

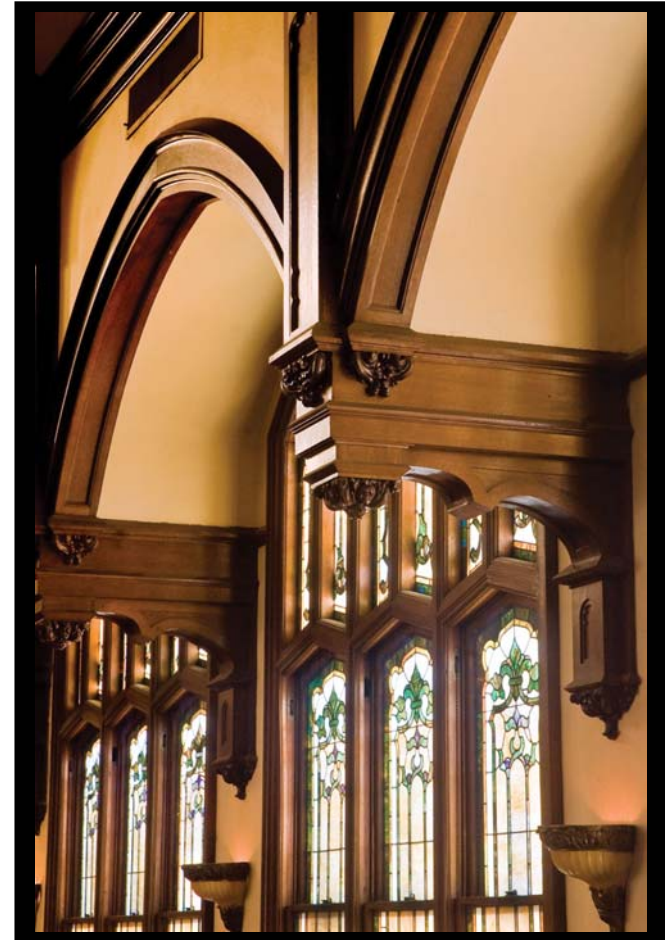


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**LAUREL HEIGHTS  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

**A CHRISTIAN FUNERAL**

Front Cover: Photograph by Brad DiBaggio

## COLUMBARIUM AT LAUREL HEIGHTS UMC

If you prefer cremation and have not yet selected a place of inurnment, the Columbarium at Laurel Heights United Methodist Church is an option you may want to consider. Phase 1 of the Columbarium is located indoors at the northwest entry to the Sanctuary.

Phase 1 offers 64 niches for sale on a first-come, first-serve basis. More information is available upon request. The pastoral staff can direct you to someone on the Columbarium Committee who can assist you with the purchase of your niche.

A pall made especially for use with an urn is available upon request if you decide to have the ashes included in the service.

At the conclusion of the Service of Death and Resurrection as contained in our United Methodist Hymnal on pages 870 to 875, the congregation will move to the Columbarium for the Service of Committal.

## INTRODUCTION

The following information concerning the funeral is intended for your consideration and study. It does not represent a policy of Laurel Heights United Methodist Church, but rather, offers suggestions that, hopefully, will be useful to you and your family as you consider the reality of death. It should be clearly understood that the ministers are ready and willing to assist and serve you in every phase of the planning of a funeral or memorial service. An important consideration is always that of the living with particular reference to the family of the deceased.

Please keep in mind that contact with the Church should be made as swiftly as possible in order for the ministers to assist you from the beginning with the necessary preparations. The Church is prepared to counsel with you at any time.



LAUREL HEIGHTS  
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5. If there is a casket in Sanctuary, place the \*Paschal Candle at the head of the casket in the Chancel area [putting the Plexiglas square under the candle]. The Paschal Candle is usually placed in the Sacristy. It is to be in the Chancel area Easter through Eastertide.
6. If the Funeral Pall is to be used, obtain it from the Pastor. The stewards will place it on the front pew, notify the funeral directors that it is to be used and ask them to place it over the casket.
7. When flowers are present, use their judgment as to placement in Sanctuary. If there is an abundance of floral arrangements, they use what is necessary in the Sanctuary and place additional ones in the Foyer [Entrance room by Rowe Plaza].
8. Thirty [30] minutes prior to the Service, light candles on the altar and the Paschal Candle.
9. Following the service, put out candles [altar candles first and Paschal Candle last] and return Paschal Candle to the Sacristy.
10. Return Funeral Pall to the Pastor for storage.
11. Change Funeral paraments back to the seasonal ones that were in place.

Please note: The Altar Guild Communion Stewards will be handling Communion when requested by the family on their scheduled assignments.

\*After the day of Pentecost the Paschal Candle is placed at the font, and for the rest of the liturgical cycle is lighted only at baptisms and at funerals [when it is placed near the coffin as an assurance that Christ our light has preceded us in death, and through our baptism has brought us through death into his new life]. Baptism – Christ’s Act in the Church, Laurence Hull Stookey, Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tennessee, page 168.

#### AFTER THE FUNERAL/MEMORIAL SERVICE:

The bereaved family members will be provided with a series of booklets on grief and offered the Services of a Stephen Minister to accompany them during their journey through grief.

Laurel Heights United Methodist Church also offers a meal for the family in the home before the Funeral/Memorial Service or a Reception in the Church Fellowship Hall following the service. The Care and Concern Committee Chair will call the family to learn of their wishes.

#### BEFORE DEATH COMES

Many times families, while under emotional stress caused by the death of a loved one, find it necessary to make hasty decisions regarding the funeral arrangements. This is particularly true when death is sudden and unexpected. Prior discussions about the meaning of a Christian funeral are helpful. It is easier and wiser to make these decisions under natural circumstances rather than after death has come to the family. Materials for this are available in the Church Office and the Pastors will need to be involved in this discussion.

#### WHEN DEATH COMES

There are basically three items which need to be considered when there is a death:

1. The Pastor should be notified as soon as possible. He/She will want to be present to support the family.
2. Consider contacting a funeral director of your choice as soon as possible. Your call will be heeded promptly and will set in motion the services performed by the professional mortician.
3. If cremation is planned and a memorial service is to be held at a later date, remember to provide guest books for registration since funeral home personnel will not be present. Refer to page 9 of this brochure for additional information on cremation.

#### THE CHURCH’S RESPONSIBILITY

The Christian concern at the time of death is with the living. This is a time when the members of the Church Family can make the priesthood of all believers a meaningful act. Historically, the Christian community has always rallied around the surviving family, surrounding them with love. Their concern and love is an important part of the Church’s ministry to the family. Hopefully there will be no skirting of the subject of death in our contact with the bereaved family. There is a need for continuing discussion about the deceased person, the remembering of this life in reality, both the good and the not so good.

## THE CHRISTIAN FUNERAL AS A SERVICE OF WORSHIP

The funeral provides the opportunity to respond to God upon the occasion of death, according to the Church's faith, based on Scripture. It is an event when we hear the Gospel interpreted so that we might once again re-affirm our faith in God, just as we do in all worship services. Our worship is in part an expression of praise and thanksgiving to God for the life of the deceased, and the rendering of tribute to our loved one.

Nevertheless, the center of our attention will be the same as for all Christian worship, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason, references in the sermon to the deceased will be simple and without extravagance.

The Gospel proclaimed is not the goodness of people, but the sovereignty and faithfulness of God. In this there is real comfort for the bereaved.

## LOCATION OF THE CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Whenever possible, the funeral of a Christian should be held in the place where the individual/family have worshiped and known God as Creator, Judge, and Redeemer – *The Church Sanctuary*. This is a familiar place for the family as it is associated with the great affirmations and joys of life. Here, baptisms and weddings have been held. Corporate worship and preaching of the Word and the Celebration of Holy Communion continue in this place. Within these walls both the deceased and the family have shared glimpses of life at its highest and best. It is not surprising then, that God's love is also celebrated in the Sanctuary upon the occasion of death. If the grace of God is truly received by the family during the service, there will be no problem of worshiping again in the same place from Sunday to Sunday. The very fact that death is not isolated from other experiences, which likewise take place within God's care and providence, will prove to be a meaningful remembrance.

Congregational participation is facilitated when the service is held in the Church's Sanctuary. The presence of the Church Family can be a sustaining force. Also, the presence of familiar hymnals eases the use of hymns and prayers. It is a great inspiration to be surrounded

There should be prayers of praise, thanksgiving, petition, intercession and dedication. The brief prayers would be an offering from the people to God in faith and trust.

## A SERVICE OF DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Please, refer to page 870 in The Methodist Hymnal

### Putting My House in Order

This form is available from the Church staff and provides needed information for those responsible in planning and handling the Funeral Service[s] – funeral, memorial, graveside, disposition of ashes], after your death in the manner appropriate to your wishes.

## PROCEDURES FOR FUNERAL/MEMORIAL SERVICE STEWARDS

These persons help greet and direct families to Parlor when services are held at the Church. They are also asked to check in Sanctuary to see that Altar candles are lit. Also, if the coffin is present, the Baptismal Candle is lit and placed at the coffin's head. If a Memorial Service is held, the Baptismal Candle will be placed near the Font.

Stewards work in pairs and assume responsibility on an alternating basis. The Chair of the Committee will inform the team who is to serve.

When Stewards are notified of a funeral at the Church, they will:

1. Check to see that Funeral or Memorial bulletins are available in the Sanctuary.
2. Check the P.A. system to see if it is ON. If not, they will contact one of the custodians or someone in the Church Office.
3. Ask the Clergy if the Processional Cross is to be used. If it is, it is to go at the head of the casket. When the Processional Cross is used, it will precede the casket from the Sanctuary. Stewards will have a clergy or steward ready to carry the Cross as the casket is taken from the Sanctuary.
4. Change paraments to white [ones with a crown on them] which includes: Communion table runner, Bible marker and an Antependium on Lectern and one on Pulpit.

## 2] Plan Two: Casket Closed While at the Church

The family may prefer for the casket to be closed while in the Church. Those who desire to view the body may do so at the mortuary before it is brought to the Church. Many people who come forward to view the body do so because it is a part of their heritage. In this plan, the casket is kept closed at all times when it is in the Sanctuary.

## 3] Plan Three: Memorial Service

The body may lie in state for a time, either at the Church or the funeral establishment. A Christian committal service is then held at the place of interment attended by the family and perhaps close friends. At a later time a service of worship is held at the Church - a Memorial Worship Service.

Some persons choose to donate their bodies to a medical school. A Memorial Worship Service may be held soon after the death and a Christian Committal service held at later date when the remains are returned to the family.

## CONGREGATION PARTICIPATION

The Christian's place is at the side of his "brother" in Christian worship of God on the occasion of death, whether or not he had any relationship to the deceased. As stated earlier, the Christian concern is with the living. Our worship together with the family is a most meaningful and effective ministry in their time of need. As the family of God, we meet to renew ourselves in the understanding "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" [Romans 14:8 King James Version]

If the funeral service is to be Protestant worship, all who gather will want to share actively in the service. The participation of the congregation in singing the great hymns of thanksgiving and praise, the Gloria Patri, saying a creed, or in praying together the great prayers of the Church are some of the best means available to us for responding to God's Good News proclaimed. And the prayers within the service are a response by the people, whether they are read together or said on behalf of the laity by the minister.

by the family of God in times of crisis. It is the faith of this community in our loving God that is our help, strength and hope. Of course, a funeral home is appropriate under special circumstances.

## THE SELECTION OF MUSIC

The Pastor may wish to consult with the family and the Director of Music concerning the use of appropriate music for the worship service. Careful selection will provide the service with music which can be a means of Christian comfort and strength. Since the service is one of celebration of God's love, emphasis on Christian faith is recommended. The music may represent:

- 1] The Adoration and Thanksgiving to God  
Example: "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"
- 2] Comfort to the living  
Example: "A Mighty Fortress is our God"
- 3] Death and Eternal Life  
"Hymn of Promise"
- 4] Hope and Trust  
"Be Thou My Vision"

Note that an index of suggested music is found on Pages 652-656 and 941-942 in The United Methodist Hymnal.

## PLANNING THE SERVICE OF DEATH AND RESURRECTION

In planning for the funeral, please, keep in mind:

- 1] The funeral conducted by a minister of the Church is a service of Christian Worship. Therefore the service of worship should follow the order of worship as established and followed by The United Methodist Church on Pages 870-875 in The United Methodist Hymnal.
- 2] The Pastor is in charge of the service. While the Pastor, family and funeral director work together, details of the funeral service should be planned through consultation with the Pastor. The funeral director "directs" services according to the plan established by the Pastor after consultation with the family. The services of the Pastor are a part of pastoral duties

representative of the Church and there is no financial obligation. If the family feels strongly about a gift to the Minister, it is then appropriate to make a donation made payable to the Church and designated for the “Pastor’s Discretionary Fund” or the Church’s “Memorial Fund.”

- 3] Should the family desire a minister in addition to its own Pastor to participate in the funeral service, the family should make such wishes known to the Church’s Pastor, who in turn will contact the other minister and make arrangements with him/her for participation in the funeral service. Of course, arrangements should be made to reimburse the guest minister’s expenses.
- 4] This is a time when members of the Church can make the priesthood of all believers a meaningful fact. Historically, the Christian Community has rallied around family and friends, surrounding them with love; This love and concern is an important part of the Church’s ministry to the family.

#### REGARDING FLOWERS:

Flowers in the Worship Service do have meaning for many persons and are by no means discouraged. This is always a personal choice, as the sending of flowers can be of great significance to the sender and can be a strong support to the family. Flowers can be utilized, but too large a display could become a distraction from or hide the chief symbols of the Church Sanctuary.

Another tribute to the life of the deceased can be accomplished by making a donation to a cause that will help the living. Many families request that memorial gifts take the place of displaying flowers in the Sanctuary. Memorial gifts are a meaningful and lasting tribute to the life of the deceased. These memorial tributes can be to important needs of the Church, to medical research, Health agencies or other worthy causes when not specifically requested by the family. When this is done, the family is usually notified of the memorial gift through the receiving agency or organization.

#### CHRISTIAN PALL

The Laurel Heights Pall is a long, white Damask cloth draped over the coffin with a metallic gold orphrey, elaborate embroidery, forming a cross the full length of the pall. The figures in the damask are the grape and the vine, the Lamb of God and the letters IHS [In His Service].

When requested by the family, the Pall covers the casket and serves as a symbol of God’s grace and love surrounding the deceased. Pallbearer derives the name as one who formerly held the edges of the pall but now those who accompany the coffin.

Upon request, the Pall is available for the LHUMC Congregation to use. Make your request known to the Pastor.

#### THE CASKET: ITS PURPOSE AND PLACE

When considering a casket for the deceased, please keep in mind it is a receptacle for holding the body of a loved one for burial. An expensive coffin does not change God’s plan for our earthly bodies and cannot equate our love for the deceased. Hopefully, we will not succumb to the commercialized approach that will surely be offered to us at this time.

Since the funeral is a service of worship, centering our attention on God and His Gospel, a Christian interpretation suggests three possibilities for the place and handling of the casket:

##### 1] Plan One: Casket Opened Before the Service

The family views the body for the final time before the service, either the evening before or several hours beforehand. The casket is open at the place of worship and remains open until the service begins. Persons desiring to view the body may do so upon entry into the Sanctuary. Before the service begins the casket is closed. It remains closed, at the place of worship and at the cemetery where the service is continued.