

# FUNERAL GUIDELINES

## FOR

# LDS BISHOPS

A set of guidelines to assist LDS Bishops in the event of a death in the Ward

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. J. Wirthlin - Sept. 18 - "Sunday will come"  
Sunday

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## At the time of Death

*As bishop, you have a special opportunity to support the family during their grief; understanding that all grief is personal and specific to those involved...*

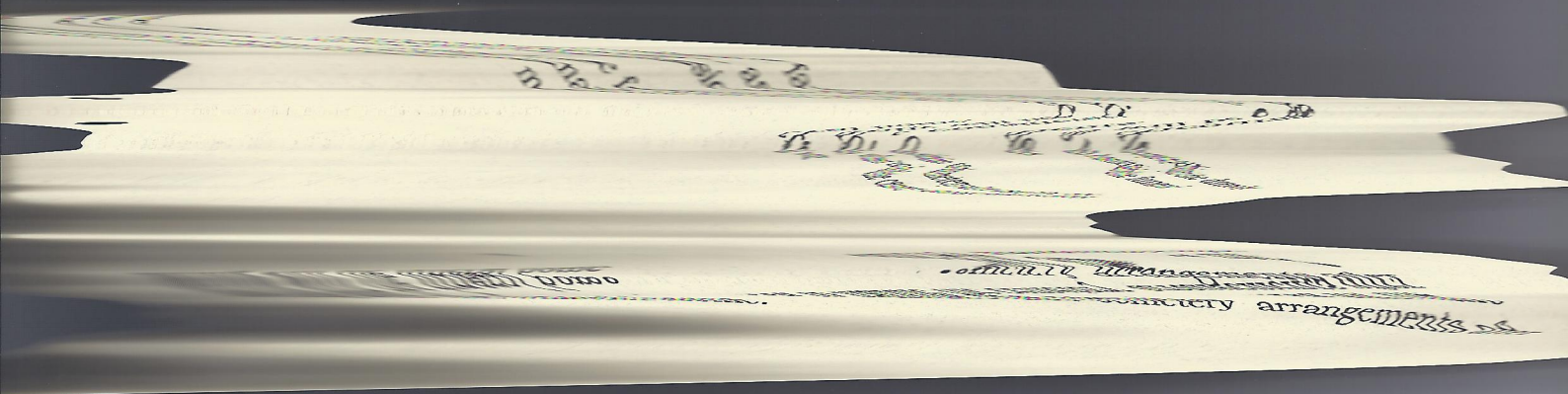
As you listen to the family members, you are letting them know that you do not have all the answers, yet it is helpful to hear their thoughts and feelings if you are to assist them in planning a meaningful funeral.

You may be at the hospital, nursing home, or family home within a short period of time after the death has occurred. This places you in a heightened emotional environment that requires guidance of the Spirit and sensitivity to the family's needs. At this time, you become an advocate for the bereaved family in providing a safe, comfortable atmosphere wherein family members feel free to express themselves. If someone dies at home without hospice or some other experienced program of home care involved and is not currently under the care of a physician, the coroner's office must be called.

One of the first decisions that need to be made upon death is which funeral home will be used. A family may have previously made financial and service arrangements with a particular funeral home. This is known as a pre-arrangement. In many instances these prearrangements can be transferred from one funeral home to another at the time of death. Oftentimes individuals may have non-funded funeral plans, in which there are no contracts issued. If there are no previous arrangements made with a funeral home, the family will need to select and notify the funeral home they prefer. A family member, healthcare provider, coroner, or you may make this notification.

Soon after the funeral home has been notified of the death, a funeral professional will contact the family to set a time for them to come in and make arrangements for the funeral service. You may want to discuss the day and time of the service before meeting with the funeral professional. Keep in mind the impact the time of service will have on out of town travelers. In addition to this, preliminary discussions concerning clothing would be helpful. If the deceased is an endowed member, then arrangements for temple clothing and the dressing of the deceased by either the Relief Society or Priesthood brethren should be discussed.







Endowed family members should be encouraged to participate in the dressing process as appropriate. These items will be coordinated with the funeral professional during the arrangements.

The family should also give consideration to what cemetery will be used for the final disposition. The family will need to handle the cemetery arrangements after meeting with the funeral home.



# Funeral Arrangement

*There are many decisions related to the funeral and burial that require attention by you and the family. It is through the funeral home that these decisions are coordinated...*

Arrangements will be finalized with a funeral professional at the funeral home in a meeting that may last 2-3 hours. Your presence is welcome and appreciated. During the arrangement the following items will be discussed:

**1) Vital statistical information for the death certificate.**

The deceased's social security number, date and place of birth, and parent's names, including mother's maiden name, are among the items essential in completing the death certificate. The funeral home is responsible for processing this certificate, which includes filing with the county in which the death occurred.

**2) Confirming time and place of service.**

Ideally, this should be coordinated with you before the arrangement. There may be some extenuating circumstances involving the release of the deceased from coroner or hospital that could delay the funeral. Traditionally, there is at least a 3-day period from the time of death to the day of the funeral. However, this may be adjusted to conform to the desires of the family.

**3) Detailing the unique aspects of the LDS funeral.**

It is essential for the family to understand each aspect of the LDS funeral. Items such as formal viewing at the funeral home or at the church and the dressing of an endowed member will be discussed. The overall outline as to how the funeral will proceed from viewing of the deceased to the conclusion of the graveside service will be discussed.

**4) Funeral Home service selection.**

These selections fall into two general categories: The *Services of the Funeral Home* and *Funeral Merchandise*.

*Services of the Funeral Home* usually include professional services, transportation of the deceased to the mortuary, embalming and other preparation, facilities for visitation, direction of funeral service, funeral coach, and other services and associated items, such as limousines.

*Funeral Merchandise* includes the casket, an outer burial container (generally required by the cemetery), printed material (memorial folders, register book, and acknowledgement cards), and flowers. It is important to note that the funeral home will simply provide options, while the family makes the decisions.



**5) Compiling funeral notice and/or obituary for newspaper.**

A service provided by the funeral home is placement of the notice and/or obituary in the newspaper, and if available, the funeral homes online guestbook. It is recommended that in addition to the service times being listed, that viewing times at the funeral home and church also be provided.

**6) Compiling the funeral service program.**

The content of the funeral service program is to be decided by you and the family. This information should then be given to the funeral home if the family chooses to use printed memorial folders. The family or the ward may elect to print the programs. Suggested elements that need to be integrated in the funeral service are discussed in the October 1988, General Conference talk by President Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

**7) Cemetery arrangements.**

When arrangements with the funeral home have concluded, the family will need to go to the selected cemetery to handle the arrangements for the burial.

Circumstances vary and at times the funeral home can make these arrangements for the family, ask to be sure. It is at the cemetery that the family will decide whether the casket will be placed in the ground (interment), or in a mausoleum (entombment). Most cemeteries require an outer burial container to help prevent the settling of the grave over time. A headstone or marker can be selected and purchased later through the funeral home, cemetery, or monument company.

**8) Military Veterans**

It is important for the families of military veterans to bring in discharge papers so the funeral home can apply for benefits such as, burial at a national cemetery, a government marker for the grave, an American flag, and any additional benefits the family of a deceased veteran may be entitled to. A more detailed discussion of veteran's benefits is located in the Frequently Asked Questions section.



# Funeral Service

*A well-organized funeral service creates a spiritual atmosphere.*

When a funeral is held at the church, the bishop conducts, or in his absence, one of his counselors conducts the service. The sequence of events will generally occur as follows (example of funeral starting at 11:00a.m with a viewing prior to the service starting at 10:00am.):

**9:45 a.m.** The funeral staff arrives at the church and promptly brings the casket into the Relief Society room or other viewing area. Generally the funeral professionals can handle this alone. They will also handle the placement of flowers in the chapel.

**Note:** With various activities taking place during any given week in the church it is necessary that the building be cleaned prior to the service.

**10:00 a.m.** Family members arrive in either limousines or their own cars and are brought to the relief Society room to begin the viewing. In the situation where there is no viewing, meaning the casket is closed, it is still appropriate to use the Relief Society room for placement of the casket so that the family and friends may gather. It is most helpful if you are initially present at this time.

**10:30 a.m.** It may be beneficial to hold a prayer meeting with participants on the program. It provides you an opportunity to go over the program format, while reminding participants of their time allotments. This brief meeting allows you to set the proper spirit. Any immediate family members who are speaking may be excused from this meeting.

**10:40 a.m.** This is the appropriate time to prepare for the family prayer. It may be necessary to invite all guests remaining in line who are not members of the family (or invited to remain) to be excused and be seated in the chapel. The funeral professionals can assist you in breaking the line and helping those still in the relief Society room file past the casket to pay their respects and/or offer family condolences. Keep in mind the following suggestions regarding this time:

- Position yourself at the head of the casket.
- Announce that the time for the family prayer has come.



- You may invite family members to stand close in around the casket to support the family at this difficult time. It would also be appropriate if the family remained seated.
- Introduce the individual who will offer the family prayer.

**10:55 a.m.**, After the family's final farewell, an endowed family member or their selection is invited to come forward and place the veil or cap prior to the casket being closed. (Endowed funeral professionals will assist in this activity.) and the casket is closed. This is a good time for you to excuse yourself from the room to be seated on the stand with the purpose of setting a reverent atmosphere in the chapel. The family will follow the casket and pallbearers from the Relief Society room into the chapel.

**11:00 a.m.** When the casket and family are brought to the chapel doors, they should pause for a moment. At that time you will approach the pulpit and invite the congregation to stand. This is done out of respect to the family and the deceased. It should be mentioned to the organist that it is very appropriate to continue "light" prelude music during the length of the procession into the chapel. The funeral professionals will assist the pallbearers and family to their reserved seats. Oftentimes, if the pallbearers are family members, they are seated with the family. The casket is then placed directly parallel in front of the pulpit for the service. Because of the closeness of the first pew to the pulpit, it is often necessary to seat the family starting in the second pew. During the seating of the family and pallbearers it is appropriate to remain at the pulpit. Once the family is seated, invite the congregation to be seated.

**The service begins** with a welcome to the family and friends and proceeds according to the program. Customarily, it is appropriate for you or the presiding officer to offer some concluding remarks. However, before doing so you should complete any announcements regarding the funeral procession (If Police escorts are provided, have those going to the cemetery use the window sticker signifying they are in a funeral procession), luncheon, and graveside service. After the benediction, the funeral professionals will make their way toward the front of the chapel. As this occurs you will once again ask the congregation to stand. The funeral professionals then begin the recessional, inviting the pallbearers to assist the casket and family. A funeral professional may remain in the chapel to continue ushering the congregation as the family has departed. (each building is unique and the appropriate door to exit should be decided prior to the service beginning).

The pallbearers will place the casket in the funeral coach and the family is directed to the limousine or their own cars in preparation for the procession to the cemetery. It is not uncommon for the burial to be in another state. If this is the case, once the casket is placed in the coach, family and friends are invited back



into the church and to the cultural hall for the reception. In the event of a memorial service, meaning there is no casket present, the family would be ushered into the foyer or directly to the cultural hall. It is not appropriate to have a receiving line in the chapel.



## Graveside Service

*Though the graveside service is generally short,  
It is vital in providing finality for the family...*

As this can be the most difficult time for the family, it is essential that you and other members of the ward provide support. Although the funeral professionals can be of assistance, the graveside service is to be presided and conducted by you or one of your counselors.

Once the casket has been properly placed for the dedicatory prayer, family and friends should then be invited to come in close around the casket. It is appropriate to welcome those who are in attendance and announce the individual who will be offering the prayer. This prayer should include the dedication of the grave. When non-members are present it may be necessary to provide a brief explanation concerning the purpose of dedicating the grave. Since the dedication is a priesthood ordinance, a worthy Melchizedek Priesthood holder offers this prayer. The person saying the prayer should stand at the head of the casket. In some situations, it may be necessary to privately instruct this person in proper priesthood ordinance protocol.

At the conclusion of the prayer you may, on behalf of the family, acknowledge the support and prayers of those in attendance, and announce that the services are concluded. It should be noted that witnessing the lowering of the casket following the prayer is becoming quite common but is strictly done at the direction of the family. Though witnessing the casket lowered into the grave can be difficult for the family, it helps them further confront the reality of the death and provides important closure.

**NOTE: Military honors or fraternal rituals** should not be a part of the prayer service itself but follow immediately after. For members of your ward who qualify for burial at a national cemetery, such as the National Cemetery in Gustine, be advised that graveside services will need to take place on a following day. If this is the case, the funeral would conclude as was mentioned in the last paragraph in "The Funeral Service".



## Aftercare

*A "steep cliff" is how one survivor described it.*

*Another stated that her "world had come crashing down."*

*A mother, whose 9-month-old child died from SIDS, indicated*

*That she felt "an all-consuming sense of guilt."*

These are just some of the feelings that loved ones experienced in the days, weeks, and even months after the funeral.

Historically, the LDS community has been very effective in providing a support system for families in the days following the funeral. The more we learn about the psychological as well as the physiological aspects of the bereaved the more we realize how important aftercare is.

The purpose of aftercare is simple: To help the survivors cope with the realities of death and grief, encourage healthy emotional adjustment and assist in the rebuilding of constructive lives. However, accomplishing these objectives may be easier said than done. In contrast to years past, we live in a society where family members do not live close to one another, which cause a breakdown in the support network for the bereaved. This is when it is particularly necessary for ward members to step in and fill the void.

**Real aftercare comes when we acknowledge and bring significance to the family's loss.** This can be accomplished with a simple note, call or visit. It is important to be pro-active in our compassionate service; the phrase, "Call me if there is anything I can do," though well intended, seldom results in a response from a bereaved family. After the death of a young father, the Relief Society arranged for a sister to come into the home the morning of the funeral. She ironed clothes, combed the children's hair, and prepared breakfast. Her efforts provided a sense of calm and relieved much of the stress during this time. Aftercare comes in many forms. Here are a few suggestions:

- **Telephone calls are greatly appreciated.** For grieving family members, some of the most difficult days are holidays, the birthday, and the anniversary of the death of the deceased. These dates, placed in your daily planner, provide you with an opportunity to call the family.
- **Personal visits can be extremely useful in assessing the family's needs.** Unless otherwise directed, dropping in unannounced can be very insightful. Obviously, visits during holidays are essential.



- **Cards are appreciated.** A simple note in the mail is encouraged to let the family know that they are in your thoughts and prayers.
- **Brochures and literature are available.** It is absolutely essential that the bereaved understand that the emotions they are feeling are normal, and that there are resources to help them cope. Many funeral homes can provide you with an abundance of literature that can be given to the family.
- **Support groups may be needed.** There are a number of non-profit organizations whose fundamental purpose is to provide help for those working through the grief process.
- **Counseling may be appropriate.** Each individual's experience of grief is unique as are your own capabilities to be an effective counselor. In order for a ward as a whole to provide the necessary aftercare, it is vital that there be coordination among the various organizations and auxiliaries involved.

*The experience of grief is powerful! So too is the ward's ability to assist in the healing process. To help the bereaved move forward a renewed sense of meaning and purpose is to let the healing begin.*



# Frequently Asked Questions

## 1) WHO IS LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE?

(1) An agent under a power of attorney for health care who has the right and duty of disposition under Division 4.7

(2) The competent surviving spouse.

(3) The sole surviving competent adult child of the decedent, or if there is more than one competent adult child of the decedent, the majority of the surviving competent adult children.

(4) The surviving competent parent or parents of the decedent. If one of the surviving competent parents is absent, the remaining competent parent shall be vested with the rights and duties of this section after reasonable efforts have been unsuccessful in locating the absent surviving competent parent.

(5) The sole surviving competent adult sibling of the decedent, or if there is more than one surviving competent adult sibling of the decedent, the majority of the surviving competent adult siblings.

(6) The surviving competent adult person or persons respectively in the next degrees of kinship, or if there is more than one surviving competent adult person of the same degree of kinship, the majority of those persons.

(7) The public administrator when the deceased has sufficient assets.

## 2) HOW CAN A HOSPICE HELP?

As doctors and the public have become more comfortable with a death occurring at home, hospice programs have expanded tremendously. It is safe to say that the increasing acceptance of hospice care has been one of the most positive developments in death and dying in our times. The hospice team consists of nurses, chaplains, social workers, and nurse aides. Hospices provide round-the-clock care at inpatient care centers or the hospice team will assist the patient and primary caregivers at a home, nursing home, or other place. If someone dies at home without hospice or some other experienced program of home care involved and is not currently under the care of a physician, the coroner's office must be called. Often this call is made by the funeral professional once it is determined that the death occurred outside of the care of a physician and outside the care of hospice or an experienced care program. (a hospice nurse having verified the cessation of signs of life, can affirm death over the phone with a physician who will subsequently sign the death certificate attesting to the cause of death).

## 3) ARE VIEWING AND THE PRESENCE OF THE BODY FOR A CEREMONY NECESSARY?

There are no legal requirements to view the body or for the body to be present for a service. Experts who study death and dying describe the "epidemic of complicated grieving" in our death-denying culture. These same experts generally



encourage viewing and the presence of the body for ceremony as a basic human need to see, believe, and accept; to express the pain ("grief denied is grief delayed"); and to share the experience of loss with others ("grief shared is grief diminished").

#### **4) IS IT POSSIBLE TO PLAN A FUNERAL IN ADVANCE?**

Any time there is a death in a family there is a high level of stress accompanied by the burden of planning the funeral and making difficult decisions. There are many benefits to planning ahead and include the following:

- Advance planning makes particular wishes known to the family.
- It allows the whole family to be involved in making difficult decisions.
- The family can focus on other important, related matters when the death actually occurs.
- Surviving loved ones may be relieved of the financial responsibility involved.

Families that pre-arrange are insured that the funeral home knows what their desires are. Families tend to take comfort at the time of death in knowing that their loved one's funeral reflects his or her wishes.

It is important to understand that advance planning does not necessarily involve prepaying. However, prepaying for a funeral can relieve the family of a financial burden by guaranteeing today's prices against tomorrow's inflation.

A representative from a trusted funeral home is always available to answer any questions related to advance planning.

#### **5) WHAT LAWS OR REGULATIONS APPLY WHEN DEATH OCCURS?**

The Federal Trade Commission enforces the "Funeral Rule" that addresses the transaction that takes place between funeral professionals and consumers, before and after a death. The Funeral Rule extensively addresses such issues as price lists, price information over the phone, permission before embalming takes place, and good-faith statements of goods and services. The Funeral Rule defines various requirements for disclosure and what constitutes a misrepresentation.

#### **6) WHO CAN CARRY OUT THE FINAL DISPOSITION OF A BODY? MUST I USE A CEMETERY?**

California law does not limit the disposition of a human body to funeral professionals; there is no restriction on who may transfer the deceased, make final disposition arrangements or arrange for burial. A family member or friend may take responsibility for the final disposition and must first contact the county health department to obtain the appropriate documents. The first documents required is the "Authorization for transportation and disposition" and the "Certificate of Death", each of which can be completed and filed by the family.



This does make the family totally responsible for compiling the pertinent information and securing the appropriate signatures from the certifying physician or coroner. It is also lawful for a family to bury a deceased human body on their own property. This too must be coordinated through the county health department and must be on property outside city limits. The health department will inspect the proposed site for any potential health issues; for example, nearness of flowing water or water tables. Must have written permission from the land owner to bury on the property.

#### **7) WHAT IS CREMATION?**

Cremation is the process of reducing the body to fragments of bone by flame and intense heat (1500 – 2400 degrees). The cremation process can take place before a memorial service or after a funeral with the body present. Some funeral homes offer caskets designed to be combustible. Some may offer ceremonial caskets for viewing and services – only the interior is later consumed in the cremation process. The cremated remains are placed in an urn selected by the family. There seems to be a growing concern among client-families that the cremation process is done carefully and responsibly. It is advisable to ask to see the crematory and even witness the cremation. For some, this finality is an aspect of emotional closure.

#### **8) WHAT IS EMBALMING?**

Embalming is a temporary process of disinfection, preservation, and restoration. A skilled embalmer closes incisions to be almost invisible and is capable of restoring features of the body that have been damaged by trauma or disease. There is no danger from the properly embalmed body.

#### **9) WHAT DOES A FUNERAL COST? WHAT IF THERE ARE NOT ADEQUATE RESOURCES?**

In the U.S., the average traditional funeral service with casket is above \$5,000.00. Local cemetery expense (without a headstone included) could add another \$1,500.00. Typically, funeral homes will add to their statement of funeral goods and services, miscellaneous cost called cash advance items. These are costs the funeral home pays outside businesses for services and merchandise on the families' behalf. Examples would be costs for; newspaper obituary, death certificates, floral pieces. Cremation can be less expensive, but not always. It is possible to choose the same services and merchandise to then be followed by cremation instead of burial. The least expensive option, direct cremation with no ceremony, ranges from about \$1,625.00 to \$1,785.00. It is important to visit the selected facility and assess the professionalism as it differs considerable from provider to provider. For infants and children, costs are usually reduced significantly.