baptismal verse.

HYMNS: ELW

#366 *The Strife is O'er, the Battle Done*
 #367 *Now All the Vault*
 #376 *Thine is the Glory*
 #380 *Hallelujah! Jesus Lives!*
 #392 *Alleluia! Sing to Jesus*
 #396 *Spirit of Gentleness*
 #422 *For All the Saints*
 #423 *Shall We Gather at the River*
 #437 *On Jordan's Stormy Bank I Stand*
 #439 *Soon and Very Soon*
 #459 *Wade in the Water*
 #502 *The King of Love My Shepherd is*
 #504 *A Mighty Fortress*
 #536 *God Be with You*
 #543 *Go My Children with My Blessing*
 #574 *Here I Am*
 #581 *You Are Mine*
 #595 *Jesus Loves Me*
 #597 *My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*
 #608 *Softly and Tenderly*
 #611 *I Heard the Voice of Jesus*
 #613 *Thy Holy Wings*
 #619 *I Know that My Redeemer Lives*
 #623 *Rock of Ages*
 #624 *Jesus, Still Lead On*
 #627 *O Day Full of Grace*
 #629 *Abide with Me*
 #631 *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*

#632 *O God Our Help in Ages Past*
 #634 *All Hail the Power*
 #638 *Blessed Assurance*
 #654 *The Church's One Foundation*
 #660 *Lift High the Cross*
 #661 *I Love to Tell the Story*
 #666 *What Wondrous Love is This?*
 #671 *Shine Jesus Shine*
 #728 *Blest Are They*
 #732 *Borning Cry*
 #733 *Great is Their Faithfulness*
 #742 *What a Friend*
 #759 *My Faith Looks Up to Thee*
 #763 *My Life Flows On*
 #764 *Have No Fear, Little Flock*
 #767 *Lord Take My Hand*
 #770 *Give Me Jesus*
 #773 *Precious Lord, Take My Hand*
 #779 *Amazing Grace*
 #780 *Shepherd Me O God*
 #781 *Children of the Heavenly Father*
 #785 *When Peace Like a River*
 #787 *On Eagle's Wings*
 #789 *Savior Like a Shepherd*
 #790 *Day by Day*
 #815 *I Want to Walk as a Child*
 #817 *Lake Shore*
 #838 *Beautiful Savior*
 #860 *Jesus Lifted Me*
 #890 *Battle Hymn of the Republic*

OTHER:

In the Garden
The Old Rugged Cross
I'll Fly Away
Lord's Prayer
I Can Only Imagine

Hymn of Promise
Come to Jesus
Amazing Grace, My Chains are Gone
Ten Thousand Reasons

APPENDIX D

LUNCHEON OPTIONS

Our church women have four groups to help you. Pastor will assist in contacting the committee. They will prepare the meal, serve you and clean up. The work group and funeral committee chairperson will handle the arrangements. A monetary donation is greatly appreciated. (see Appendix C)

The four options are:

1. Serve bars or cake, coffee and lemonade. There is no charge for this option.
2. Serve sandwiches, bars or cake, coffee and lemonade. The family is responsible for the cost of the sandwiches.
3. Serve sandwiches, salad, bars or cake, coffee and lemonade. The family is responsible for the cost of the sandwiches. If you want, they can also furnish chips at your cost.
4. You may also choose to cater food in, at your cost. The women would be happy to assist in the serving, if you choose.

Also note:

1. Paper products will be used unless church china is specifically requested.
2. # expected to attend the luncheon, 50-75, 75-100, 100-125, 125-150, 150-175, over 175.
3. If interment is immediately following the service, should they begin serving those who remain behind or wait for your return?
4. Would you prefer to sit together as a family at a head table, with food served to you, or prefer to go through the buffet line and sit among the guests?