

ST PETER LUTHERAN CHURCH

Policy for a Liturgy of Christian Burial

A funeral or memorial liturgy held in the church is a worship service where God delivers His gifts to those gathered around His Word, and reminds those gathered especially of the gifts God granted to the deceased. Every element of the liturgy must reflect: (a) reverence for God, (b) fidelity to Scripture and doctrine, and (c) content which is centered in Jesus Christ.

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS) - the church body in which St. Peter Lutheran Church holds membership - recognizes that there is great freedom granted to a congregation regarding the form and style of a worship service. As a result, worship practices and liturgies may vary greatly among congregations of the LC-MS. While certain practices and content may be used in other Lutheran congregations, any service conducted at St. Peter Lutheran Church is to conform to the theological and liturgical practices of this congregation. Secular content does not have a place in faithful Christian worship. Elements which might be present in other funeral or memorial settings are not always appropriate in a liturgy on the premises of the church. The final arbiter of appropriate content, including music, is the pastor.

General Guidelines

Eligibility: A funeral or memorial liturgy is conducted in St Peter Lutheran Church when the deceased has been a member of the congregation in good standing, as defined in the Constitution of St. Peter Lutheran Church, section 5.3.

Requests by a sister congregation to hold a funeral or memorial liturgy at St. Peter Lutheran Church will be considered, provided (a) the deceased was a member in good standing of that congregation; (b) the request is made by the pastor of the deceased; (c) valid reasoning is presented why the deceased wished to have a service officiated by the pastor of St. Peter Lutheran Church.

St. Peter Lutheran Church allows her pastor discretion in the instances where: (a) a non-member was in the process of becoming a member, or (b) the deceased was someone to whom the pastor of St. Peter ministered and who seemed to have departed this life in the Christian faith.

It is contrary to the truth to offer Christian burial (that is, from the sanctuary, with church rites, and with the assurances of the resurrection unto eternal life) to those who are not Christian, the excommunicated, or those who were indifferent to Christ's Church. Should the pastor of St. Peter accept a request for burial as a service of love and mercy for the family, that burial is limited to the funeral home/graveside (apart from any Christian honors).

Setting the Time and Date: Previously scheduled activities on church premises must be considered when making plans for the liturgy. We will endeavor to meet the needs of the parties concerned; however, regular scheduled liturgies of the church take precedence over funeral or memorial liturgies.

It is important that the church is notified as early as possible regarding a pending funeral or memorial liturgy. This is necessary for notification of appropriate staff, reservation of worship space, arranging for planning the liturgy, and preparation of bulletins.

Normally, a representative of the selected funeral home will notify either the pastor or church office of a person's passing. We encourage a family member or representative to contact the office and pastor in order to be certain that notification has occurred.

Planning: The pastor normally meets with interested family members to plan specifics related to liturgical content of the funeral or memorial liturgy. An appointment must be made for this meeting. The pastor assists the family with hymn selections and will gather any information needed for the funeral or memorial liturgy.

The celebration of Holy Communion is not normally incorporated into a funeral or memorial liturgy. A family may request that Holy Communion be celebrated, but – as our church practices closed communion – only those persons who are members in good standing of the LC-MS or of a church with whom the LC-MS is in altar-and-pulpit fellowship may partake. Because those who attend the funeral or memorial liturgies are often persons who may not partake in the Lord's Supper from a Lutheran altar, it is often inadvisable to celebrate Holy Communion within the liturgy. The family is asked to provide strong reasoning regarding the inclusion of Holy Communion within the funeral or memorial liturgy.

Participants: The church will secure a crucifer (cross bearer), if one is available, and ushers. The practice of audience participation in a time of remembrance or the use of a eulogy are popular practices. Although these practices have spread, they are not appropriate in a Lutheran funeral or memorial liturgy and will not be allowed at that time. It is suggested that if such opportunities are desired, time be set aside during the luncheon or gathering at a suitable venue following the liturgy.

The sermon delivered during a funeral or memorial liturgy will be delivered by the called pastor of St. Peter Lutheran Church. The pastor may exercise discretion in allowing another pastor, ordained into the Ministry of Word and Sacraments, to share responsibilities for proclamation, and will extend the invitation to any other pastor whose participation is requested. Clergy from congregations not in fellowship with St. Peter Lutheran Church will not be allowed to participate in any funeral or memorial liturgy.

Fraternal or other Outside Organizations: Since funeral and memorial liturgies are religious services and are subject to the Biblical and theological standards of our church body, other religious traditions and secular organizations do not have a role and their participation, other than attendance at the liturgy, is precluded. No rites from these outside organizations may be performed on church grounds or – in the event the liturgy is to take place at another location – before or after the funeral or memorial liturgy.

The only exceptions are for military honor guards.

Music: The church will provide an approved musician to accompany the liturgy. All music used must be chosen with care in order that it may be consistent with the sacred character of liturgical worship. Secular music is not appropriate and is excluded. Sacred music offered by a member of the family, or friend of the deceased may be considered. Any musical offering must be approved by the pastor.

All vocalists and instrumentalists must be vetted by the pastor in advance of the day of the liturgy and prior to finalizing the liturgy and publishing the bulletin. This includes musical selections and capabilities of both outside vocalists and outside accompanists. In the event that any unapproved musical offering is used, the liturgy will be halted and the person or persons involved will be excused from the gathering.

Copyrighted Material: The congregation copyright policy applies in all instances. Photocopied music is prohibited unless accompanied by publisher authorization.

Photography: Reverence for God, and respect for those worshiping and in mourning, precludes the use of flash photography during the funeral or memorial liturgy. Any photographers or videographers of any service must have prior approval from the pastor. In the event that flash photography is observed, the liturgy will be halted and the person or persons involved will be excused from the gathering.

Floral Arrangements: Floral arrangements for the funeral or memorial liturgies are to be arranged in accordance with the guidelines of St. Peter Lutheran Church's Altar Guild. Flowers are not to be arranged on the altar, which is reserved for the body and blood of our Lord, nor should they obstruct the chancel or lectern. Any photoboards may be displayed in the narthex or in the reception area but are not appropriate for display within the sanctuary. In the event of a memorial service, a photo of the deceased may be displayed alongside the remains within the sanctuary.

Animals: Out of reverence for the worship space and the safety of those attending, only certified service animals are permitted on the property of St. Peter Lutheran Church.

Access Assistance: Several wheelchairs are available to assist in conveying persons with limited mobility from vehicles to the worship space. Please see the elder on duty or an usher on duty in the event of need.

Reception: In connection with a funeral or memorial liturgy for a member, the Parish Hall is available for a post-liturgical gathering. The hall should be reserved for post-liturgical receptions when the date is set. Church policy prohibits smoking and the use of alcohol on church property.

Fees: There is no charge for use of the building for a funeral or memorial liturgy. However, since such use requires additional cleaning time, a donation for custodial services is recommended.

The church musician is also to be compensated for the extra time required for preparation and services rendered in connection with a funeral or memorial liturgy.

The following are the costs involved for a funeral or memorial service at St. Peter. If a family decides that they would like to leave a greater honorarium, they may decide to do so:

- Custodian: \$50 (not required, but recommended)
- Church Musician: \$100
- Luncheon hosted by Dorcas Circle: Cost of meat provided at luncheon

There is no cost for our pastor to officiate at a funeral or memorial liturgy. Honorariums are accepted.

The pastor will provide up-to-date information regarding the names of pertinent individuals. Fees are due prior to the liturgy. Your funeral director may be able to assist in delivering the appropriate fee to the proper parties.

Adopted by action of the Board of Elders, 01/11/2020

Adopted by action of St. Peter Lutheran Church, Voter's Assembly, 11/16/2020