



# A Checklist for Your Pre-Planned Funeral or Memorial Service

Planning your own funeral or memorial service can provide peace-of-mind to you and your family.

**No one likes to think about death.** The finality of death and the separation from those we love cause us to avoid this painful subject as much as possible. For this reason few of us have not discussed funeral or memorial service arrangements. When a loved one dies, grieving families and friends face many decisions, some of which must be made quickly and under emotional duress. By planning your service in advance you will help provide peace-of-mind to your family and friends who will be able to remember you as you wish.

**A funeral or memorial service provides meaningful comfort and closure for your loved ones.** Having a service of remembrance is a loving act toward your loved ones who need to say "good-bye." Hearing words of comfort and hope as well as the sharing of tears with one-another is an important step toward the healing process. Based on your religious affiliation, you will want to discuss with your faith leader what type of service is best for you and your loved ones.

Determine what type of service would best honor you and provide comfort for your family.

In most cultures and regions, funeral rituals are divided into 3 parts: **Visitation** ("Viewing"/"Wake"), **Funeral** (or, Memorial) and **Burial**.

## Visitation

At the visitation the embalmed body of the deceased is placed in a casket. The viewing is either an "open casket," where the deceased is clothed and treated with cosmetics for viewing; or "closed casket," where the deceased is not viewed for various personal or religious reasons. Visitation usually takes place 1 to 2 days before the service and sometimes an hour before the service. Visitation can take place in a home, funeral home or place of worship.



## Funeral

A *funeral* is a service with the body of the deceased present. A *memorial* is a service without the body of the deceased present. Services can take place in a home, funeral home, place of worship or graveside. Services are usually conducted by one's faith leader. However, funeral home directors and staff are also able to conduct a service. Services include prayers, readings from the Bible or other sacred texts, hymns/songs and a brief meditation by a faith leader giving hope and comfort to those in grief. Eulogies are also given either by an appointed family member or friend, or by several people during the service.

Tradition allows the attendees, following the service, to view (or say "good-bye" to) the deceased body one last time before the casket is closed. Some family members may choose to remain present as the casket is closed.

## Burial

A burial service is conducted at the graveside, mausoleum or crematorium. A burial service usually follows immediately after the funeral service, in which case a funeral procession, consisting of the hearse/coach, family and friends, travels from the place of the service to the place of burial. If the deceased was a member in a branch of the Armed Forces, then military rites are usually conducted at the burial site. Your funeral home director will provide information on this service.



Pallbearers, traditionally male family members or close friends of the deceased, will carry the casket from the place of the funeral service to the hearse/coach, and from the hearse/coach to the site of burial.

Depending on religious affiliation, a committal service is conducted at the graveside where the body of the deceased is committed to the ground. This is usually a brief reading from the Bible or sacred text and final comment of hope and comfort is made by the faith leader. Traditionally, members of the family would help fill the grave using a shovel or with a hand full of dirt as a final act of love for the deceased.

Luncheons typically follow the burial service where a meal or light refreshments are served at the decedent's place of worship or some other site.

**Decide what type of service you want to have:**

- I would like to have a funeral service, followed by burial or cremation
- I would like to have a funeral service, followed by a graveside (crematory) service, followed by burial (or cremation)
- I would like to have only a graveside service or a service at the crematory, followed by burial or cremation
- I would like to have a memorial service after the burial or cremation
- I would like to have a funeral service in my own home, funeral home or place of worship
- I would like to have a visitation / viewing / wake before my funeral
- I would like to have a visitation before my funeral
- I would like to have a luncheon or gathering after my funeral or memorial service
- I would like to observe my religion's mourning events

**Identify specific location and people you would like to have participate at the service**

**Identifying the specifics for your service takes thoughtful consideration.**

Just as identifying the various locations for your service is important, even more important is choosing the people who will have a special role in honoring and remembering you. These will be people with whom you have had a close relationship and hold great meaning in your life. Careful consideration must be given when identifying family members and friends to help make your service meaningful.

**Identify the Locations**

- I would like my visitation to be held at the following location: \_\_\_\_\_.  
If this is not available, my second choice is \_\_\_\_\_.
- I would like my funeral or memorial service to be held at the following location: \_\_\_\_\_.  
If this location is not available, my second choice is \_\_\_\_\_.
- I would like my burial to be at the following location: \_\_\_\_\_.  
If this is not available, my second choice is \_\_\_\_\_.
- I would like a luncheon / gathering to be held at the following location: \_\_\_\_\_.  
If this is not available, my second choice is \_\_\_\_\_.

**Identify the People**

- The person I would like to conduct my funeral or memorial service is \_\_\_\_\_. If this person is not available, my second choice is \_\_\_\_\_.
- I would like the following people to serve as pallbearers:
  1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_
  4. \_\_\_\_\_
  5. \_\_\_\_\_
  6. \_\_\_\_\_
- I would like the following people to deliver eulogies:
  1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_

I would like the following people to deliver prayers, poems, or other readings:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

The readings I would like them to deliver are:

Title	Author/Source
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____

I would like the following songs, hymns, or pieces of music to be played:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

I would like people to honor my memory by making a donation to one of the charity organizations that has meant a lot to me:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

I want to be sure that the following groups, organizations, and clubs will be notified of and invited to my funeral or memorial service (such as veterans' groups, alumni associations, sports or hobby clubs, etc.):

Name of Group/Primary Contact	Contact Info
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____

I want to be sure that the following people, whom my family may not know, will be notified of and invited to my funeral or memorial service:

Name	Contact Info
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____
8. _____	_____
9. _____	_____
10. _____	_____
11. _____	_____
12. _____	_____
13. _____	_____
14. _____	_____
15. _____	_____

**Be sure to check with your Comfort Hospice chaplain for more information.**