

Clergy Funerals

The funeral of a pastor listed on the clergy roster of the Southern Ohio Synod, ELCA, whether active or retired, is a worship event for both the synod and the local congregation where the deceased pastor held membership. The following protocol is suggested for use in arranging the funeral service for clergy.

Notification of the Bishop

Upon the death of a rostered pastor, the bishop of the synod should be notified immediately and consulted before final funeral arrangements are made.

Location of Funeral Service

The funeral service should be conducted in the church building where the pastor held most recent membership. In the event that retired clergy held the title *Pastor Emeritus*, the service may be held at the church which bestowed the honor, of course, family desires, history and tradition may dictate other arrangements.

Role of the Bishop

Since the bishop provides for the pastoral care of pastors and is the synod's pastor, it is appropriate that the bishop take the presiding role at the funeral service. The bishop officiates at Holy Communion and usually performs the committal service at the cemetery or other such venue. The bishop may deliver the sermon, but may request that the local pastor preach, especially when the local pastor had been the primary caregiver to a retired pastor and family. If the bishop is unavailable, an assistant to the bishop would act in the bishop's stead and fulfill these roles.

Role of Other Clergy

The assistant to the bishop and the local clergy where the deceased pastor held membership should participate in the funeral services under the direction of the bishop. Other clergy friends, relatives and associates may take part in the service as deemed appropriate by the bishop, the congregation's pastor and the family of the deceased. All pastors are encouraged to attend. They are requested to be vested, process, sit as a group, recess and serve as honorary pallbearers.

Burial Apparel

It is traditional, though not required, that the body of the deceased pastor be vested for burial in clerical garb with a white stole. If desired, a stole may be placed on top of the funeral pall after the casket is closed.

The Funeral Service

The service should be a full Eucharistic liturgy that celebrates the new life the deceased has entered by God's grace. Traditional rubrics include the following protocol.

The coffin should be covered by a white pall. (If needed, one is available from the synod.)

The entrance into the church led by a processional cross (also available from the synod), followed by torches and/or the paschal candle. Vested clergy process in the order of conference pastors and other invited clergy, local pastor(s), officiants, with the bishop last. The coffin follows the bishop with the head of the deceased pastor toward the altar. The bereaved may follow the coffin, if they are not already seated in the worship area.

The coffin should be positioned at a right angle to the altar with the head towards the altar. (This follows the time-honored tradition of placing the deceased according to their accustomed role in the church. Clergy, as presiding ministers, face the people. Lay persons are positioned with their feet towards the altar as if facing it as part of the congregation.)

The paschal candle may be placed at the head of the coffin or to the left of it.

The service should follow the liturgy for *Burial of the Dead* as printed in the **Lutheran Book of Worship: Minister's Edition**, including appropriate hymns and the celebration of Holy Communion.

The recessional to the outside of the church follows the same order as the processional. Clergy may form an "honor guard" from the door of the church to the vehicle used to carry the coffin to the cemetery.

The processional cross may be taken to the cemetery, preceding the presiding bishop, designated officiants and coffin to the grave.

Cremation

The family or the deceased pastor may have chosen to have the body cremated either before or after the funeral service. In the event cremation precedes the service, the ashes may be placed on a small table or pedestal before the altar and covered with a small white funeral pall if available, or other appropriate white cloth, if needed, one is available from the synod.

Memorial Service

A memorial service takes place with neither the body nor ashes present. Specifics for a memorial service can be found in the **Lutheran Book of Worship: Minister's Edition**. It is most appropriate to include a Eucharistic celebration as part of the service.

Both Funeral and Memorial services commemorate the deceased pastor's life of service to the Church on earth and celebrate the new life of glory in heaven. Both services provide for the Eucharist in remembrance of Jesus and as a foretaste of Christ's eternal feast to come.

The Bishop and the synod staff are available to answer any questions concerning clergy funeral preparations.

Adopted October 1999, revised September 2003

Clergy Funeral Information

Please complete this form and return it to the synod office for the Bishop's files.

Please keep a copy for your personal files and
submit another copy to the congregation where you hold membership.

Name _____ Spouse _____

Children _____

Date of Birth _____ Place _____

Date of Ordination _____ Place _____

Education: College/Degree/Date _____

Seminary/Degree/Date _____

Graduate/Degree/Date _____

Service to the Church (Calls to Congregation or Agencies/Dates)

Date of Retirement _____

Service to the Community _____

Favorite Scripture Passage for Notification Letter from the Synod

Location of Service (Cong., City) _____

Preference: _____ **Funeral Service** _____ **Memorial Service**

Scripture Passages for Service _____

Service Hymns and Placement within the Service (indicate LBW, WOV, etc.)

Memorials to be listed: _____

Has the synod or any synod-affiliated ministries been included in your estate planning?

Yes No

Please have the synod's director of Planned Giving contact me to discuss estate planning.

Other Preferences/Notes _____

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading kept in heaven for you... I Peter 1:3-4 (NRSV)