

Alive in Christ

FUNERAL POLICY AND GUIDELINES OF
GLORIA CHRISTI LUTHERAN CHURCH
GREELEY, COLORADO



“Oh, come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...”

*This is a guide designed to assist family and loved ones at the time of one's death.
This document does not substitute for, or take the place of a duly drawn, witnessed and notarized Last
 Will and Testament.*

Dear Baptized Saints and Heirs of Eternal Life,

The Psalmist tells us to number our days in order to use them wisely. It is wise to talk about your own funeral with your family – especially if you do it long before you expect to die.

This manual has been prepared by the Pastor and the Board of Elders of Gloria Christi Lutheran Church of Greeley, Colorado, in order to assist members 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. This policy norms our funeral practices.

When a believer dies, his soul immediately separates from his body and experiences the joy and peace of heaven as it awaits the Last Day when Jesus will raise that body, make it free of sin and perfect in every way, and reunite it with the soul in immortality. Meanwhile, the loved ones, friends, and relatives we leave behind after our death can be consoled greatly if we take the time now to establish some prior funeral arrangements in order to lessen their grief in a time when decision-making is often difficult and traumatic.

Christian funerals held at Gloria Christi Lutheran Church or officiated by the pastor of Gloria Christi are Christian liturgies and therefore are governed by the Scriptures, our Lutheran Confessions, and the received liturgical practices of the Lutheran Church and our synod. While one may find divergent practices in other Lutheran Churches (even in our own synod) we endeavor by God's grace to hold to the best and most faithful of our church.

We, therefore, ask you to read this manual thoroughly as we commend it to your use, so that we may rejoice together in our eternal future in heaven.

In the Name of our Resurrected Savior, Jesus Christ,
The Pastor and Board of Elders at Gloria Christi Lutheran Church
 A.D. 2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
AT WHOSE FUNERAL DOES GLORIA CHRISTI LUTHERAN CHURCH AS GUIDED BY HOLY SCRIPTURES AND THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS ALLOW HER PASTOR TO OFFICIATE?	4
MAY NON-LCMS PASTORS OFFICIATE OR CO-OFFICIATE AT OUR FUNERAL SERVICES?	4
ARE FAMILY AND FRIENDS ALLOWED TO SHARE A FEW WORDS OR GIVE A EULOGY?	5
HOW CAN THE PASTOR ASSIST THE BEREAVED FAMILY FOR THE SERVICE?	5
WHAT IS A 'CHRISTIAN' WILL?	5
WHAT IS A MEMORIAL SERVICE?	5
WHAT ABOUT MEMORIAL GIFTS AS OPPOSED TO GIVING FLOWERS?	6
IS CREMATION ACCEPTABLE FOR CHRISTIANS?	6
ISN'T VIEWING A BODY RATHER MORBID?	6
WHAT IS A FUNERAL PALL?	6
IS THE PRACTICE OF DONATING ONE'S ORGANS ACCEPTABLE FOR CHRISTIANS?	7
SHOULD THE FUNERAL BE AT THE CHURCH OR AT THE FUNERAL HOME?	7
ARE LODGE CEREMONIES OR CEREMONIES OF OTHER ORGANIZATIONS PERMITTED AT OUR FUNERAL SERVICES? WHAT ABOUT NATIVE AMERICAN RITES?	7
WHAT ABOUT MILITARY HONORS AND CEREMONIES?	7
WHAT ABOUT HYMNS AND OTHER MUSIC FOR THE SERVICE?	8
VISITATION BEFORE THE FUNERAL	9
FLOWER AND DECORATIONS FOR THE SERVICE	9
<u>APPENDIX</u>	
CHRISTIAN PREAMBLES TO YOUR WILL	10
FUNERAL ARRANGEMENT FORM	12

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

"AT WHOSE FUNERAL DOES GLORIA CHRISTI LUTHERAN CHURCH AS GUIDED BY HOLY SCRIPTURES AND THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS ALLOW HER PASTOR TO OFFICIATE?"

We believe that Christian pastors should officiate only at the funerals of professed Christians, as evidenced by their verbal confession of the faith, receiving of the Word and Sacraments and affiliation with the family of God. The very presence of a Christian pastor testifies to the faith of the deceased and implies that the individual has "fallen asleep in Jesus." A "church funeral" is a privilege, not a right. Having a "church funeral" does not guarantee a person goes to heaven, as neither does merely having one's name printed on a church membership list.

We also believe that the pastor of Gloria Christi Lutheran Church congregation has been called to a specific responsibility to his own parishioners and to sister congregations in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod and not to the Christian or secular community in general. Therefore, he is to officiate at the funeral or memorial service of members, thus being assured that the brother or sister who has died had made a public confession of faith in Christ Jesus. Exceptions are made for professed Christians who were active in the spiritual life of our congregation while contemplating membership, as well as to non-member believers to whom the pastor, elders or others of Gloria Christi Lutheran Church had a direct, personal evangelistic contact.

Members of Gloria Christi Lutheran Church who request that her pastor officiate at the funeral of their non-member friend or relative place the pastors and elders in a very difficult position. A pastor does not merely hire himself out to officiate a funeral. Not knowing the individual or the spiritual condition of the deceased may turn many a funeral sermon into an unfortunate impersonal eulogy or generic evangelistic sermon at best. We believe that eulogies have no place in Christian funerals. Therefore, it is better to refer such funerals to a minister of the congregation or denomination to which the individual belonged or to a non-denominational minister suggested by the funeral home or to a friend at a funeral service at a funeral home

If you are planning a funeral for a living family member or a friend, share your faith in Jesus with him and bring him to the Divine Service and/or Bible Study or catechism class if possible. It is never too late to bring the Word of Jesus to them.

"MAY NON-LCMS PASTORS OFFICIATE OR CO-OFFICIATE AT OUR FUNERAL SERVICES?" "MAY NON-CHRISTIANS OFFICIATE?"

No. A funeral service is a liturgical service of worship, so the same confessional and Lutheran Church --Missouri Synod policies apply in order to assure that what is said and preached will be truly Biblical and free of false doctrine. Clergy of churches/denominations of whom we are not in church fellowship may not officiate with our pastor nor in our church facilities. No non-Christian ministers or otherwise may officiate. Additionally, no non-Christian rites or un-Lutheran rites or songs may be used in the funeral service or give the impression that they are part of the service.

"ARE FAMILY AND FRIENDS ALLOWED TO SAY A FEW WORDS AT THE FUNERAL?" "MAY WE INCLUDE A EULOGY?"

Anything that is to be said in the service or in the sanctuary must first be screened and approved by the pastor. Eulogies about the deceased are not acceptable in a Lutheran funeral service as it contradicts or detracts from salvation by grace through faith for the sake of Christ and distracts from the service being Christ-centered (Ephesians 2:8,9). Additionally eulogies can often include inappropriate humor or vulgar content which is nearly impossible to review ahead of time and puts undue stress upon pastor and elders who have responsibility for the content of the funeral service. It is also important that what happens in and around the service not detract from the Gospel. Chances are, in fact, since those gathered there are friends and family of the deceased, they would learn little new from a eulogy.

The policy of Gloria Christi is that if the family desires a eulogy given by family or friends of the departed that this take place either during the visitation at the funeral home or during the luncheon after the funeral service. Eulogies are not permitted during the funeral service nor in the sanctuary (nave & chancel) of the church building. They may be given in the parish hall dining area.

"HOW CAN THE PASTOR ASSIST THE BEREAVED FAMILY WITH THE SERVICE?"

Contact the pastor as soon as possible. In addition to officiating at the funeral, he will normally first meet and have devotions with the bereaved and is willing to accompany the family to the funeral home to help them in making the funeral arrangements. He is well-experienced and an expert in this kind of service. While the family may have preferences for certain elements of the funeral service, please understand that the pastor also has a responsibility to maintain the service as a Christian funeral rite according to the confession of the Lutheran Church and our synod. Certain elements of the service may change but there are certain other elements which remain fixed. Certain plans that were made years ago may be brought up to this standard.

"WHAT IS A 'CHRISTIAN' WILL? WHAT ABOUT A GIFT TO THE CHURCH?"

Every Christian should have a will, but as a final witness to one's faith, the use of a Christian preamble to your will provides you with the opportunity to give a posthumous testimony of your faith in Jesus to your attorney, relatives, and friends. A sample of such of Christian preamble is found on page X of this manual. We also encourage you to remember God's church in your will, so that you vicariously can carry on the Lord's work even after He has called you home. It can be an important witness to remember the congregation or other Lutheran organization in your will with a financial gift for the ministry and mission of the Lord's Church.

"WHAT IS A MEMORIAL SERVICE?"

A memorial service does not have the casket or remains present at the service. The interment takes place before the service or at another time. Memorial services have become very popular for Christians, and can simplify the arrangements. Sometimes parents of a child died before birth may wish to have a memorial service and/or committal, since, on the basis of Scripture, we believe life begins at conception.

"WHAT ABOUT MEMORIAL GIFTS AS OPPOSED TO GIVING FLOWERS?"

Many say that cut flowers are a "waste" or ostentatious, but when the disciples said much the same about Mary's anointing of Jesus with a bottle of precious nard, the Savior took issue with them. Others prefer to give potted plants, which will continue to grow and be enjoyed by the family. Still others prefer to remember their loved ones by donating a gift of money to a memorial fund or the church. They believe this method to be best, because it benefits the most people and is an ongoing way of remembering their loved ones. The Gloria Christi elders can furnish you with a number of acceptable choices for a memorial, which would extend the work of God's Kingdom. Gifts that relate to worship related items or education (e.g. paraments, vestments, crosses, artwork) should be approved by the elders in advance as this impacts worship practices and the doctrine of the Church. The Church is not obliged to accept memorials which may cloud teaching or negatively impact the worship life of the congregation.

"IS CREMATION ACCEPTABLE FOR CHRISTIANS? WHAT IS CUSTOMARY?"

The historic custom of the people of God in the Old Testament was burial, so also for the Lord Jesus after His death. The aversion to cremation by some Christians comes from the fact that the Old Testament forbade the practice because of its use by pagan peoples; the Jewish Mishna also forbade it and the unbelieving Romans burned bodies of Christians in a futile attempt to prevent the resurrection! Some people believe that cremation is a way to deny publicly the resurrection. However, if God can resurrect the bodies of martyrs burned at the stake or eaten by lions or decomposed to dust after centuries in the grave, He should have no trouble at all with the cremains. During times of plague in Europe Christians were cremated for societal health reasons. While cremation has not been the standard in the Christian tradition it is not explicitly forbidden. Regardless of whether one uses customary burial or cremation we still should show respect for the body which Christ has redeemed along with the soul and know that Christ will raise all the dead on the last day and give eternal life to all believers in Christ.

"ISN'T VIEWING A BODY RATHER MORBID?"

Perhaps, and if you prefer a closed casket, that is fine. But viewing need not be regarded as morbid. On the other hand, a viewing helps some people to accept the reality of death and that their Christian loved one is at peace. Another point to remember is that sometimes some family members or friends have not seen this person in some time. However, if the casket is brought into the church at a traditional funeral service, the casket is always closed and covered with a pall which symbolizes our Baptism into Christ, so that our thoughts will not be centered on a temporal, lifeless body, but rather on the message of victory we share in an eternal, living Savior.

"WHAT IS A FUNERAL PALL?"

A funeral pall is a large white cloth shroud, usually on which is embroidered a symbol of the resurrection. In place of a floral spray, it is draped over the closed casket during the funeral service at church as a beautiful symbol of the triumph over death of our resurrected Savior and that the believer's sins have been covered through baptism into death. Just as our resurrected Lord passed through His shroud, so also our resurrection is assured. The use of the pall is very encouraged. We strongly encourage use of the funeral pall with its baptismal meaning.

"IS THE PRACTICE OF DONATING ONE'S ORGANS ACCEPTABLE FOR CHRISTIANS?"

Again, the Scriptures do not speak to this issue because it was not ordinarily possible at the time of the writing of the Scriptures. Therefore, it is your own decision. You are neither obligated to do so nor forbidden to do so. We assure you, however, that there is nothing ghoulish or unchristian in deciding to give the gift of life, sight, etc. to a fellow human being. Pray about such a decision before death and discuss it with your family. If you decide to be a donor, obtain a Uniform Donor Card from your local hospital, and keep the card in your wallet or purse. If you decide not to be a donor, do not feel guilty. There is no obligation for Christians to do this.

"SHOULD THE FUNERAL BE AT THE CHURCH OR AT THE FUNERAL HOME?"

Because a Christian funeral is also a Christian liturgical service, God's House, when available, is the most appropriate place for a Christian funeral. However, the visitation need not be at the church building. Due to the convenience (and the extra charge for using the funeral chapel at *some* funeral homes), the "option" of having the service at the church may not even be presented to many families. Furthermore, funeral chapels are purposely devoid of an altar or Christian symbols that offend Jews, Buddhists, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and other non-Christians. Therefore, in place of such a generic environment, we strongly encourage you to utilize the church building as a closing statement of faith by those who have "fallen asleep in Jesus." We will convey this information and our position to any mortuary upon your request.

"ARE MASONIC LODGE CEREMONIES OR RITES OF OTHER ORGANIZATIONS PERMITTED AT OUR FUNERAL SERVICES? WHAT ABOUT NATIVE RITES?"

No. It is likely that the lodge's oath-bound insistence that salvation is not through Christ and His Word alone, but rather by one's own good works and moral living is in obvious conflict with a Christian funeral. Members of Gloria Christi Lutheran Church are required to give up membership in the Masonic or "animal" lodges (e.g. Moose, Elks, Eagles) and their auxiliaries before they become members of our congregation and take their confirmation or membership oath to Jesus as the only way to heaven. Not only is the participation of the lodge and its symbols forbidden during funeral service, but any lodge rite in addition to and separately from the Christian funeral is also forbidden. Lodge insignia or clothing is not permitted on the deceased. There is no problem with military honors for those who have served as veterans but they remain distinct (not interspersed) from the Christian liturgical rites. What is said about Lodge rites applies to Native American (Indian) rites as well. As we currently understand them, there is no objection to the Lions Club or the Kiwanis.

"WHAT ABOUT MILITARY HONORS FOR THE DECEASED? HOW DO WE PROPERLY HANDLE BOTH THE CHURCH RITES AND MILITARY CEREMONIES IN RELATION TO ONE ANOTHER?"

Military honors are certainly appropriate for the Christian deceased so long as such civil ceremonies and honors are kept distinct from the Christian liturgical rites and not interspersed. Typically the military or veteran's ceremonies will take place at the cemetery after the pastor has finished the committal rites. Military rites should not take place within the service at the Church (nor at the funeral home if the pastor is conducting the service there). Either the flag of our country or the funeral pall may be on the casket, but not one on top of the other. If the family wishes to use both, the pall may be used at the church during the service, and the flag may be

placed on the casket for the rites at the cemetery. Weapons are not worn or carried in the sanctuary. All military personnel except active pallbearers (those actually carrying the casket) uncover (remove their hats) inside the chapel (sanctuary/nave/chancel).

“WHAT ABOUT HYMNS AND OTHER MUSIC FOR THE FUNERAL SERVICE?”

The Christian Funeral Service is a public act of the church. Even if the service is "private" with only the pastor and a few family members, it is still subject to the public ministry of God's Word and our Lutheran Confessions. As part of the public ministry, the church has the responsibility to see that the service is carried out for the praise and worthiness of the Lord. Appropriate hymns, Scripture lessons, and prayers, are to be used in consultation with the pastor. The pastor must approve all music in the funeral service (whether at the church building or funeral home) or at the committal at the cemetery. The family may have both hymns and vocal solos.

Our preference is that there be at least one or two congregational hymns (or even three) from the hymnal in our pews or one of the predecessor hymnals of our synod. Such songs should be Christ-centered and focus on our salvation in Christ, His grace, the resurrection, and the consolation of the gospel. All music should be Christian and in accordance with our Lutheran Confessions. Many songs heard in other churches or denominations or at other funerals may not be appropriate or correct for a Lutheran funeral service (even if heard at other Lutheran congregations). The preference is for organ or piano accompaniment, without entertainment or secular connotations in the musical delivery or rhythm, reflecting the liturgical context.

The Funeral Service, when conducted in a church, is first and foremost a liturgical service of worship, centered on Christ. While grieving and experiencing the feelings of loss of our loved one, it is important to remember this about the funeral service and its music. While memories and “favorites” of the deceased and the family have their place they may or may not be appropriate for the service itself. However, what might not be permitted during the service may be a good thing to do during visitation, the luncheon or at an informal family gathering. Moreover, through the liturgy, readings and sermon, it is an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work faith in people’s hearts through the hearing of the Word of God. For this reason the funeral service does not belong to the family only, but it is a public service (even when celebrated privately) which belongs to God primarily and also to the church, as well as our congregation. The rite of the funeral itself will be performed according to one of the following books: *The Lutheran Agenda* or *Lutheran Worship Agenda* or the *Lutheran Service Book Agenda*, all of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.

Music is an integral part of the Church’s worship. Music not only serves to accompany the message of the text of song, but also carries a message all its own. It is a powerful tool that can be used either to enhance the meaning and purpose of words, or detract from those words. Likewise, music can either enhance our reverence in worship, or it can detract from that reverence. The choice of music in the funeral service is already largely determined by your coming to God’s House and by having the pastor officiate your service. An honorarium of thanks to the pastor (or the church musician) for the funeral service and other ministry does not obligate him to discard theological principles as if it were a business contract, which it is not. Although you may have heard some music used at other churches, even other LCMS churches, the reasons stated define what we at Gloria Christi expect for music in liturgical services here. Both text and tune will need to be considered in this regard.

In this respect it is safe to assume that our hymnal is a good place to concentrate. While a selection may not be right or appropriate for the funeral service we are not necessarily implying that such a song is sinful, just that it doesn't suit a worship service of the Church in our confession of faith. Again, anything used in the service needs to be approved by the pastor. The pastor kindly asks that as he works with families on these matters that they respect his decision and not unduly argue as he does not enjoy having to decline a musical selection or say "no" especially at such a difficult time. While some hymn books may have been used in other Lutheran churches or even at Gloria Christi in the past, this does not mean that all such choices are acceptable by a consistent application of our Lutheran doctrinal standard.

“WHAT ABOUT VISITATION BEFORE THE FUNERAL SERVICE?”

Many families will have visitation the day before the funeral service either at the church or at the funeral home. The pastor is available to have a brief devotional prayer service (or “wake” as it is sometimes called). Others may wish to have no visitation or visitation simply an hour or two before the funeral service.

“WHAT ABOUT FLOWERS OR OTHER DÉCOR FOR THE FUNERAL SERVICE?”

Around the altar we ask that decorations be simple and kept to a minimum. *At no time should the altar, pulpit, lectern, baptismal font, paschal candle, processional crucifix, be moved, changed, or obscured. If some change should be necessary for extenuating circumstances, consult with the pastor.* In all our services the altar and cross are to remain the focal point in the Church. No more than two vases of cut flowers may be placed on the altar itself. Other flowers may be placed elsewhere where they do not obscure altar, pulpit, baptismal font, paschal candle, or processional crucifix. Do not place flowers or decorations on the baptismal font, pulpit, lectern, piano or organ. Flowers *may* be placed *around* the pulpit, font, lectern, and candles or at the end of the seating rows.

See the funeral liturgy in our hymnal, *Lutheran Service Book* for more information about the order of service.

A CHRISTIAN PREAMBLE TO YOUR WILL

When planning your will, you can grow so preoccupied with how to distribute your material blessings that you may fail to share your true wealth: the Good News of forgiveness and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

A Christian Preamble to your will 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, too, to place their trust in Jesus Christ.

Prayerfully consider adding one of these sample Christian Preambles to your will or use them as a guide in writing your own.

PREAMBLE I

I, _____, Of the City of _____,
County of _____, and State of _____,
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; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth 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.

PREAMBLE 2

I, _____, Of the City of _____
County of _____, and State of _____
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 heretofore made by me.

First, I commit myself to God's care, secure in His love for me and trusting in the salvation purchased for me through Christ's suffering and death. I leave those who survive me the comfort of knowing that I have died in this faith and have now joined my Lord in eternal glory.

Second, I commend my loved ones to the protecting hands of God, knowing that He will continue to provide for them despite my absence; and I encourage them to place their faith and trust in Him alone.

(Then follows the body of the Will.)

FUNERAL ARRANGEMENT FORM

Make copies of your completed form, and then give them to the individuals who will be involved with arranging your funeral. This will include pastor, family member(s) or close friend, funeral director, etc. Be sure to discuss any directions that might need clarifying.

Name _____

Home address _____

Telephone number _____

Date of preparation _____

Date of birth _____

Place of birth _____

Date of baptism _____

Place of baptism (church, hospital) _____

Date of confirmation _____

Place of confirmation _____

Verse: _____

Date of marriage(s) _____

Location _____

Describe life in local congregation(s) _____

Full name of your father & city & state of his birth _____

Full name of your mother (including maiden name) & city & state of her birth

Education _____

Places and types of employment _____

To what organizations do you belong? _____

Social Security Number _____

Military ID Number _____

Family:

Spouse _____

Children _____

Siblings _____

Relatives/Friends to notify:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Relationship _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Relationship _____

These directions express how I would like my funeral handled. If possible, I request the following:

A. I request the following for the service:

Church _____

Address

Telephone number _____

Clergyman to officiate, **if possible** _____

Address

Telephone number _____

Biblical texts _____

Lutheran Hymns and musical selections (choir, solos, etc.) _____

(hymns and musical selections should be in keeping with sound Lutheran teaching)

Flowers desired? Yes No

Body to be viewed? Yes No

B. I would like my body, or parts of it, to be used for medical purposes. Explain:

Provisions have been made by proper documentation in accordance with the state laws governing this procedure. The documents are located:

C. Burial

I prefer a burial in a casket.

Location _____

Has a plot been purchased? _____

Casket desired:

I want to be cremated, with ashes to be buried.

Location _____

D. I want memorial gifts designated to the following organization(s), persons, etc.

Name _____

Address

Purpose:

Name _____

Address

Purpose:

Name _____

Address

Purpose:

E. Will

I have a will _____.

The will is located:

F. I request these additional instructions to be followed:

G. I have shared these plans with the following people:

Name _____

Address

Relationship _____

Name _____

Address

Relationship _____

Put this form in your safety deposit box or another safe place, readily accessible to your family or executor. This is information your family will need immediately at the time of your death.

Signature _____