



Christian Funeral Policy

The Dual Parish of:
St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church—Brule, Nebraska
Trinity Lutheran Church—Ogallala, Nebraska

Member Congregations
of the
Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod

Christian Funeral Policies

“Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.”

1 Thessalonians 4:13 (NIV)

AS CONFESSIONAL LUTHERAN CHRISTIAN CONGREGATIONS AND WANTING TO GIVE BIBLICAL WITNESS TO OUR BELIEFS ABOUT DEATH, WE DO HERE PRESENT THE FOLLOWING POLICIES FOR FUNERALS CONDUCTED IN OUR CHURCHES:

1. The Christian funeral is an important opportunity to witness to those things that we believe, teach, and confess about death as drawn from the sacred Scriptures.
2. The Bible readings, prayers, and hymns are intended to direct our focus upon the values and beliefs that we, as a Christian Confessional Lutheran church body, use to interpret the meaning of death during a time of mourning.
 - a. First, we should know that the status of the dead is defined in this way: *“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord....”* Revelation 14:13 (NIV)
 - b. Secondly, those who mourn are comforted: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”*
2 Corinthians 1:3–4 (ESV) And Jesus also declares, *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not*

give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled....” John 14:27 (NIV)

- c. Finally, the living are instructed in the meaning of death:
“Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” Psalm 90:12 (NIV)
3. Funeral services are primarily intended for the deceased who, at the time of their death, were current members of St. John’s Ev. Lutheran Church, Trinity Lutheran Church, or a sister congregation of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS). Any requests made for the funeral of an immediate family member or someone who holds current or past membership within these parishes (so long as they have retained church membership in accordance to our congregations respective Constitutions) will be prayerfully considered, and then either approved or disapproved by the pastor and elders. It will then be the responsibility of the pastor to tactfully explain to the requester the reason, and/or reasons, why any request is denied.
4. Prayer Services (a service attended by the family of the deceased at the funeral home or in the church prior to the public funeral service) may be conducted at the family’s request.
5. Any music requested by the family to be played before, during, or after the service (i.e., visitation at the church or during the dinner/reception) will be subject to pastor’s approval.
 - a. Most secular music is inappropriate for a funeral service in our congregations. A very simple and easy guideline to follow would be to select hymns from one of the hymnals: The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH), Lutheran Worship (LW), Lutheran Service Book (LSB) approved by our Synod. (See Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Article VI, #4)

- b. “Hymns and music in the funeral service should reflect Christian confidence, trust, and hope in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.” (LSB Agenda, pg. 117)
- 6. Presiding and Assisting Ministers *must be* Ordained Clergy (whose status is either Active or Emeritus) of the LCMS. Vicars of our Synod may assist with services. However, the District President and appropriate seminary faculty member(s) at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, or Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN, must give their **prior approval** for a vicar to preside over such services.
- 7. The only services that will be held in the church, on church grounds, or either before/after a burial, will be Prayer Services, Funeral Services and Committal Services (respectively). If a funeral is for a veteran of any of our national armed forces, military honors by members of a veterans service organization (i.e., the American Legion, VFW, etc.) may be conducted after the Committal Service when directed to do so by the pastor.
- 8. “A eulogy is not in the best Christian tradition.” (LSB Agenda, pg. 117) Eulogies are considered inappropriate for any of the services mentioned in #7 above.
- 9. “An obituary may be read which focuses on the Gospel promise of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ Jesus our Lord, and not on the good deeds of the deceased.” (LSB Agenda, pg. 117). “When an obituary is read, it may be read in connection with the Sermon. Appropriate examples are provided in the Resources for Christian Burial...” (LSB Agenda, pgs. 148-149)

10. The funeral home and/or family is expected to allow the pastor sufficient time to review the obituary of the deceased and edit (when deemed necessary) before publication.
11. We consider that any services provided are meant to glorify our Father in heaven through Jesus Christ who has redeemed us with His precious blood. To Him alone do we give all glory, honor, worship, and praise. Therefore, everything pertaining to the services will be in accordance with God's Holy Word.
12. The date and time for Prayer, Funeral and Committal Services will be decided by taking into consideration the availability of the pastor, the church, the funeral home, cemetery staff, etc.

Organist, Pianist, and/or Soloist

1. It is preferred that the talents of current members of our church are used for organist, pianist, and/or soloist. They are familiar with our liturgies, hymnals and practices. (See #5 and #11 above)
 - a. Organists, pianists and/or soloists who are members of sister congregations of the LCMS may also play/sing for funerals with prior approval of the pastor and elders.
 - b. Requests for organists, pianists or soloists who are not current members of our synod will be prayerfully considered, and then approved or disapproved, by the pastor and elders. It will then be the responsibility of the pastor to tactfully explain to the requester the reason, and/or reasons, why any request is denied.

Facility Use and Meals

1. Sanctuary and fellowship hall policies will be followed accordingly.
2. Funeral dinners and/or receptions to be held at the church will be coordinated through the ladies of the church.

Committal and Cemetery

Committal

The custom of burial taking place immediately following the funeral service is advised for both interment and inurnment of the decedent's bodily remains.

1. Interment (Traditional Burial)

- a. When circumstances permit, the family, along with those within the congregation who desire to attend the graveside service, will process to the cemetery where the body is buried in the earth to await Christ's Second Coming (1 John 2:28; 3:2) at the resurrection of all flesh.
- b. In the case of a direct burial, the Committal Rite will take place at the graveside with the family present and the funeral may then occur either immediately afterward or at a predetermined time at the church.
- c. Traditional burial follows the precedence of both a biblical and Christian understanding of the care for the body after death. It is not dictated, nor is it influenced by things, such as shifting societal trends and worldly pressures like human composting, cost, cemetery space, etc.
- d. Traditional burial provides the opportunity for necessary closure to the family. It is also a Christian witness of the certainty that the body seen placed into the grave, will be the same body raised when Christ returns again in glory. (cf. Job 19:25-27).
- e. The advances in embalming techniques do allow for sufficient time to hold a funeral, in some cases, up to 10 days after death occurs. At the same time, this form of burial does not permit the Christian funeral to be delayed indefinitely, as may happen with cremation.

2. Inurnment (Cremation)

- a. If this method is chosen for final disposition of the body, *all of the cremains* are expected to be reverently sealed inside of a container made of bronze, pewter, marble or similar plastic material, or a hardwood urn. Other containers will not be used. These include but are not limited to items such as: cardboard boxes, soft-sided containers, fishing tackle and tool boxes, beer steins, balloons, jewelry, teddy bears, boots, etc.
- b. “In the case of cremation, the ashes (cremains) are expected to be buried or interred at a cemetery plot, mausoleum, crypt, or columbarium. The practice of scattering the ashes of the deceased to the elements is discouraged among Christians.” (LSB Agenda, Committal, pg. 124)
- c. Items 1a & 1b above are still applicable in this situation.

3. Cases Pertaining to Medical Science

- a. “When [a member’s] body has been willed for medical research, the Committal [Rite], with appropriate modifications, may be used in the presence of the bereaved before the body is removed.” (LW Agenda © 1984, Notes: Burial of the Dead, pg. 196)
- b. “If the body is to be cremated, the ashes (cremains) of the deceased are interred later using, with appropriate modifications, the Committal [Rite].” (LW Agenda © 1984, Notes: Burial of the Dead, pg. 196)
- c. It is expected that the family consult with pastor so that appropriate arrangements can be made for burial.

Church Cemetery

In the case where the congregation has its own cemetery (Trinity Lutheran Church—Ogallala, Nebraska), the Cemetery Policy previously adopted shall be in effect until such time it is amended by the voters assembly of that congregation. (See **Trinity Lutheran Cemetery Policy**, Adopted May 20, 2018)

This policy supersedes all other such guidelines, policies, and/or handbooks published in the past.

Adopted by the Board of Elders from St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church—Brule and from Trinity Lutheran Church—Ogallala.

Revised: 29 August 2025

Ratified by the Voters Assembly at St. John's, 26 October 2025

Ratified by the Voters Assembly at Trinity, 26 October 2025

