

## **Things to think about when preparing for a funeral**

**Know this, you WILL have to make some of this up as you go along, every situation is different.**

A funeral is a time that the family will always remember - for good or ill. Work to try and make it the best experience they can have.

**The handbook is the best place to start. Get it out and study it.**

**There is a help that was designed by a member who is a mortician. It's about 10-15 pages on things to think about in preparation for a funeral. If you do not have this let me know and I can get you a copy.**

### **Program:**

- Conducting and welcome by bishop
- Opening hymn: hymn from the LDS hymn book
- Opening prayer:
- Eulogy: by family member (this should take 10-20 minutes and should be uplifting and in good spirit in memory of your grandmother)
- Optional intermediate hymn: LDS hymn book

Or a special musical number, if a family member would like to do this, or the ward can provide. Number must be approved by the Bishop.

- Memorial Comments: 1-3 family members who would like to share uplifting stories and memories of grandmother. This is not an open forum, you should choose 1-3 family members who will speak most respectfully in honor of the deceased, each speaking for 3-5 minutes.
- Speaker (Talk on Plan of Salvation): bishop or other speaker assigned by bishop
- Closing hymn: LDS hymn book
- Closing prayer:
- Adjourn to cultural hall for lunch prepared by Relief Society.

Conducting.

There may be many non-members in the congregation. It is probably good to explain:

- Who you are
  - Where they are, church of LDS, and which congregation you preside over
  - that they are in a sanctuary. Where we hope the spirit will be, and that they can feel the Spirit here as well.
  - We ask that they be reverent. Clapping is not appropriate, for we are hoping to hear the sweet whisperings of the spirit.
  - Please turn off your cell phones. Join with us as we remember and rejoice over the life of
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Kleenex

have a box of Kleenex in the RS room ready for the family prayer.

Have a box of Kleenex at the entrance of the chapel.

Have Kleenex at the podium.

have Kleenex all over if possible.

### **Talk on Plan of Salvation:**

The second speaker is traditionally the talk about the Plan of Salvation. It's basically a forum for us to teach all the non-members in the congregation about our beliefs, but also importantly, to remind the members that they will see their loved one again. This talk is typically the closer, so everyone is left with uplifting feelings.

One of the documents on the site is my talk on the Plan of Salvation. You can use that as a template if you need to. It's just an example. My talks are typically written in a type of shorthand, so I can read my notes from the pulpit while giving the talk and remember where I am. So, there may be parts that seem cut short, that's because I would remember what goes there : )

If you simply read this talk, you'll do a fantastic job. Great outline.

President Monson - April Conference, 2007:

I know that my redeemer lives:

<http://www.lds.org/general-conference/2007/04/i-know-that-my-redeemer-lives?lang=eng>

I've seen this be a great opportunity for others to give this talk as well. It can be very moving to speak at a funeral, especially for a person that you are close to.

### **Other things to think about:**

**\*\*\*When someone calls and says a death has happened, get over there and meet with the family ASAP. Literally drop whatever you're doing and get over there.** Many items are time critical and getting to the family ASAP is important so you don't get behind the ball.

Time sensitive issues:

- There is usually family traveling from great distances
- Newspaper article announcing the deceased
- Burial - schedule the grave site.
- If the person was endowed, an endowed member will need to dress them in the appropriate clothing. See the Handbook. Ideally a family member, or a HTer / VTer.

## **1. Building Preparation**

- Cleaning

The building is often cleaned on Saturdays. Probably a good idea to tell your building person, that the building cleaning people need to clean the building either PRIOR to the funeral, or some time Sat night. They CAN NOT be there while people from the funeral are there. After is

probably best, then they can clean after the funeral.

- Basketball.

Are there people who typically use the building early Saturday morning? They need to be told.

- Building Heat

As Hollister is quite cold in the AM sometimes the chapel takes a while to heat up. It is probably prudent to get there by 8am and make sure someone pushes the heat UP button in the chapel so it starts warming up.

There are timers that start the building, including the chapel, heating up by 6am on Sundays.

As the chapel isn't used on Saturdays, the only thing that will tell the heat to come on is the switch by the door.

This one has bitten me before.

## **2. Have priesthood backup**

Funerals are a terrific opportunity to screw up. Have at least one Priesthood brethren there to back you up. Ideally a member of your Bishopric.

You'll need support. Greeting family members that are mourning can sometimes be difficult.

Not knowing them, or knowing what to say. A warm, confident but empathetic smile, that's what I typically do. I typically stand in the library hallway, allowing family and friends to gather in that foyer and I greet people coming down the hall and tell them where to go. - Family to go to RS room for the family prayer, everyone else to the chapel.

There will be things you need someone to run and do. The Bishop needs to be present, stable, while the family sometimes falls apart. You need to be there, not running to clean this or do that. And there WILL be things you need someone to run and do.

## **4. Family Prayer**

I believe this is mentioned in the handbook. It's typical in LDS funerals to have a family prayer immediately preceding the funeral service. Probably not necessary at a memorial service. You might want to ask her how many family members will be there vs others. If it's the whole group, then probably no need, but if 5-10 of the group will be family, it is probably appropriate to have a family prayer.

I don't know if this is mentioned in the handbook, but this is how I've seen it done, and how I have done it many times:

\*Assume funeral service begins at 10am

\*\*\*Please note, the casket can be open prior to the family prayer. This would be considered a viewing. This would be open to all, and the family would be asked to stay during the family prayer.

A. Family gathers for family prayer in RS room. All tables and podiums at the front of the room should be removed, only the casket should be at the front of the room. Perhaps a table with flowers, or a picture if the casket is closed. An urn should be set upon one of the tables, as the center piece in the RS room. All chairs facing it. Probably should have a tablecloth under it,

make it look nice. Ask for RS help.

B. At 9:50 the family prayer is to begin. In my experience there is usually someone they are waiting for before this takes place. Often an estranged child, or simply someone who is late. It is the family's funeral, so it really doesn't matter if the actual funeral starts 10 minutes late. Take as much time here as needed. I once waited until 10:15 before I told the family we needed to get started. They finally agreed. They were looking for someone to take charge, and as Bishop, this is your building so take charge as needed.

C. Someone needs to be asked to give the family prayer. This ideally is a family member. If not, then the Bishop can give it or someone close to the family.

D. The Bishop gives a short welcome before the family prayer. Explains all that will be taking place. The tradition that the LDS faith has of having a family prayer. What will happen immediately after the family prayer, how and when they will walk in, where they will sit, etc.

E. Bishop invites person to give family prayer. Prayer is given.

Eb. - If an open casket, then the casket is then closed. If the person was endowed then the proper clothing needs to be adorned. See the handbook.

F. Bishop invites pallbearers to come to the casket - at this time the funeral home people will join in, to help move the casket.

G. Bishop goes first into the chapel and stands at the pulpit.

H. As the casket is brought to the door, the Bishop asks 'All arise' of the congregation.

This is to show honor to the deceased.

-- For a cremated person I would have one 'pallbearer' or person assigned to carry the urn.

Follow the same instructions as above.

I. The family follows the casket / urn.

J. Once the family is seated, the Bishop says, 'Please be seated.'

K. Then proceed with the introduction of the program.

### **5. Block off the two front rows for family**

You'll notice in the binder 4 sheets that say something like 'Reserved for Family' in large letters. I've used these to block off the two front rows for the family members. One at each end of the row. I would place these as soon as you get to the church, so no one but family will sit there.

### **6. Newspaper:**

Article about the deceased. Newspapers have deadlines, so if it's going in and going to be announcing the funeral / viewing, then you need to nail down the details ASAP.

### **7. Grave site:**

I've often found that cemeteries are typically booked. They typically have a small staff and can only do so many funerals in a day. Weekends typically come with an additional charge. So, this should be one of your first scheduled items, as the rest of your program and schedule could revolve around this.

Also, family could be traveling from great distances, if they make plans prior to knowing this date, then great problems can arise.

### **8. Caskets:**

Caskets can be purchased at Costco, and delivered overnight to just about any location. They are inexpensive.

With an actual casket there are a lot of things you have to think about, keys for the funeral doors in the chapel, explaining to the funeral directors that the casket WILL be able to make it around the pews even though it's so large. And much more.

### **9. Military Funerals:**

The military has a particular way of memorializing the dead. Typically someone from the VFW will be present to help. They need to be a part of the planning, as you'll need to have space to perform all that they require. In one instance we had the funeral in the chapel, walked the entire congregation outside to the front/side of the building - a grassy area. We then had a short ceremony by the military. We had prepared seats outside for the elderly.

After that we drove to the cemetery where they again performed prior to the actual burial. We were able to have a graveside dedication prior to the burial as well.

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