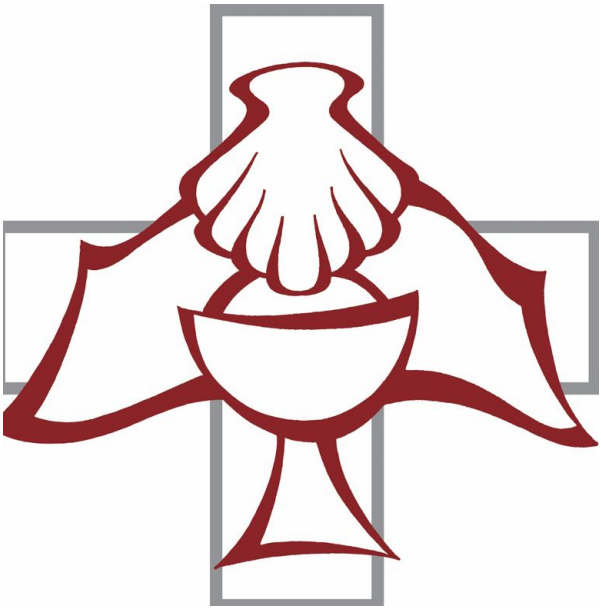
Death and the Christian

A guide for funeral planning



St. Peter Lutheran Church

Address: 324 E Traer St.
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We know that at all times and places the words of the apostle Paul are trustworthy and true: "*Neither death, nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord*." (Romans 8:38-39).

Great care will need to be exercised to make sure that those who are dying experience the ministry of the Church. If it is not possible for our Pastor to be physically present at the time of death, rites from Evangelical Lutheran Worship Pastoral Care, such as the "Commendation of the Dying" may be employed by a hospital Chaplain, a family member or another individual who is able to be in close contact. (A pdf is available on ELCA website.) The resource Peace at the Last, available from Augsburg Fortress may also be of comfort to families who are gathered together at the time of death, in the absence of our Pastor. It may also be of some comfort for the Pastor to administer those rites via telephone or video call.

At the time of death, at the funeral service, and at other occasions in the Church's life, such as All Saints Day, our tradition gives thanks to God for a person's life, asks God to comfort those who mourn with the hope of the resurrection, and commends the person who has died into God's eternal care. These prayers while naming the dead, are for the living. They are a way for us to ritually release the person we love into God's everlasting arms.

The Pastor of St. Peter Lutheran Church shall be notified by the family or the funeral director as soon as possible following the death. Pastoral care and use of the Sanctuary shall be made available to all, regardless of church affiliation or lack thereof. Please allow 2-3 hours for funeral arrangements with the funeral home and Pastor. A funeral home is able to coordinate different participants, line up the non-church tasks such as placing notices in newspapers, coordinating with the cemetery, providing guidance on laws and rules relevant to your situation. They will also be able to provide you with services that by law

require a licensed funeral home and funeral director. The laws do not require you to purchase specific merchandise or services from the funeral home except in specific cases. Your funeral director will be able to counsel you in this area.

The funeral service shall be under the direction of our Pastor. Others may be invited to participate in the service at the request of the family and at the sole discretion of the Pastor. Please provide a transcript of the remarks prior to the worship service and keep in mind that a short period of remembrance during worship should total no more than 10-15 cumulative minutes. A Christian funeral is a worship service, therefore, rituals of non-church related organizations are not permitted in the service. A time for recognition of the deceased's membership in an organization can be provided as a part of the graveside service.

In the event that our Pastor is unavailable, such as vacation, we will arrange for a supply Lutheran Pastor, no exceptions. All church activities supersede timing of funeral plans, and will not be changed (excluding committee meetings). Once we have a confirmed time from the family or funeral home, no other church events will be scheduled during time of visitation or funeral services including building maintenance or other daily activities.

The singing of hymns by the congregation is strongly recommended, both as a statement of faith and a means of participation by the congregation. Other music, whether sung or played by musicians, or recorded music, can be used with prior approval of our Pastor.

Ushers are provided by St. Peter, but if the family would like outside persons to usher, as in handing out bulletins and escorting visitors into the church, please indicate this to our Pastor. A couple of church ushers will be present to perform basic church functions.

The funeral pall is a cloth used to cover the casket or urn during the funeral service. This represents the new garment we put on when we are baptized into Christ's Family. It is a visual reminder of the promise of salvation we received at baptism. The pall is placed on the casket or the urn at the beginning of funeral service and removed before we leave the church.

A luncheon is usually provided following the funeral service, before or after committal. Women of the ELCA (WELCA) prepares a meal or outside food services can be used. WELCA will serve the food either way. Please clear this during the funeral planning. Families are asked to pay for the groceries. There is no charge for preparation and serving, although a contribution is appreciated.

Suggested honorariums:

Custodian $100
Organist $100
WELCA (for serving) $100, $150 for large funerals
Pastor $150-200
Media/Live stream/Record $25
(Bring a flash drive)
West Forty Market (family is responsible for food costs)

Checks should be made out to each above listed, not all in one check. If you are unable to afford these expenses, please speak with the pastor.

If a Funeral Home is Not Coordinating the Service
...please understand the family needs to coordinate the following items:

* Organist, optional soloist
* Burial (including the digging of the grave and the vault contact Greene City Hall)
* Military Honors
* Procession to cemetery
* Transporting or handling the body or cremains. The church will not handle or transport the cremains or the body; nor will they be stored at the church overnight. Additionally, the church is not liable if the cremains are lost or spilled.
* The family must arrange the display of flowers and pick them up after the service. St. Peter does not have flower stands.
* Easels to display photos or memorabilia.
* Obituary or death notice.
* Guest book/memorial booklet.
* Card box
* Death certificate
* Social security administration notification
* Provide the church with one contact person who will work with the church to coordinate all services
* Pall bearers
* Chairs for use at the cemetery

St. Peter Lutheran Church will provide a pastor, ushers, and arrange the WELCA luncheon. The church will provide bulletins at no charge, please have your preferences and information to the church secretary 2 days prior to the church funeral service. A date and time must be set with the pastor, including a visitation, if desired.

Flowers must be transported and arranged by the family. Care must be taken in the flower arrangement to allow access to the altar and podiums for the Pastor and speakers.

If you want to use prerecorded music, run a slide show, or desire the service to be recorded, please communicate that to the Pastor so that a trained church member can be on hand to operate the system. Our Pastor will preside over the graveside service, the family is responsible for transport of the remains.

St. Peter Lutheran Church, Greene, IA is not responsible for theft, damage, vandalism, or any other incidents that may occur while deceased is unattended in our church. The church is locked at night, but as our Funeral Policy states, we are not responsible for remains. We have seen the need to disclaim responsibility for intact unattended remains as well. Thank you for understanding.

Revised: August 2026