



Funeral Planning Guide and Worksheet



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Funeral Planning Guide and Worksheet

Jesus said: "*I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.*"

John 14:3

Thank you for picking up First Congregational Church of La Grange's Funeral Planning Guide and Worksheet. This material is designed to:

- provide a tool for planning for the future when your life on this earth ends,
- support and guide families making plans upon the death of a loved one, and
- help families understand the roles of the church staff and ministries in this difficult time..

In the first days following a loved one's death, the family makes an average of 200 decisions. During such an emotional, stressful and demanding time, plans that have been made earlier lighten the load after death.

If you've not made advance plans, this guide will be helpful to you as you make arrangements for services and burial of your loved one.

This guide will walk you through a series of questions. Your responses can be marked on the worksheet at the end. Our Pastor is available to discuss any items with you. When you are finished, please share your worksheet with a family member or friend who will act on your behalf after your death. It would also be helpful to contact the Pastor to share your worksheet so that it can be held in safekeeping for the future.

The Goal of the Christian Funeral Service

The gathering of family and friends, who form a community of hope for a funeral or memorial service, is a rich opportunity to recall the promises of God. Each time we gather to worship upon the death of a loved one, we do so in the context of God's promises for extravagant love, grace, comfort, and healing. Every funeral includes praising God even as we celebrate the life of the deceased and give thanks to God for the time shared with that person.

Christians view death as another step in our life as children of God. Yet, Christians also experience death as a time of loss when sorrow, grief, and bereavement are both natural and appropriate. These two truths inform the Christian funeral service and guide the church in its ministry to those who have lost a loved one to death, affirming with both joy and tears the promise and hope of the Love of God.

A funeral or memorial service should be comforting to those who mourn as well as bear witness to our faith. *The concern of gathered friends does minister to our grief but, above all else, a funeral is a service of worship to God.* There, in God's presence together, we witness to our faith in the communion of saints, and promise of God's never ending love. In doing so, the assurance of God's love and grace in Christ become a ministry, especially to the bereaved. Since a funeral is a service of worship, all that takes place should be consistent with this principle.

Planning Faithfully, Choosing Wisely

What is the difference between a funeral and memorial service?

Simply put, at a funeral service the body of the deceased is present, whereas at a memorial service either the deceased's ashes or no remains are present. Both services provide an opportunity to proclaim God's death defeating acts in Christ as we remember all that God has given us in the life of our loved one.

How does the Church view cremation?

Cremation is an acceptable way for Christians to deal with one's earthly remains. The Scriptures tell us that we are formed "of the dust of the ground" (Genesis 2:7) and, after death, we shall return "again to dust." (Job 34:15)

Should I make pre-arrangements with a Funeral Director?

Making the decision to pre-arrange some aspects of your funeral and/or burial is helpful. An appointment with a Funeral Director in advance of death is a wise step to help you decide what you and your family need from the many services available. If you are a family member caring for a dying loved one, making an initial contact now with a Funeral Director can be very helpful and will lessen the decisions and demands you'll face upon death.

How soon after death does a funeral or memorial service take place?

Funeral services are generally held within three to five days following death, thereby allowing appropriate time for family members and friends to gather for the service. Memorial services can be held at any time. However, waiting for weeks or even months after a death will have a bearing on finding a sense of closure, and this will impact the grief work that follows the death of a loved one. Therefore, it is recommended that a memorial service be held within a few weeks after death.

If a funeral or memorial service is to be followed by a burial that same day, the schedule of the cemetery workers dictates that burials be held during normal business hours for city cemeteries. Surcharges apply for weekend burials, and burials are not available on holidays. It is also possible to have the burial before the service which allows for a late afternoon or evening service.

Funeral or memorial services on Sunday are highly discouraged as Sundays are reserved for the worship service and activities of the congregation.

What fees are associated with a funeral or memorial service at First Congregational Church of La Grange?
There are fees for the people involved in providing the worship service as well as those who prepare and clean up following the service and reception. A fee schedule is available from the church. *There is no building rental fee for FCCLG members.*

Who plans a funeral or memorial service at First Congregational Church of La Grange?

All services of worship at FCCLG are planned by the church staff. Funerals and memorial services are planned by the pastor in consultation with you before your death and with your family following your death.

Who makes arrangements for the musician(s)?

FCCLG's Director of Music is available to assist you in planning for music. Our musicians serve as the pianist or organist for all funerals held in the church unless special arrangements are made through the Director of Music. A vocalist and/or instrumentalists may be selected by you or your family, or the additional musicians can be arranged by Director of Music.

May we have a visitation at the church the evening before the service, or must that take place at a funeral home?

The visitation may take place at FCCLG before the service if there are no other events already scheduled in the Sanctuary or Founders' Room.

Who is responsible for producing the order of worship and bulletin?

After the service has been planned with the Pastor, the church office will produce the bulletin at no cost to your family if the service will be held at First Congregational Church.

Who is responsible for submitting the death notice and obituary to the newspaper?

The Funeral Director will take care of this for you. A full obituary normally appears 2-3 days before the visitation and funeral. There is a cost for this, and the Funeral Director will assist you.

Who plans the reception following the funeral or memorial service?

If using the Founders' Room, the church office staff will schedule the room and make these arrangements with the Ministry of Nurture and your family. When plans are being made for the funeral following death, a contact person from the Ministry of Nurture will work with your family to order food appropriate to the number of people you anticipate attending. We know it is difficult to estimate a number. But we have years of experience at planning these events and, with a few questions, we can assist in that estimate. We assure you that there will be sufficient food and seating for all who choose to attend the reception.

Any leftover food is yours to take home, deliver to agencies in the community that welcome donations (such as B.E.D.S.). Payment for the reception food and servers is coordinated through the Church Office.

What if I desire to have memorials directed to FCCLG or other organizations?

This is an honorable thing to do. First Congregational Church of La Grange and any other organizations you choose are blessed when memorials are directed to support their ministries and missions. The Funeral Director will be happy to include any memorial designation(s) in the notices about the funeral service. All memorial gifts received directly by FCCLG will generate an acknowledgment to you and a thank you note from the church to the donor.

FUNERAL PLANNING WORKSHEET

When planning your funeral or a funeral for a loved one, there are many choices to make. Facing some of those choices now will make the process less demanding for your loved ones later. This Funeral Planning Worksheet will lead you through a variety of decisions. After death, FCCLG's Pastor will meet with family members and review your worksheet to form the funeral or memorial service.

This worksheet may be used by:

- an individual making their advance plans known, or
- a family planning the funeral of a loved one nearing death or recently deceased.

Please supply as much information as you wish to share on any parts of the worksheet.

Guide for the Christian Funeral of _____
Full Name: First, Middle (Maiden), Last

Date Completed: _____

For the Person Making Advance Plans:

When you have completed this worksheet, please consider sharing it with FCCLG's Pastor. Your information will be kept in a confidential file available only to the Pastor. It will be used in consultation with your family or whomever you have directed to carry out these wishes upon your death.

Also, after completing the worksheet, consider telling someone you trust about it. You may wish to discuss with them what you have written to be certain that it is clear. Consider providing copies:

1. To your Family
2. Attached to your Five Wishes Booklet and/or your Will or Trust Plan
(see www.agingwithdignity.org/five-wishes.php)
3. To a Funeral Director

Or simply give it to someone you trust with a note that says,

I have recorded my desires regarding my death and burial. I keep this information in the following place: _____ (i.e. on file at the church, with my will, etc.).

At the time of my death, I ask that you use this information to provide guidance for my family and my church in making arrangements for the funeral I desire. Although this information is being left for safekeeping, I understand that it is not legally binding or enforceable. This worksheet does not make the church or anyone obligated or responsible for the execution of these instructions.

With gratitude,

Signature and Date

For Family Members Making Plans for the Funeral of a Loved One Nearing Death or Recently Deceased:

Please use this worksheet to assist with plans that will honor your loved one's expressed wishes or desires and will reflect his/her values. If you haven't already contacted a Funeral Director, please consider doing so now. The professional services, compassionate care, and guidance they provide will greatly assist you in the days ahead.

When death occurs, please contact the church office at 708-352-0800 or, after hours, please use the personal phone number of the pastor listed on the Church Directory. Area Funeral Directors also have personal contact information for the pastor and will contact them on your behalf.

Visitation:

A visitation is an informal gathering for friends and family to express sympathy, view photographs/video tribute, etc. You are invited to consider FCCLG for visitation when you work with a professional Funeral Director.

- **Will a Visitation be held?** circle one: Yes No

- **Location of Visitation:**

—At the Funeral Home

—At FCCLG

—Other _____

- **Will the remains be present at the Visitation?**

—Coffin with Viewing of Body

—Closed coffin

—Urn with Photograph next to it

—No remains present

- **Time of the Visitation:**

—Evening Prior to the Funeral or Memorial Service

—Before the Funeral or Memorial Service Only

—Both

- **Displays:**

—Photographic displays

—Mementos (Awards, Certificates, etc)

—Video Tribute (often produced by the Funeral Home)

—Other _____

Christian Worship Service Plans:

A Memorial or Funeral Service is a worship service that celebrates the life of the deceased, praises God for the gift of this person and all that they have meant to their families and friends. The Officiant is the deceased's pastor who will create the service in consultation with the family and plans specifically left by the deceased person.

- **Location of the Service:**

—First Congregational Church

—Funeral Home

—Cemetery (graveside service only)

—Other _____

- **Will the Remains be Present at the Worship Service?**

—Yes, Coffin (will be closed prior to the start of the service)

—Yes, Urn with Ashes

—No

• **Display Items to be on or Near the Casket/Urn:**

- Floral Spray and/or additional Flower bouquets*
- Bible or other Symbol of Faith* _____
- Photograph*
- Cross*
- Flag (Only during visitation or at Cemetery)*

• **Favorite Biblical Theme or Image:** _____

• **Readers:**

- The pastor who officiates reads*
- I would like this/these person(s) to read:* _____

• **Choosing Bible Readings:**

- The Pastor who officiates may choose the readings*
- My family will choose the readings*
- I have chosen the readings as indicated below*

(Generally 2 or 3 passages are read.) Examples include:

Psalm 23; Psalm 46:1-5; Psalm 90:1-10; Psalm 121, Psalm 130; Psalm 139:1-12;
 Job 19:23-27; Isaiah 40:28-31; Isaiah 65:1-7
 Matthew 11:28-30; Luke 23:33, 39-43; John 11:17-27; John 14:1-6 25-27;
 Romans 8:14-23, 31-19; Romans 10b-12;
 1Corinthians 15:20-26,35-38, 42-44, 50, 53-58; 2Corinthians 4:13-18;
 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11, 2 Timothy 4:6b-8, Revelation 21:1-4, 22-25, 22:3-5;
 Revelation 22:1-5; or other scripture passages that have been meaningful to your faith
 journey

—*Other reading selected:* _____

• **Congregational Hymns? (Generally 2 or 3 hymns are sung, with additional music included in Prelude or Postlude.)**

- The Pastor who officiates may choose the hymns.*
- My family will choose the hymns in consultation with the Pastor.*
- I have chosen the hymns as indicated below:*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bless Be the Tie that Binds ▪ This is My Father's World ▪ He Lives ▪ Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross ▪ O For A Thousand Tongues ▪ Amazing Grace ▪ It is Well with My Soul ▪ Beautiful Savior ▪ Guide Me O Thou Great Redeemer ▪ Love Divine All Loves Excelling ▪ O God, Our Help In Ages Past ▪ For All the Saints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lift High the Cross ▪ The King of Love My Shepherd Is ▪ Precious Lord, Take My Hand ▪ My Faith Looks Up To Thee ▪ My Hope is Built on Nothing Less ▪ How Great Thou Art ▪ In The Seed There Is A Flower ▪ I Was There To Hear Your Burning Cry ▪ Other _____ ▪ _____ ▪ _____
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- **Soloists/Ensemble** *If possible I would like this/these musicians to sing:*

Musical Selections: _____

- **Are there other musical selections you would like included? (Prelude, Postlude?)**

- **Are there specific events about your life (accomplishments, associations, memories, etc.) that you would like to be shared?**

Reception following Worship:

- **I would like a reception following the service for mutual conversation and consolation**

—Yes

—No

- **I would like the Reception**

—*Immediately following the worship service and before the burial*

—*Following both the worship service and the burial.*

- **Location for the Reception:**

—*First Congregational Church of La Grange*

— *Founder's Room*

— *Drawing Room*

— *Other* _____

- **Menu for the Reception**

—*Dessert and Coffee/Beverage*

—*Light Lunch (Sandwiches, Salads, dessert)*

—*Secure your own caterer*

— *Other* _____

Funeral Home:

- **I have made preparations with a funeral home for my burial arrangements?**

—Yes *Name and Contact Information:* _____

—No.

- **Disposition of the Body**

- *Embalm Body (Required if unrefrigerated over 24 hours before burial)*
- *Cremate Body shortly after Death*
- *Cremate body after visitation and/or service*

- **Burial Wishes**

- *Bury Coffin/Urn in Cemetery*
- *Cremains in FCCLG Memorial Garden*
- *Other* _____
 - *(For example a family member to spread ashes somewhere special to you, etc.)*

- **Bury Coffin or Urn**

- *Before Visitation*
- *After Visitation but Before Funeral Service*
- *After Funeral Service but Before Luncheon Reception*
- *After Luncheon Reception*
- *At a Later Date:* _____

- **Grave, Marker**

- *I have made arrangements for a grave marker with this company:* _____

- *I would like the following to be included on the grave marker:*

- Name: _____
- Dates: (birth/death dates) _____
- Maiden name: _____
- Bible Verse: _____
- Graphic: _____
- Other: _____

- **Eligible for Military Honors**

- *Yes*
- *No*

- **Names of Pall Bearers (Six Pall Bearers needed only when there is a coffin for burial.)**

- _____
- _____
- _____

- **Cemetery**

- *I have made arrangements for my burial.*

- Name of Cemetery* _____

- Location of Cemetery* _____

- *I do not have arrangements for my burial. I suggest the following arrangements:*

- *I have arrangements for a memorial marker with the following company:*

(Include Contact Information)

Desired Expressions of Sympathy

—Flowers

—I desire Memorial Gifts in lieu of Flowers

• Memorial Suggestions

—First Congregational Church of La Grange Endowment Fund

This is an Endowed Fund where gifts are invested, and the interest growth is disbursed annually to support a variety of ministries and missions of FCCLG.

—FCCLG's Memorial Fund

—FCCLG's Friend's of Music

—FCCLG's General Fund

—Other: _____

Obituary

Full Name (*including Maiden Name*) _____

Birth Date and Location _____

Parent's Names (*including Mother's Maiden Name*) _____

Baptism Date, Church, and Location _____

Confirmation Date, Church, and Location _____

Marital Status, Marriage Date, and Name of Spouse

Other Marriages/Divorces/Spouse(s) _____

Names of Children _____

Additional Next of Kin _____

Personal History

On a separate page, record additional information including place(s) of residence, special events, hobbies/interests, schools attended and degrees received, accomplishments, memberships, employment history, volunteer activities, military service, etc. Include as many full names, city of residence, birth and death dates, etc. as possible. All this information is important to your family. This information does not need to be prepared in paragraph form.

Important Documents and Advisors

It is important that survivors be able to locate vital records and important documents. Before your death, you should have a current will/living trust and related health care directives which express your wishes on important personal, financial, medical, and charitable issues for your survivors. If you need information regarding estate planning, planned giving, and/or the inclusion of a Christian preamble for your will, please consult your legal or financial advisor.

Location and Date of Will/Living Trust _____

Location of my Five Wishes Booklet or Living Will _____

Attorney/Will Preparer _____

Power of Attorney/Financial _____

Power of Attorney for Health Care _____

Executor of Will/Estate _____

Guardian (for Minor Children) _____

Additional

Comments _____

Please check here _____ if you would like a pastoral call regarding this form.

Please check here _____ if you would like information on how to include FCCLG in your estate planning.

Please check here _____ if you have already included FCCLG in your will.