I am sure you have heard of undertakers, but the idea of an “uppertaker” might be new to you. Perhaps that term is implied in Paul’s statement in Philippians 3, “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (ESV). Although I have heard it suggested that this upward call refers to the rapture, it is probably best understood as Paul’s commitment to live in light of his (soteriological) call which promised such a prize. In any event, it is God who calls us, and that “upward,” so he may appropriately be called the “Uppertaker.” One day we will all meet him. Some of us perhaps in the rapture, others by death. We hope that meeting will be in the rapture of the church, an event we acknowledge to be imminent. But although Christians have held that hope for centuries, most of them have met their Uppertaker through death. We, too, as many generations of believers before us, may well meet the undertaker before the Uppertaker. If that is the case, we and our loved ones ought to think about how that meeting will be marked by those left behind.

Death is not something that we enjoy talking about, at least not seriously (the jokes are innumerable), and funerals are even less popular as a topic of serious conversation. Joseph Bayly called death The Last Thing We Talk About. Yet such discussions ought not be left to the end, for if we have time to discuss it at the end (we often don’t since such appointments are rarely made in advance!), we are often in the least objective place to do so. Pain, grief, and sorrow typically color the thinking of the one dying as well as those closest to him.

But think of it we should, and that for several reasons. First, most of you will encounter death most immediately in the death of loved ones, most likely your grandparents, though losing a parent, spouse, or child at your age is, unfortunately, not uncommon. Since that is often one’s first serious confrontation with death (in that you are now old enough to understand the significance of such events far better than when you were a child or in your teens), it is wise to be prepared for the inevitable event.

Second, as a Christian you have some responsibility in how your own death will be handled, not only in terms of the medical ethics questions (e.g., living wills, life support, etc.), but also in the sort of funeral and burial arrangements that will be made for you. Even though it is your family who will most likely handle the

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1 A similar translation can be found in NASB and NET. Other translations replace “upward” with a functional equivalent that identifies the referent, either a “heavenward call” or a “heavenly call” (see NIV, ISV, HCSB).
2 There is a difficult genitive construction here: κατὰ σκοπὸν διώκω εἰς τὸ βραβεῖον τῆς ἄνω κλήσεως τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. Some take τῆς κλήσεως to be a genitive of apposition (the prize, i.e., the upward call, or, as CEV says, “I run toward the goal, so that I can win the prize of being called to heaven”—which in this rendition may imply that salvation is a work! though a gen/apposition need not imply such), while others prefer a subjective genitive (e.g., “the prize promised by God’s heavenly call,” HCSB). For a careful evaluation of several options, see Peter T. O’Brien, The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 430–33.
3 I am obviously speaking figuratively and loosely here. If we are to use precise, technical terms, then even in death one would (hopefully!) meet God before the undertaker was notified of a death. Perhaps some have “literally” arrived at the undertaker’s before meeting God, but that is not a desirable situation! ☺
5 The reasons given here assume an audience of seminary students, typically in their mid-20s.
6 Though I’ve not done a statistical study of this, my impression is that it is when one is in one’s 20s and 30s that one most often loses his grandparents since they are often about 50 years older and this puts them in their 70s and 80s while you are in seminary.
7 These questions are not within the scope of the present paper.
arrangements, it will be both helpful to them and a testimony to your Lord if you have had the foresight to give some thought to these matters in advance.\(^8\)

Third, as someone who is preparing for pastoral ministry, you will deal with death on a regular basis. You must be prepared both to comfort the family and to counsel them as to the arrangements for and conduct of a Christian funeral.\(^9\) Unfortunately, many Christians have heard little about the implications of Christian theology for funerals. They have likely heard many sermons about the resurrection, the rapture, etc., but that is only part of a Christian view of death, dying, and funerals. As a pastor you should talk with your people about these matters as part of your regular teaching ministry, whether from the pulpit, in a Sunday School class, or as an occasional special seminar series.

My goals in this article are two-fold.\(^10\) First, to survey the relevant biblical-theological data on which our views should be based, and second, to offer some advice at the level of praxis: how ought you to minister in the context of a funeral, and also what ought you to think about in terms of how God may be glorified in death, whether your own or others. So first, the biblical-theological considerations.

**Biblical-Theological Considerations**

There are many questions that need to be answered. What are the biblical-theological underpinnings of our view of death and dying? For that matter, what is a person? Are we only a body? Or is our real person only immaterial? Flood comments on the difficulty of distinguishing what is “me” from what is “mine.” That is, are our bodies us, or simply ours? “Are our bodies separate from ourselves, something we have but are not part of who we are, or are they integral to our identities?” Or again she asks, “What vestige of a person still remains in the corpse? Is there anything about the body that needs to continue in the life beyond … in order for the self to be complete? Or is the true self outside of or separate from the body?”\(^11\) There are several biblical-theological considerations necessary to respond to such queries including the doctrines of the body, death, and the resurrection.

**A Christian View of the Body**

Christians view the body differently from nonchristians. Since our authority in such matters is Scripture, we begin by noting that it was God himself who created the physical body of the first human (Gen 2:7). Though formed from humble materials—dust from the earth (עָפָר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה)—Adam’s body was dignified and animated by the breath of life (נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים) received directly from God. Thus both the material and

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\(^8\) That assumes, of course, that you not only think about them, but that you communicate your thoughts to your family, preferably in writing.

\(^9\) Perhaps it is assumed that this will get covered during your internship, but I think it helpful if you first encounter a theological discussion of the issues before grappling with the praxis. This paper will not tell you such things as your traditional role as pastor in walking at the head (not the foot!) of the casket when it is carried to the hearse or of standing at that same end during a graveside/committal service. There are a host of such traditional protocol and ceremonies in ministry. They are not biblical mandates by any means, but you had best learn them so that you can minister without causing offense. But that is not the subject of this paper.

\(^10\) This article is, in one sense, a “prequel” to my previous article, “Is It Better to Bury or to Burn? A Biblical Perspective on Cremation and Christianity in Western Culture,” forthcoming in *JMAT* (2 parts, 11.1, 2, Spring and Fall 2007). It should logically have been the first paper written since cremation is but one aspect of the more general topic of death and dying. Some of the following theological discussion originated in the earlier article. My thanks in this paper are due to two “senior”/veteran pastors, James Howell, my pastor at Northmoreland Baptist Church, and to my father, Victor Decker, for reading all or large portions of this paper and offering their counsel on the subject. I have also had input on a key section from Dr. Jim Jeffery, Craig Golden, and pastors Dave Culver and Mark Schmidt.

\(^11\) Karen P. Flood, “Contemplating Corpses: The Dead Body in American Culture, 1870–1920” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard Univ., 2001), 1. There are many theological/ethical issues which revolve around these questions, including such matters as cloning, *in vitro* fertilization (especially with egg and sperm from “donors” and the “sale” of such), conception control, abortion, etc.
immaterial parts of humanity originated directly from God. Since the time that God formed Eve’s body from Adam’s side, all human bodies and souls have originated by natural procreation, and every human being bears the image of God. God’s original creation—including the first two human bodies—was proclaimed to be “very good” (Gen 1:31).

It is significant that humans are not first and essentially soul/spirit with an appended body. God did not first create a soul and then place it into a body. In terms of origin, man was first body, then became a living being. Body and soul are not opposed to each other even though they are distinct entities. “The body is as really and eternally a part of man as is his spirit, and the resurrection of the body is an indispensable part of his salvation.” Only in unity is there a complete person. As Murray phrases it,

There are two entities in man’s constitution, diverse in nature and origin, the one derived from the earth, material, corporeal, phenomenal, divisible, the other derived from a distinct action of God, immaterial and ordinarily not phenomenal, indivisible and indestructible. These two entities form one organic unit without disharmony or conflict. In the integral person they are interdependent. They coact and interact.

We thus view our bodies as gifts from God, as good things to be celebrated and honored (though not worshipped!) rather than as a prison of the soul as the body was typically viewed in Greek philosophy. Yoda may believe that “luminous beings we are, not this crude matter,” but that is not a biblical view.

Salvation is not just a “spiritual” matter that relates only to the soul, the body being largely irrelevant; salvation also includes the body. The body will also be redeemed (Rom 8:23). Our body will be transformed to

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12 The distinction between material and immaterial is not just a theological construct; it is a biblical distinction. Note, e.g., the contrast between the inner and outer man in 2 Cor 4:16, ἀλλ’ ὁ ἐξω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος διαφθείρεται, ἀλλ’ ὁ ἐσω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος ἀνακαινοῦται. See other uses of the “inner man” in Rom 7:22 and Eph 3:16. BDAG cites numerous examples of this terminology in nonbiblical Greek; s.v. ἄνθρωπος, 5.a.; ἔξω, 1.a.; ἔσω, 2. Throughout this article BDAG refers to F. Danker, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, 3d ed. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000.)

13 On the material and immaterial (or: corporeal and incorporeal) parts of humanity, see John Murray, “The Nature of Man,” in Collected Writings of John Murray, 4 vols., ed. Iain Murray, 2:14–22 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976–82); and Robert Gundry, Sōma in Biblical Theology, with Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology, SNTS 29 (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987). Most religious and philosophical systems conclude with a truncated view of humanity, either all material or all immaterial. The biblical view of mankind is a unity of both. Morey suggests that this is the ancient problem of the one and the many treated in a reductionist fashion (Robert A. Morey, Death and the Afterlife [Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1984], 42–43). Some otherwise orthodox scholars have truncated views as well; e.g., Murray J. Harris has a monistic anthropology and argues for an immediate resurrection following death (Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament [London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1983; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985]).

14 I use the term “soul” here as a convenient shorthand for “the immaterial part of a human being.” (I intend nothing regarding the di/tricotomy debate.) The summary above is a deliberate statement of a traducian view as to the origin of this soul, though further elaboration or defense of such is beyond the scope of this article.


17 This was part of Pythagorean as well as Platonic doctrine; it is also found in Philo and would later become part of Gnosticism. Irion summarizes the Greek view: “The dualistic assumptions of [the Greek philosophical system] made an obvious separation of body from a very desirable thing. Death and the dissolution of the body provided the means for the emancipation of the soul. This objective combined with the assertion of Heraclitus that fire was the underlying principle of all existence. Fire symbolized the purification and release of the soul and the unification of the body with its original elements” (Paul E. Irion, Cremation [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968], 6). See also Stephen Prothero, Purified by Fire: A History of Cremation in America (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2001), 7.


19 And we insist that indeed we do have a divinely-created, physical body, contra Christian Science (as well as some Eastern religions). Mary Baker Eddy wrote that, “Man is not matter; he is not made up of brain, blood, bones, and other material elements. The Scriptures inform us that man is made in the image and likeness of God. Matter is not that likeness. The likeness of Spirit cannot be so unlike Spirit. Man is spiritual and perfect; and because he is spiritual and perfect, he must be so understood in Christian Science. Man is idea, the image, of Love; he is not physique” (Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures [Boston: First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1906], ch. 14, “Recapitulation,” 475.6). The Bible, by contrast, clearly says that “God formed man from the dust of the ground” (Gen 2:7).
be like our Lord’s glorious body (Phil 3:21). When Paul explains that “you were bought (ἀγοράζω) with a price,” he concludes from this argument that we are therefore (δὴ) to “honor God with [our] body” (1 Cor 6:20). The same passage provides an additional reason for respecting the body, and that is the fact that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19) and it is even described as a “member of Christ” (6:15).20 We are specifically commanded to “honor God with [our] body” (6:20) on this basis. True, this is a description of a living body, but upon death a body, which is no longer indwelt by the Spirit,21 but which has had the privilege of being God’s temple, ought to be honored. Though not technically indwelt after death, if the body is a member of Christ due, in part, to the resurrection, then this body is still, somehow, united to Christ.

If we treasure, for example, the Bible of a loved one (sentimental though such a value may be), ought not we even more to honor the body of a loved one now with the Lord?22 The Christian has a unique respect for the human body compared with most, if not all, of her competitors on the stage of world religions.

That humans do have an immaterial part of their being is also crucial on this point. Christians are not materialists. Death does not end one’s existence. Although the specifics of what happens to the corpse do not affect the existence of the soul, death must be viewed from a holistic perspective, that is, one which has both material and immaterial affects on the person.

A Christian View of Death

A Definition of Death

Death is defined theologically as the separation of the soul and the body (Jas 2:26), though neither cease to exist. The body, apart from the soul is not functional, slowly but surely returning to dust until the resurrection. The soul apart from the body is also limited in some way. In the words of 2 Corinthians 5, without our “earthly tent-house” (ἡ ἐπίγειος ἡμῶν οἰκία τοῦ σκήνους, v 1)—that is, our body—we are “naked” (γυμνός, v 3) and “unclothed” (ἐκδύω, v 4) following death and prior to the resurrection.23 Although Paul’s figurative language here speaks of our “mortal” (θνητός, v 4) body being “destroyed” (καταλύω, v 1) and consequently of receiving a “building from God” (οἰκοδομὴν ἐκ θεοῦ, v 1), an “eternal, non-handmade house” (οἰκίαν ἀχειροποίητον αἰώνιον, v 1), our “heavenly dwelling” (τὸ οἰκητήριον ἡμῶν τὸ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, v 2) with which we will be “clothed” (ἐπενδύομαι, v 4),24 this should probably be understood as a reference to receiving our resurrected body rather than as a description of our “real” spiritual, bodiless existence or as a reference to some sort of temporary body.25

20 The imagery here is not exactly transparent. It appears that Paul is referring to the fact that the Christian’s body is part of the body of Christ due to the resurrection. In other words, being part of the body of Christ is not just a spiritual relationship, but also an organic one in some way. It is real enough to make it unthinkable that such a human body would be united with a prostitute. In any event, it certainly speaks loudly regarding the status of the body in Christian theology. Further, see Gordon Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 257–66.

21 Indwelling should not be thought of primarily in terms of physical presence (i.e., the Spirit is in some way locally present within the physical body of the believer). It is rather primarily a relationship—but a relationship that is specifically mediated in and through the physical body of the believer in such a way that the body can be viewed sacerdotally as a temple.

22 The comparison with other sentimental values is suggested by Boettner, Immortality, 51.

23 Hughes explains that “the body … is essential … for the full expression of the personal and potential faculties of humanity. The soul of man is able to express itself adequately only in conjunction with the specially prepared instrument of the body…. At death the soul is separated from the body, and man’s integral nature is disrupted” (Philip E. Hughes, Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962], 170–71).

24 The word used here is an interesting NT ἐπενδύομαι. The double compound (ἐπί + ἐν) is probably significant and not synonymous with the shorter form. It likely means “to put a garment on over an existing garment” (BDAG, 361) as both classical and koine usage outside the NT attest. The resurrection body is put on “over” the existing earthly body—which implies that the present body is not replaced or discarded, but must be resurrected for it to be “clothed over.”

25 Even less likely, in my opinion, is that Paul refers to our receiving our glorified resurrection body immediately at death—a conclusion drawn by Murray Harris, Raised Immortal, 98–100, 219–26. This passage is difficult and numerous explanations have been offered (for a survey of the major options, see Ralph Martin, 2 Corinthians, WBC 40 [Waco, TX: Word, 1986], 97–102). Wilbur Smith comments that this passage “probably has had more different interpretations than any other extended
The Significance of Death

Another biblical truth relates to the destiny of those who die. I have in mind here the specific truth of Hebrews 9:27, “it is appointed for people to die once—and after this, judgment” (HCSB). When a person dies, their future is sealed. Those who die apart from Christ have no future opportunity to change their destiny. Nothing that anyone does here can change God’s verdict or affect their condition beyond the grave. Perhaps this is so obvious to us that we tend to forget it, but we should not assume that this is so for all those to whom we minister. This should not only impact the urgency of our ministry to the lost (which is where our usual emphasis lies), but it should also mold our funeral practices. How this might be so will be considered below.

The Significance of the Corpse

It is significant that when someone is buried, the NT still refers to the person as being buried. Consider the description of Jesus’ burial.

Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if he [i.e., Jesus] had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body [πτῶμα] to Joseph. So he [i.e., Joseph] bought some linen cloth, took him [αὐτόν] down, wrapped him in the linen, and placed him [αὐτόν] in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid (Mark 15:44–47).

When Jesus was buried the text does says that Pilate gave the body (πτῶμα, “corpse”) to Joseph of Arimathea, but Mark then tells us that Joseph wrapped him (αὐτόν) and placed him (αὐτόν) in the tomb. One might have expected αὐτό (neuter) if Mark had intended the pronoun’s antecedent to be understood as the corpse (πτῶμα), but αὐτόν is unambiguously masculine. Mark refers to Jesus as a person—though what was taken down from the cross, wrapped, and placed in the tomb was, indeed, the corpse.

Only a few verses later in the account of the women’s arrival at the tomb on Resurrection Morning, the angel says, “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him (αὐτόν)” (Mark 16:6). The statement is that “he has risen, he is not here” (both ἠγέρθη and ἔστιν are 3S verbs). Although the default 3S subject of ἔστιν could be read as neuter (“it is not here”), referring to the corpse, the antecedent in this context is Jesus the Nazarene. The angel says, “see the

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place where they laid him” (αὐτόν). What was “laid” in the tomb? Yes, it was a corpse (πτῶμα), but it can still be referred to in personal terms.

This is not unique to Jesus’ burial. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead his words were not, “Dead corpse, come to life!” Rather, speaking to the one who was in the tomb, Jesus said, “Lazarus, come out!” (John 11:43). He addresses Lazarus as a person, not as the corpse of a person. 

"Even in death the body that is laid in the tomb is not simply a body. It is the body of the person. More properly, it is the person as respects the body. It is the person who is buried or laid in the tomb…. So what is laid in the grave is still integral to the person who died. In and during death the person is identified with the dissolved material entity."

This is not to suggest that a corpse is all there is of a person, but it certainly does argue that we ought not speak of the immaterial soul as the “real person” who only possesses a (disposable) body. To set “the transitoriness of the physical in bold relief against the everlastingness of the spiritual” reflects a biblically deficient view of the person.

A biblical view of the person as a bipartite soul/body entity, contrasts sharply with materialistic views of the body which are blind to the immaterial aspects of death. If there is continuity between a person’s unified body/soul in this life and in the resurrection, then it is not irrelevant how we treat a person’s corpse. This must have some impact on our funeral practices.

A Christian Attitude Toward the Event of Death

Physical death is, indeed, an enemy—though a defeated one in light of Jesus’ own victory over death in the resurrection. Though ultimately doomed, death still reigns over mortal beings. Every living being will one day die; the human mortality rate is 100%. When that time comes, though we do not welcome the pain and suffering that often accompanies death, Christians need not fear death. Their destiny is secure and they will be released from their suffering, “no more death or mourning or crying or pain.”

The Christian has ambivalent feelings regarding death. Though not welcome and certainly an enemy, yet death is the gateway “to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far” (Phil 1:24). Paul describes dying as gain (1:21, τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος, to die is gain), yet he recognizes that to go on living would also be fruitful labor (1:22, εἰ δὲ τὸ ζῆν ἐν σαρκὶ, τοῦτό μοι καρπὸς ἔργου). He is hard pressed to chose between the two (1:23, συνέχομαι δὲ ἐκ τῶν δύο), between living and dying. This is an appropriate model of a Christian’s attitude toward death, realizing the benefits of both living and dying, yet content to submit to God’s providence whichever that should be. In either eventuality Paul exhorts the believers to conduct themselves “in a manner...
worthy of the gospel” (1:27, ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου). Particularly in this context that would imply that a Christian is to conduct himself in death in a Christian manner—and that the sort of funeral arrangements a Christian makes for loved ones should also be distinctively Christian. There is a Christian way to die and a Christian way to conduct a funeral. Consequently, Paul’s command also implies that there are non-Christian ways to do the same, and that whether the individual is a believer or not.

A Christian View of Resurrection

Resurrection is a given in a Christian theology of death. From Jesus’ promise to raise both those who believe on him as well as those who have done evil (John 5:21–30; 6:39–44), to Paul’s great exposition of the future death-destroying resurrection (1 Cor 15), to the final promise of those who come to life to reign with Christ a thousand years (Rev 20:5–6) and then are given access to the tree of life by Jesus himself (Rev 22:12–14), the resurrection is the bedrock of Christian hope. This is a hope that cannot be denied or disappointed by any destiny of the human body.

This is stated clearly in 1 Corinthians 15:22, “for as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive” (ὥσπερ γὰρ ἐν τῷ Ἀδὰμ πάντες ἀποθνῄσκουσιν, οὕτως καὶ ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ πάντες ζωοποιηθῶσιν). Resurrection is co-extensive with those who died in Adam, that is, the entire human race. Although the “all” who will be changed (i.e., resurrected) in 1 Corinthians 15:51 is limited by the context to believers, the earlier statement in v 22 is clearly a universal one since it is paralleled with the fall. The fact that all will be raised, even unbelievers, points to the value and significance of the body and thus of the importance of how we treat the body in our funeral practices.

The Nature of the Resurrection

This resurrection is a bodily resurrection. It is our “mortal bodies” that will be given life (ζῳοποιήσει καὶ τὰ θνητὰ σώματα ὑμῶν, Rom 8:11). Our “lowly bodies” are what will be “changed” to be like Jesus’ glorious, resurrected body (μετασχηματίσει τὸ σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν, Phil 3:21). The mortal puts on immortality and the perishable puts on the imperishable (ديث γὰρ τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀφθαρσίαν καὶ τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀθανασίαν, 1 Cor 15:53). The resurrected body is not merely resuscitated; it is somehow transformed and receives new properties appropriate to the new form of bodily existence we will have after the resurrection. “There is a utilization of the old body, but a transformation of it in the process.”

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38 This is not intended as an exclusive statement in the sense that there is only one Christian way to die, etc., but that the way one dies is to reflect Christian theology, values, and choices.

39 The form is an imperative (πολιτεύεσθε, 2PPAM) of a verb used metaphorically of conducting or living one’s life. The origins of the word relate to living as a citizen under the laws of the state where one’s citizenship is held. While the political overtones may not be strong, the word was still used in this sense in contemporary literature (though not in the NT), so it is probably a legitimate parallel (see the data in BDAG, s.v. πολιτεύομαι, 846). If so, then the appropriate comparison is living life (or in this case, dying!) in accord with the “laws of heaven” where one’s citizenship is held. In other words, as Paul states directly, “in a manner worthy of the gospel.” (Side note for exegetes, semanticists, and Greek students: observe that the context substantiates the semantic force suggested by the word itself! This is not based on a “word study” alone.)

40 Jesus’ own statement that “all who are in the graves” (πάντες οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις, John 5:28) would be raised is not to be limited only to those who are inhumed, but is a clear figure for “everyone”—the figure reflecting the normal Jewish burial practice.

41 Note the “brothers,” and “we” (1P verb ending) in vv 50, 51: τοῦτο δέ φημι, ἀδελφοί … πάντες οὐ κοιμηθῆσομεν, πάντες δὲ ἀλλαγήσομεθα.

42 The statement of v 22 (“all will be made alive”) is not limited to believers by v 23 which refers to the resurrection of believers because the series begun in v 23 (“Christ … those who belong to him”) is continued in v 24 by reference to the final group of those raised (including unbelievers): “the end” (τὸ τέλος), i.e., the last group. The passage is tightly structured: ἕκαστος ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ τάγματι (τάγμα, “order”), then three “orders” are listed: 1. ἀπαρχὴ Χριστός, 2. ἔπειτα οἱ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ, 3. εἶτα τὸ τέλος. This sequence tends to be obscured by the verse break and in some English translations by the punctuation (period after v 23, so NIV, ESV, HCSB, NET, etc.; ctr. NA27/UBS4, NASB [but NASB adds an italicized word which doesn’t help], which use a comma). On this three-fold sequence, see BDAG, 988, s.v. τάγμα, 1b.

The Bible never explains the mechanics of how God will raise anyone, let alone those cases we might deem more problematic. This should be both reassuring to the believer and troublesome to the unbeliever. The believer can rest confidently in the certainty of a future glorified, resurrected body. On the other hand, the certainty of resurrection ought to be a troublesome thought to an unbeliever. They must face the reality of God’s promise that “those who have done evil will rise to be condemned” (John 5:30).

We affirm that there is a substantial, organic identity of the person’s body in this life and in its glorified, resurrected state.44 “This new body has some connection or point of identity with the old body, but is differently constituted.”45 How this is accomplished we are not told, but that is not our problem. God will be able to handle it quite nicely without our concern.46

Such a view of resurrection informs Paul’s analogy in 1 Corinthians 15 of the body being planted.

35But someone may ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” 36How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. 38But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. 39All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. 40There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. 41The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. 42So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 43it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body (1 Cor 15:35–44).

There is an organic connection between a seed which is planted in the ground and the stalk of wheat which grows from that seed—and that despite the fact that the atoms of the seed are not necessarily the same atoms to be found in the plant which grows from it. Paul argues that the same is true of the resurrection. The body which is planted in the grave is not identical with the body that is raised (vv 42–44). The body which is planted (the “seed”) is perishable and dishonorable since it is dead and decaying; it is a weak and natural body. But the body raised, though organically connected with the body planted, will be imperishable, glorious, powerful, and spiritual.47

The Significance of a Bodily Resurrection

In an effort to comfort those mourning the loss of a loved one we have too often adopted terminology that does not reflect a biblical view of resurrection or a full-orbed, biblical view of the human person. When we say, referring to a body lying in a casket, “This is not really Joe, it’s just his body; the real Joe is in heaven with Jesus,” we have not made a full biblical statement. It is certainly true that Joe is in heaven with Jesus (assuming Joe was a Christian),48 but we have implied that the body in the casket is no longer important. More significantly, we have divorced the body from the person; it was only a disposable possession. That corpse is certainly nonfunctional now that it has been separated from the immaterial, but it is still an integral part of the person, else there would be no point in a resurrection. If the spirit was the real person, there would be no further need for a body, or, if a body were desired, it could be created with no reference to the original body. God, however, has said that our mortal bodies will be resurrected and glorified.

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46 It is not necessary to resolve such questions for the present purposes. Regardless of the outcome of the debate, e.g., between Murray Harris and Norman Geisler, as to the precise nature of the resurrection body or the time of this event, both sides agree with the centrality of the resurrection (on the debate, see: Harris, *Raised Immortal* and Norman L. Geisler, *The Battle for the Resurrection* [Nashville: Nelson, 1989]).
48 “Away from the body and at home with the Lord,” 2 Cor 5:8; see also Phil 1:21–24.
Practical Considerations

Having sketched a biblical-theological framework for addressing the issues of death, dying, and funerals, how does it impact the praxis involved? How does one handle the death of a loved one in a Christian way?

Please realize that I am talking about general principles here and intend no critique of or offense to anyone who has made alternate choices in handling family funeral arrangements. There are biblical absolutes in terms of what we believe about life and death, but how we handle the death of a loved one is not specified. Often these are cultural practices, but for a Christian they should be local customs which have been evaluated and modified in light of biblical teaching. Just how that will work out in any given situation will vary, in part because there are usually many people involved in making funeral decisions, sometimes including unbelievers. Christians will differ on what they think appropriate. For various reasons (upbringing, tradition, etc.) some Christians will not be comfortable with or willing to consider some of the alternatives that are suggested here. So take the following pages as advice (hopefully good advice based on my own pastoral experience!) unless I point to explicit biblical absolutes. You will have to evaluate the appropriateness of many of these comments on a case-by-case basis.

The Purpose of a Christian Funeral

Though few might ever ask the question, perhaps we should first ask, Why have a funeral at all? Of course, it’s traditional, but if that in itself is not a compelling reason, why do we bother with what is usually an expensive ceremony? Though it is not a biblically-mandated practice, the very fact that it is nearly universal in all cultures (biblical and otherwise) suggests that there is some wisdom in such a practice. Perhaps the most basic function of a funeral is the time to say goodbye, to accept the fact of death, to deal with the inevitable grief, and prepare to move on without a loved one. That is a basic human need. Denial, though appealing to those grieving in a sinful world, is powerful and deceptive; it is crippling if it continues. Seeing the casket, participating in a funeral service, and standing at the graveside—never easy experiences—are, nevertheless, part of the healing, grieving process for all people. These observations are just that, observations of human nature. They are not based on “a verse.”

It has been said that “the funeral … symbolizes the beliefs of the society, its hopes, its ideals, its religious concepts.” If that is true (and I think it is), then it suggests that we should think carefully about the funeral of a Christian. How do we symbolize our Christian beliefs? How do we demonstrate our Christian faith to friends and family at the time of death? From a Christian perspective we turn to Scripture for a biblical approach to funerals. I would suggest that a Christian funeral serves several purposes. First, it enables the Christian to deal with very real, and very natural grief. Christians do grieve. Despite the fact that the Christian has the promise of resurrection and knows that death is a defeated enemy, there is still grief in the death of loved ones. It is not valid to cite 1 Thessalonians 4 as a rebuke of Christians who manifest grief on such occasions, for the text does not say that Christians do not grieve. Rather, Paul says, “we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope” (1 Thess 4:13, ESV). Paul’s desire is to encourage and teach believers in order that (purpose, ἱνα) they should not grieve as
others (καθὼς οἱ λοιποὶ—a comparative statement) grieve. This clearly says that Christians will grieve; the point is that Christian grief is different from nonchristian grief. For those who know nothing of forgiveness, eternal life, and the assurance of resurrection, there is no hope (οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες ἐλπίδα). The grief of those who have Christian hope is qualitatively different than the hopeless grief of others. This ought to make a difference in a funeral. A Christian funeral ought to be an expression of hope and this should help Christians deal with their grief.

Second, a funeral should be a time of instruction and encouragement, both for family members as well as for other believers. This was Paul’s express purpose in his Thessalonian letter: “we do not want you to be uninformed” (1 Thess 4:13, ESV; οὐ θέλομεν δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν). This apostolic instruction, though not delivered at a funeral, did follow the death of some Thessalonian Christians. Just as he sought to encourage and instruct those who remained that they might not grieve, the pastor’s ministry at a funeral should have a similar purpose. This is directed both to the grieving family as well as to other believers (some of whom may well be new or immature believers) who have already, or will soon face their own grief in the face of death. The relevant content of this teaching is, as is evident in the Thessalonian context, hope and resurrection, predicated on God’s grace in forgiveness and salvation (1 Thess 4:13–18; 1:4–10; 2:13–16).

Third, it is a public testimony of one’s faith in Jesus Christ. This is true for the Christian who has died—it is perhaps his last opportunity to share his faith, albeit posthumously and vicariously through the words of his pastor and family. Thoughtful Christians might well write out their testimony long before their death is anticipated (or, if time permits, as they spend their final days in preparation), to be read at the funeral service. Such a testimony could have a powerful impact on those present. It is not common for someone to thoughtfully and confidently speak of one’s own death and to address one’s survivors in terms of Christian hope. More often it will be the pastor’s privilege to verbalize the faith of those who have died. If there is a clear testimony of faith, that should surely be done. But even if there is not such confidence, the gospel should still be proclaimed as simply and clearly as possible. In contemporary American culture a funeral is perhaps the only time that many unbelievers will attend a religious service and listen to a sermon. It is often a fertile time for sowing the seeds of the gospel message since many of those who are present will have been forced to face the stark reality of death and their own mortality.

The Choices (and the Costs) for a Christian Funeral

In some ways funerals are rather generic in terms of arrangements. The funeral industry has, since its origins in the late 19th century, largely homogenized American funeral practices. There are a few regional differences, but at one level it appears that Christian and nonchristian, east coast and west coast, north and south, and even protestant and Catholic services have many of the same elements. I would suggest, however,

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that if we are concerned to plan for and conduct funerals that are distinctively Christian, then we not be too quickly swept along with the generic advice of a well-meaning undertaker. Why do we do what we do? There will be differences from funeral to funeral and family to family. Since these matters are not dictated in Scripture, and since the pastor does not have the final say in how everything will be done, the discussion in this section should be viewed as recommendations that attempt to address the issues of the "Christian why" of funeral practices. These recommendations are based on the biblical-theological perspective set out above, though they will not always be explicitly connected.

A topic relevant to this section, but beyond the scope of the present article relates to wise choices by Christians in anticipation of their death (if Jesus does not return first). This includes such matters as "life" insurance (better called "death insurance"—but then who would buy it?!), prepaid funeral expenses (something generally to be avoided), and preplanned arrangements deserve consideration. All three of these topics should be influenced by the same biblical-theological perspective described above.

Cost

A funeral can be one of the largest expenses a family ever has, and likely one of the larger unplanned or unscheduled expenses in life. Funerals run quite a gamut in this regard. Most will be at least several thousands of dollars and many will run into five digits. (There is no upper limit for those with more discretionary

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57 A conscientious funeral director will attempt to make arrangements that are suited to a particular family, but many of the "generic" elements still remain. I do not intend this paper to be a criticism of the funeral industry, but a plea that Christians make some deliberate and conscious choices, including some that may not fit the usual patterns. For those interested in pursuing some of the broader issues of shady practices in the funeral industry, see the following discussions: Miriam Horn, "The Deathcare Business," US News and World Report, 23 March 1998, online edition available at <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/culture/articles/980323/archive_003518.htm>; Interfaith Funeral Information Committee (Phoenix, AZ) "Funerals and Ripoffs," <http://www.funerals-ripoffs.org/> (an amateurish site in terms of design; verify the info listed, but it appears to be helpful); Lisa Carlson, Caring for the Dead (Hinesburg, VT, 1998); and Consumer Reports, Funerals: Consumers' Last Rights (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977). A related book I have not seen yet is Darryl Roberts, Profits of Death: An Insider Exposes the Death Care Industries (Chandler, AZ: 5 Star Publications, 1997); the few references later in the paper come from Amazon.com excerpts.

58 Where the law does not legislate particular requirements, the family has the final decision in most such matters. They may or may not follow the advice of their pastor. There are only two "absolute" choices the pastor has: to participate in the funeral service or not, and what he will say as part of the service. All other choices are at the discretion of the family, though hopefully in consultation with the pastor. You may be given the freedom to plan much of the service, but you cannot dictate it (other than by declining to participate). The pastor has no "legal standing" in funeral and burial arrangements. If we viewed the funeral sacramentally (viz, the Roman Catholic mass and "last rites"), then the pastor/church would have much greater control over what is done and how it is handled. Earle Griffith has some wise counsel in this regard (The Pastor As God’s Minister [Schaumberg, IL: RBP, 1977], 169–71). Remember, too, that advice offered in a time of bereavement will not usually be heard very clearly and decisions made will not be the same as those that might have been made months earlier.


60 Other issues not included here include various funeral benefits from Social Security or the military.

61 Typical funeral home "basic services" charges (which are nonnegotiable) are often in the $1,400–$2,000 range. (This is based on price lists I have seen; I suspect the range is much wider.) This does not include anything purchased (casket, register book, flowers, etc.), specialized services performed (embalming, transportation, supervision of services, etc.), or cemetery costs (plot, grave digging, liner, etc.). The only way to reduce these costs is to find a funeral director who charges far less than average.
income than discernment.) The average American funeral costs about $6,500.63 (Remember that this is an average figure, not a minimum or a necessary figure; it’s just what Americans have been spending.64) Although this figure could be dissected and evaluated, the initial questions in regard to cost are not related to the individual items on the funeral director’s bill.

Before I address specifics, it would be appropriate to point out that the financial considerations discussed here have nothing to do with the person who has died. Not only is that person beyond any further benefit from such actions, but so far as we know from the biblical record, he will be totally unaware of what is done in terms of his corpse or funeral. Rather, these considerations relate directly to the family that is left behind. Joe will be unaffected, but Mrs. Joe (or Joe’s children—or parents) certainly will be—and that despite the ages of those involved. Death almost always complicates life for the living. Whether it is a young widow with children to raise alone, an older widow without her spouse as companion, a widower who must now learn to prepare his own meals and do his own laundry, a parent grieving for a child taken “too young,” or a young husband left in the aftermath of a tragic accident or fatal disease, these situations result in emotional stress, the addition of tasks undone, and additional financial needs.

In such situations we—and the grieving family—need to remember that whatever financial resources are available (cash, savings, investments, retirement accounts, or insurance), will be needed by the family. The fewer resources available, the greater the need. Even those with generous provisions are wiser to use that money for things that “lay up treasure in heaven” (Matt 6:20) rather than for a brief spurge of remorse or pride.

If we have established a Christian purpose for a funeral, then the overall cost of a funeral ought to be established in light of our intentions that the funeral be distinctively Christian. As such I would propose that more is not necessarily better. A Christian view of funerals should result in major reductions in final expenses compared with our cultural norm, though not to the point of stinginess or greed. There is nothing that fits the purpose of a Christian funeral that will be served just by assuring that we spend enough money. Some people seek to make an impact on community image, or to make up for things undone in life by the lavishness of the funeral. “Some people ‘overspend’ on a funeral or burial because they think of it as a reflection on their feelings for the deceased.”65 At times family members who have not been particularly close to the deceased or to each other seek to assuage their guilt with an excessive funeral.66 But those should not be Christian motivations or goals. On the other hand, being stingy to the extreme (the proverbial “burlap bag and a hole in the ground”) is not necessarily wise either, especially if it gives the impression of greed instead of Christian values. Since one purpose for a Christian funeral is to deal with legitimate grief, it is not helpful in most cases to remember how “cheap” the funeral was. I would like to suggest that in our culture we honor the body of a Christian who has died by a dignified, Christocentric, low-key funeral that is well below the cost of the average American funeral, though not a pauper’s funeral.

(a variety!), or for the family to handle the arrangements themselves without the services of a funeral director (and that is legal in most states, including Pennsylvania).


63 National Funeral Directors Association, “NFDA Fact Sheet,” <http://www.nfda.org/nfdafactsheets.php>, accessed 2/27/2006. This does not include cemetery costs. In our local, Clarks Summit area, a local funeral director estimates that his average funerals are about $5,800, but notes that this is substantially less than costs in the New York City metro area only two hours away (phone conversation with Lawrence Young, Young’s Funeral Home, Clarks Summit, PA, 3/1/07).

64 American spending habits are seldom reliable guides for Christians seeking to be good stewards of their resources.

65 “Funerals: A Consumer Guide” (FTC), 2. “When emotions are high, it can be hard to remember that the cost of a funeral is not a measure of your feelings for the deceased” (“Preplanning Your Funeral Arrangements” [AARP, 2007]), available online at <http://www.aarp.org/money/wise_consumer/smartsolving/communications/funerals.html>.

66 A local funeral director observed to me, “80% of the people I deal with [in planning funerals] don’t like each other.” The lack of close family ties and good relationships is magnified when dealing with grief. Thankfully, the same undertaker also commented, “You Baptists seem to do things different; when I have a funeral at [name of specific local church], I know there won’t be any trouble.” Although that speaks well for the testimony of genuine Christians, even among our own people these can be stressful circumstances. As a pastor you will deal with difficult family relationships during and after funerals.
Though most people do not realize it, most items on the typical funeral director’s bill are not required. For that matter, “many people don’t realize that they are not legally required to use a funeral home to plan and conduct a funeral”!67 I have not yet met a funeral director who would admit this (though I’ve not talked to large numbers of them). Many I’ve talked to insist that they must do the paperwork for the death certificate and burial permit (though this is not the case in Pennsylvania). Some offer vague, noncommittal answers. Even those in state regulatory agencies have difficulty addressing this option (“I’ve never heard of such a thing!”), often because they are licensed funeral directors themselves. The funeral industry has a monopolistic mindset in which they see themselves as the sole providers of funeral services. Misconceptions as to what is legally required have led to many abuses in the funeral industry in past years to the point where the Federal Trade Commission has intervened with investigations and regulations.68 As those preparing for ministry, you should have copies of the key FTC publications that spell out these matters so that you can provide good counsel to those to whom you minister. There are three important publications:


- “Complying with the Funeral Rule,” FTC, 2004. Available online at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/pubs/buspubs/funeral.pdf> (This item is designed for the funeral home operator, not the consumer.)69

Providing wise counsel to the grieving should consider at least the following factors.

Disposition of the Corpse

When someone dies in Pennsylvania,70 a death certificate must be completed by the attending physician. If the individual was not under a doctor’s care (e.g., a fatal traffic accident), then the county coroner becomes involved and he completes the certificate. This certificate is then signed by the funeral director (or: “person acting as funeral director”71). It is then filed with the “Registrar”72 (by the funeral director or whomever is acting in that capacity) who issues the burial permit and forwards the data to the state. Without the burial permit the body may not be buried or cremated.

The first specific decision that must be made is regarding the disposition of the corpse. Will it be buried or burned? Since I have explored the significance of the major alternatives, inhumation and cremation, in a

68 Regarding the abuses, see the last several items listed in n. 59. My impression is that regulation has not solved all the issues, sometimes because the funeral industry dominates the regulatory agency boards—i.e., many board members are funeral directors themselves and assume the same monopolistic perspective.
69 The official copy of the Funeral Rule is published in the Federal Register, Friday, 24 Sep 1982, Part III, FTC, “Funeral Industry Practices; Trade Regulation Rule.” It can be found on the FTC web site: <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/rulemaking/funeral/funrlprac.pdf>. The rule was revised in 1994; the revisions are included as pp. 40–45 of “Complying with the Funeral Rule” (see above).
70 These details are only for Pennsylvania; they will likely differ from state to state.
71 There is no legal requirement in Pennsylvania that a licensed funeral director be involved or sign the certificate. A family member may sign it if they are coordinating the arrangements.
72 So far as I can tell, “registrar” is the usual title (though it may be “local registrar of vital statistics”?). This is a position appointed by the Secretary of Health for each “registration district”; there may be only one in a county or sometimes a half dozen in a single town. It may be that one can apply to serve as a registrar just as one can to be a public notary? Few people in government seem to know anything about this—at least any of those I talked to. (See Title 35, §450-305.)
previous article, I will not explore the question again here. I will assume that, at least in western culture, the best practice for a Christian is that of burial. This will affect the cost of a funeral since, in general, a burial is somewhat more expensive than a cremation. This is not invariable since either option may be as simple or as extravagant as one wishes. Such a choice, however, is not to be determined on the basis of cost alone; sometimes it costs a bit more to do things “right” than it does to opt for alternatives just because they are cheaper.

Embalming

Next one must decide, at least in America, whether or not to embalm the corpse. Though surprising to many people, embalming is not required by law in most cases, though a funeral home may require it if there is to be a viewing at their facility or if there is to be an open casket funeral service. What the law may stipulate is how soon the body must be buried if not embalmed or refrigerated. The purpose of embalming is not long term preservation of the corpse. It is primarily to preserve it long enough to allow for an open casket service within a matter of days. The choice of immediate burial without embalming is much less expensive, but it does mean that the burial must take place within a few days.

Not only is the cost reduction significant (typically in the $500 range), but if a Christian is concerned to honor the body of a loved one (and the discussion earlier in this article has suggested that this is a Christian value), embalming and the associated “preparation” of the body by a mortician is not necessarily the way to do this. Though it may result in a “nicer” looking corpse in the casket, the details of what is involved in the process might not be appropriate for those with a squeamish stomach. An autopsy is even more “invasive” and embalming after autopsy is usually priced higher.

I would suggest that families ought to consider immediate burial without embalming as more honoring to the body and less expensive. In such a case a private family graveside service or funeral may be in order followed at a later time by a public memorial service. There is no necessity to have the body present at the public service. The primary value of its presence for a private family service (or at least the immediate family being able to see the body before burial) is in dealing with the reality of the death and as a symbolic farewell so that the family can begin to cope with the new situation.

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73 “Is It Better to Bury or to Burn?” (see n. 10).
74 Embalming is rarely practiced outside the US and Canada (sometimes in Australia and the UK). It is rare in Europe. “Elsewhere in the world, we are looked upon with bewilderment and some disgust for our burial practices. Perhaps this fact is the greatest single testament to the marketing abilities of our funeral professionals” (Roberts, Profits of Death, 12).
75 Theoretically one has a few other options including mummification (which is not the same as embalming), but these options are either prohibitively expensive or otherwise unavailable. See my article on cremation in n. 10 for further discussion.
76 “Funerals: A Consumer Guide” (FTC), 12. The Pensylvania Code does require embalming in the event that death was due to certain contagious diseases (Title 28, §27.203)—though it is questionable whether or not this does any good in terms of public health.
77 This is only the case for a formal viewing. The FTC regulations explicitly state that the family is allowed to see the body without it being considered a viewing: “the request to see the deceased does not constitute a formal viewing” (“Complying with the Funeral Rule” [FTC, 2004], 23).
78 Cold storage can extend this period for some time, even months if necessary. This is sometimes the general practice in northern areas where it is not feasible to dig graves during the coldest parts of the winter. This is, however, a minimal cost, typically $50-100, even if it involves the entire winter (phone interview, David Penepent, funeral director at Herishon Funeral Home, Ithaca, NY, 3/10/2006).
79 In this regard, embalming is quite different than mummification.
81 I would recommend against an autopsy in most cases unless required by law for purposes of criminal investigation, etc. There is little to be gained for the treatment inflicted on the corpse.
Viewing (Visitation/Wake)

Will there be a “viewing”? Although this has become a well-established tradition in American funerals, it should not be treated as a given. In some cases it is not feasible due to the nature of the death (especially if it was violent or if the cause of death was debilitating and wasting). If our purpose is to honor Christ and not to pay inordinate attention to the corpse, then there may be good reason for omitting the viewing, and that despite the arguments earlier that the corpse is to be honored. Putting it on display is not synonymous with honoring it. Then too, some people have a firm opinion that they do not want people gawking at their corpse after they die. The primary value of these gatherings is for the encouragement of the family. It enables friends to express their sympathy to the family and to remember the person who has died. But this need not be in a funeral home, nor need the casket be present. The older American practice of visitation at the home of the deceased, or of a family member may be just as appropriate if the family is willing to open their home. Another alternative is to schedule visitation at the church’s building. In either case expenses are reduced (and that by hundreds of dollars) since there is not a charge for rental of the funeral home facilities and the services of the funeral director and staff.82

Location

Should the funeral, whether the traditional service with the casket, or a memorial service following the burial, be held at a funeral home or the church’s building? The trend seems these days to be holding the service at the funeral home. It is supposedly a neutral place and one better equipped to handle such a service and the needs of the family. There are, of course, quite a variety of funeral home accommodations (as there are church buildings), but the convenience and suitability arguments have little to commend them. Most church buildings that I have seen are well suited for such a service and often provide better facilities for sound reinforcement, etc. Should a particular building be too small to handle the size group anticipated, it is often possible to use larger facilities of a sister church, and in such situations the typical funeral home is likely to be woefully inadequate as well. If we are concerned that such a service include a clear testimony of Christian faith, it would seem that the church’s building is far preferable to a generic location. And once again, such a decision should result in a lower cost, typically hundreds of dollars for rental of the funeral home and services of the staff.

Caskets and Vaults

There are two factors to be considered in relation to the casket. First, will the service be open or closed casket? Many people assume a service will be open casket unless there is something wrong—a violent death, a disfigured corpse, etc. But we might want to rethink this practice. As already considered above, if a viewing is omitted, there is no issue regarding the casket. If there is a service with the casket present, it need not be open, and it need not even be present for a public service. A photo (or even collection of photos) might well be appropriate, but I would suggest that it not be placed at the front of the auditorium. Let the service focus on glorifying the Savior rather than the individual.

The more serious consideration relates to the sort of casket that is selected. Families may be well meaning (and sometimes funeral directors greedy), but it is foolish to spend large sums of money for a casket. The average casket cost is “slightly more than $2,000,” though it is possible to spend $10,000 for a mahogany, bronze, or copper casket.83 It is difficult to imagine a greater waste than spending thousands of dollars on a

82 The funeral director will surely offer his assistance for a memorial service at the church—but he will also charge hundreds of dollars for such help. A family need feel no pressure to accept such “assistance”; the pastor and church family can provide all that is needed.

83 “Funerals: A Consumer Guide” (FTC), 13. The markup on caskets is enormous—typically in the 600–700% range! Wholesale casket costs are typically under $500; even with a generous markup and shipping a casket should not cost more than $1,000 for any but the most elaborate. For a “muckraking” site with all the “dirty details” of casket pricing, see “Funerals and Ripoffs,” online at <http://www.funerals-ripoffs.org/3dCask1.htm>. For 60 pages of questionable funeral practices, see the site’s main page: <http://www.funerals-ripoffs.org/>. See also Doriain Friedman, “Caskets: Compare and Save,” US News and World
fancy casket that is destined to be buried in the ground after a few hours on display. The least expensive caskets are seldom shown to families unless requested, and then are sometimes described as “pauper’s boxes,” or “welfare caskets,” etc. Do not be intimidated by the innuendos of such manipulative language. The least expensive coffin will serve just as well as the most extravagant.

There are some significant options in this case. People need to recognize that the only purpose of a casket is “to provide a dignified way to move the body before burial or cremation.”

It has nothing to do with the preservation or protection of the body. There are no legal requirements for a particular kind of casket. It can be as simple or elaborate as the family wants. The casket may be metal, hardwood, softwood, pressed wood, fiberboard, fiberglass, plastic, or cardboard. The family can provide their own, whether a commercial one purchased elsewhere (perhaps online) or built themselves. The casket can even be rented! Though some recoil at the thought, it makes a lot more sense to rent the casket if there is going to be a public service with the casket present. Rental units have an inexpensive inner liner that slides in and out through the end of the fancy exterior. Only the inner casket is buried.

Any of the caskets chosen will only deteriorate in the ground along with the corpse. Some will last longer than others, but differences are most likely measured in decades rather than centuries. A sealed casket does not preserve the corpse any longer; if anything, it hastens the process. Despite being sold for hundreds of dollars more than an unsealed equivalent, the only difference is a rubber gasket around the lid. Whether it rots from the outside in or the inside out makes little difference.

“Outer burial containers” (i.e., grave liners or vaults) are not required by law in most states, though local cemeteries often require one. Their purpose has nothing to do with the corpse or coffin; it only facilitates grounds maintenance in that the ground does not cave in when the coffin lid rots in a few years. A liner may cover only the sides and top of the casket or it may be a simple concrete box; a vault is more expensive and fully encloses the casket with various linings and/or coatings over the concrete. Again, there is no need for an elaborate, sealed, lined vault. The basic concrete box is just as functional as expensive, custom vaults.

Transporting the casket should also be considered. A hearse is not required. Renting the hearse from the funeral home will cost several hundred dollars (as will any other vehicles provided by the funeral home, e.g., flower car, family car, etc.). Although less traditional, a van, station wagon, or pickup truck provided by the family will work just as well. It is not uncommon for a firefighter’s coffin to be carried on a fire truck (especially if he died in the line of duty); it would be equally appropriate to use a pickup truck or van in other situations.


85 Many online casket companies (see next note) can provide a serviceable, attractive casket and ship it overnight for far, far less money than the local price list would indicate (and often the very same casket model). Funeral homes are forbidden by law from adding any sort of surcharge or service fee if the family obtains the casket elsewhere.

86 For a lengthy list of suppliers (more than 24 pages long!), see <http://www.funerals.org/caskets.htm>.

87 Jewish tradition in our country stipulates a relatively plain, pine coffin for a Jewish funeral. These are often available at much less cost than the fancy hardwood or metal variety, but are seldom displayed at funeral homes. Designs for building a coffin can be purchased from woodworking supply companies (e.g., <http://www.rockler.com/product.cfm?page=5015&cs=1>), but any capable woodworker could design and build a suitable coffin with little difficulty. There are several published books on the subject (e.g., Dale Power, Do-It-Yourself Coffins: For Pets and People [Atglen, PA: Schiffer, 1997]; be aware, however, that the Amazon reviews for the book are very low!), and a web search on “coffin plans” will turn up many such plans as well.

88 As the FTC points out, gaskets “just add to the cost of the casket” (“Funerals: A Consumer Guide” [FTC], 14. There are some gory descriptions on the web of the decomposition process in sealed caskets. Mausoleum operators do not like sealed caskets which can explode from internal pressures.

89 A concrete grave liner will typically cost around $800, whereas a concrete vault with stainless steel or bronze overlays will cost thousands of dollars. The most expensive one I have seen listed on a funeral home price sheet cost nearly $12,000!
Other Items

There are other costs typically associated with American funerals, including flowers and grave markers. As with the other items discussed above, the range of options here is wide. Spending large amounts of money on flowers is not wise stewardship. The only real beneficiary in this case is the florist. Even if there is to be a public service (with or without the casket), there is little need to order flowers. There will always be some that arrive from friends. Though a “wall of flowers” may look impressive and seem to be quite an honor to the deceased, it is a very fleeting honor. A few flowers may not be inappropriate, but the practice in some churches and families of requesting memorial gifts for ministry in lieu of flowers (whether Gideon Bibles, local church ministry, or global outreach) would form a much more substantive tribute.

Grave markers have similar issues as many others just noted. It is not uncommon to hear a monument dealer discouraging talk of “placing a headstone,” and focusing attention on “memorializing a life”—which is intended to encourage more “generous” decisions. The cost for a commercial marker will likely begin around $300 for a 1’×2’×4” flat slab inscribed with the person’s name. A local dealer estimates that his average sale is about $2,500 which would be a 3’ high monument on a foundation. Extravagant monuments focus attention on the wrong person. Though unbelievers find it attractive—and it may be the only recognition they get after death—it seems inappropriate for the Christian whose ultimate reward will be in heaven. A simple stone to mark the location of the grave and establish a permanent record of birth and death dates for the family (and later genealogists!) is not only adequate, but is a lesser target for vandals. Most cemeteries have specific regulations as to what type and size monuments may be used.

Cemetery costs vary widely across the country. For some ball park figures in our area, one city cemetery cited figures of $650 per burial plot with a $700 charge to open and close the grave. By contrast, a local rural cemetery lot can be purchased for only $300 (with a $600 charge for opening the grave). Private family cemeteries are also possible, though this is more common in rural areas. There are no state regulations or permits necessary to establish such a burial site for family members (nor any local, township regulations in my area), though plots may not be sold.

Summary

As can be gleaned from these comments, I am proposing that Christians ought to re-think some of the traditional trappings of American funerals and make choices that better reflect a Christian view of the person and of death. The goal is not just to save money—a motive that may as likely come from greed as from Christian values. It rather reflects the fact that funerals are for the living and they do nothing for the deceased.

90 Cemeteries may require that even small monuments like this must be installed on a stone or concrete foundation.
91 David Sultzer, Sultzer Monument, Chinchilla, PA, phone conversation, 2 March 2007. The most elaborate installation he has done for an individual burial was a $120,000 mausoleum with an eternal light.
92 An alternate opinion is that “it is good to spend extra money on a gravestone that communicates well the believer’s life message. If you cannot afford a large stone, that is reasonable, but do put some writing on the stone for future readers. In this way your loved one can ‘preach’ for years to come” (Jim Elliff, “Reducing the Cost of Funerals,” available online at <http://www.ccwonline.org/funerals.html> ).
93 Cathedral Cemetery in Scranton, PA; at the same location, the more expensive options of burial in a crypt/mausoleum is $3,500 per space with $400 opening and closing costs. Since there is not a separate monument or vault, the actual cost difference is not as great as it might seem at first, especially if a large, upright monument is involved. A crypt has only a flat stone, inscribed with the name, etc., to seal the front of the opening.
94 These are the current costs at Vaughan Cemetery in Mehoopany, PA—which does not require a grave liner or vault, further reducing costs.
95 I do not know what the legal situation is for such cemeteries. In Pennsylvania cemeteries are regulated by the Real Estate Commission, but private family cemeteries are exempt from such jurisdiction (section 201 of RELRA, Real Estate Licensing and Registration Act; see the PA State Real Estate Commission News, Fall 1998, p. 8, available online at <http://www.dos.state.pa.us/bpoa/LIB/bpoa/20/10/reanews98.pdf>).
96 The only stipulations that I am aware of is that the casket must be at least 2’ under the surface (Carlson, Caring for the Dead, part 2, “Caring for the Dead in Pennsylvania,” 500).
A simple funeral is no reflection of the family’s valuation of their loved one. Despite it being less traditional (at least in 20-21st C America!), immediate burial without embalming followed later by a public funeral/memorial service at the local church (without a funeral director) is a very viable Christian option that can be used to present a clear testimony of Christian faith. If the family is willing to do so and plans ahead, it would not be unrealistic for the family to handle the burial and funeral themselves (again, without a funeral director at all). This is the way funerals were handled until the last century and, at least in Pennsylvania, it is still legal to do so.97

**The Conduct of a Christian Funeral Service**

The comments in this section assume that a Christian pastor is conducting a service for a believer whose family are also Christians (or at least amenable to a Christian service). Other situations—e.g., the funeral of a Christian from a nonchristian family, or of someone from an otherwise Christian family who has never made a clear profession of faith, or of those with no church association at all—are considered below. I am not here describing the order of service and details of music, etc., but addressing the conceptual matters that undergird such details.

**Nature of the Funeral Service**

Assuming one has chosen to hold a service, what should be the nature of that service? What sort of attitude/tone should there be? We know that it is to be different from the abject grief of those without hope and without Christ in this world (1 Thess 4:13), but does that mean that a Christian funeral should be a happy, party-like event? I sometimes hear people say that a funeral should be a celebration. Perhaps, but I think that is only true if we understand “celebration” in terms of the biblical concepts of joy and hope. A funeral can only be characterized by joy if we understand it to refer to a deep-seated satisfaction that God is in control. Joy is not the same as happiness or hilarity. It may be expressed in and through tears and pain as well as in happiness. Joy is based on hope. Biblical hope is not wishful thinking, but is the settled confidence that God is in control and will do for us what he has promised in Scripture to do. We trust God for the fulfillment of his promise to his children for a home in heaven and the resurrection. That is what enables us to experience joy through tears at a funeral. We ought not deny the real sorrow and grief that comes from losing a loved one and there is no shame in such tears so long as there is an underlying confidence in the promises of God.98 “For the Christian, death has its bright side. But … too few of God’s children can see that bright side through their veil of tears. The fear and sting of death still abide, even for the best of believers. Though one lives in the warmth of Gospel truth, he feels the chill of death.”99

A Christian funeral (which need not be lengthy100) should be dignified, not a circus, a sham, or a careless, ritualistic charade. The same confidence in a sovereign God that enables us to experience his joy in sorrow can also enable us to commemorate the home-going of a loved one with dignity. When you stand before God’s people to lead such a service, you should be prepared both theologically and emotionally to do so with confidence and dignity. This does not necessarily mean that you will not weep with your people, for that is a

97 Such a choice would necessitate advance planning since local officials rarely encounter such a practice and may protest—funeral directors certainly will object! The reasons for such ought to be explained as being based on specific Christian values—perhaps in a “bulletin insert” at the memorial service. Care should be taken that it is presented in such a way that outsiders do not conclude that the “simple” option is not just greed.

98 The stoic who refuses to cry in the face of death is only repressing sorrow. There is no premium on the macho image of being unmoved. Some may weep in private, others of us will more likely weep in public, but until the day when God wipes every tear from the eyes of his children, when there is "no more death or mourning or crying or pain" (Rev 21:4), we will cry when we face the death of a loved one here on this sin-cursed earth.


100 Avoid two extremes in funerals: a cursory, 15-minute perfunctory slot on the one hand, and on the other hand a lengthy service that will easily discourage or alienate guests who are present. Perhaps 30–40 minutes are adequate to minister effectively. Only in unusual circumstances should a funeral run for an hour or more.
biblical principle from which the pastor is not exempt (Rom 12:15). At times you will even weep with them during the service itself (especially in particularly tragic deaths, e.g., of a child, or for those to whom you have become particularly close during your ministry), though in most circumstances you will be better able to minister if you can refrain in order to speak clearly.101

Focus of the Service

Be sure the service (and especially your funeral sermon) is Christ-focused, not person-focused. Yes, you are remembering the person who has died, but let that memory be one of a person who has experienced God’s grace. Speak more of God and the Savior than the deceased. Your purpose is not to glorify the person, but God, and surely you do not want to say things about them that are untrue in an attempt to be kind and compassionate. Just as you never “preach an unbeliever into heaven,” you should not make an “average” Christian (or even a “poor” one) into more than they were. I would hesitate to describe someone as a “wonderful Christian man/woman” if they were an uninvolved, Sunday morning pew-warmer, or if they attended only sporadically, even if they did make a seemingly clear testimony of faith if asked. Many in your audience will know them better than you and will think you hypocritical if you exaggerate for effect.

Even the obituary should maintain this perspective. Although some pastors decline to read an obituary at all, I think you should do so as a courtesy to the family. It ought to be factual, not flowery. The basic facts of the person’s birth, life, family, and career should be listed much as they are in the typical newspaper column. But add to this, if you can, the specifics of the person’s salvation (when, where, how, etc.) as well as their ministry and involvement in the local church. Phrase it all in terms of God’s grace and goodness. I would be cautious of including baptism in an obituary of this sort unless you make it abundantly clear that it was a public testimony to their previous salvation.102

The corpse (if present) should not be the center of attention. The body is not insignificant, but the goal of a funeral ought not to be the display of a “natural”-looking corpse (an oxymoron if there ever was one! Death is not “natural,” though it is both normal and inevitable in a sinful world, and corpses don’t look “natural”). In the previous section I have suggested that an open-casket service should not be taken for granted. But since you do not have the final say in that matter, you will often stand beside such a casket to speak. You might, as is traditional, when rising or entering the room to begin the service (especially if it is at a funeral home), pause briefly at the casket,103 but do not make much ado over it.

The service, and especially the sermon, should be Bible-based. Read from and preach the Bible. Especially at a funeral people do not want to hear what you think and what you have to say. They need to hear from God. So read his Word—and not just isolated verses. Select appropriate passages and read at least a paragraph. Psalm 23 is a traditional text and you will often read it in its entirety. Ask the family for a favorite passage of the deceased and try to use it if appropriate. On the other hand, the service should not consist of just readings (Scripture, poetry, etc.). Make your comments personal as you minister the Word of God.

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101 If you get too choked to speak clearly, your audience will understand. Don’t apologize. Pause long enough to regain your composure and voice, and continue. Such public displays of emotion should never be contrived, but if genuine, may minister as effectively as your words. For your first few funerals and for those you anticipate being difficult even later, enlist your people in advance to pray for you that you might minister effectively.

102 It is tempting (and I have heard even veteran pastors do this) to look up the person’s baptismal record and include that listing in the obituary. Although this might be one way to find out if someone had ever made a public profession of faith, it can easily give the wrong impression to guests. Many people from other denominational backgrounds have the odd idea that we are called Baptists because we believe that baptism saves a person. We know that is the exact opposite of our Baptist distinctives regarding baptism, but it is a public perception I have often heard. If you do mention their baptism, make its significance clear, and precede it with their testimony of salvation. The likelihood that you will conduct funerals for church folks you do not know very well may suggest the wisdom of getting to know your older folks as soon as possible after taking a new ministry. In the usual course of events the first funerals you do will be from this group. It is very helpful to have sat in their living room and heard their testimony before you stand by their casket.

103 This is usually viewed as a traditional gesture of respect and memory.
The funeral sermon should be expository, not a topical collection of proof-texts,\textsuperscript{104} but keep it simple—this is not the time for a detailed, 50 minute exposition of every nuance of a passage. As good and helpful as that may be on other occasions, a funeral is not the appropriate venue for that sort of sermon. Those grieving are not likely focusing closely enough on the details to profit from or even remember them. Take them to a single passage and help them understand what it means and how it is relevant to their present need.

The pastor needs to be sensitive to how his funeral message is understood. A hundred years ago even unbelievers had a basic acquaintance with the Bible and “gospel terminology.” That cannot be assumed today. The language the pastor uses must accurately reflect Bible truth without being couched in “evangelical code.” Bible words we can and should use, but they must be explained to an audience which will include many who do not speak our insider’s dialect—a dialect that is filled with euphemisms and idioms that roll easily, often unconsciously, off our “funeral-sermon tongues.” Even such basic concepts as sin have little meaning for nonchristians.\textsuperscript{105}

Make sure the service comes across as gospel centered—a testimony to the person’s faith in Jesus Christ. But use wisdom in presenting the gospel. You are not preaching an evangelistic crusade. There is no sawdust in the aisle. An altar call is not appropriate at a funeral. I would hesitate even to ask people to raise their hands in response to an invitation. The gospel should be clear, but not belabored. Focus on God’s grace and forgiveness, on the hope of eternal life and the promise of resurrection. Don’t make it a “hell fire and brimstone” sermon.\textsuperscript{106}

Your invitation should be one that encourages people to talk to you afterwards if you can be of help to them.

\textbf{A Christian Pastor’s Conduct of Nonchristian Funerals}

Should a pastor officiate at nonchristian funerals? What about those requests that come from people (often through a funeral director) to “do a funeral” for someone with no church affiliation? Although some pastors may differ, here my advice is quite different than it would be if the request were to perform a wedding for such people. With a wedding you are placing your blessing on the beginnings of a new marriage and family. That is a significant obligation. But with a funeral, there is no such commitment. You are blessing nothing. You can do nothing for the person who has died. But you do have opportunity to open the Word of God and minister to people who need to hear from God—people who might not otherwise voluntarily sit to listen to a sermon. I would encourage you to take such opportunities for ministry to the extent that your schedule allows. It is often the case that you will be able to follow up such contacts and later see people come to Christ and perhaps even to the church as a result. It may be many years before this becomes a reality, but patience and faithfulness in doing so will be remembered when family members later experience other challenges in their life.

Although many things will be the same, there will be some key differences in what you say at a nonchristian funeral. The funeral message is not the time to preach people into heaven. Other than reading a factual obituary, you will likely say relatively little about the individual who has died. In many cases you will

\textsuperscript{104} Topical sermons are problematic anytime, but especially when ministering to a audience with (in all likelihood) more unsaved folks present than usual, they will not understand you flipping back and forth through your Bible. They will get the distinct impression that the Bible is a pastiche of unrelated texts that can be patched together to say what you want said. This may not have been as much a problem in a day when most people grew up in church and had some conception of the Bible’s storyline, but in today’s culture of biblically illiterate people, you need to explain things in context.

\textsuperscript{105} This is no plea to “dumb down” our message or to allow our message to be reduced to the lowest common denominator of pagan or “seeker” comprehension. In New Testament times the gospel was proclaimed in pagan, Greco-Roman contexts that were very different from the Judaic/OT background and worldview of the Jews, yet one does not find any less theology in Paul’s great sermon on Mars Hill than what is in Peter’s Pentecost sermon. My plea here is simply that we must communicate clearly and accurately the unchanging message of the gospel.

\textsuperscript{106} Some people will take even a clear, positive presentation as negative and “wrathful” if they understand that the Bible says that everyone must be saved. I once had an elderly gentleman say to me at lunch following a funeral service I had conducted, “Some ministers talk about love and some talk about wrath. I wondered why you chose wrath?” Yet in the message I had mentioned God’s love and grace frequently—and probably never used the word wrath (or even a synonym for it!). But he had understood enough to reject the message. Let your offense, if need be, be the offense of the cross, not your personal offense due to a lack of wisdom or tact in what you say, especially at a funeral.
not know them anyway. Better to say too little than to attempt to say too much. You can still preach a gospel message of God’s love and point people to the hope of eternal life and the resurrection.

In the case of an unbeliever or someone without a clear testimony, I find no obstacle in speaking of the fact that “Jesus died for Joe” so long as one does not in doing so imply that Joe is certainly and surely in heaven. One must be honest and consistent with one’s theology in such cases; funerals are no time to “wink” at one’s theology just to please a sensitive audience. I may not be able to speak confidently of Joe’s salvation, but I can confidently say, “Jesus died for Joe—and he died for you as well. Will you trust him as your savior so that you are ready to face God one day?”

Perception of a funeral message is sometimes affected by others factors that may be unique to a particular family. The pastor must be sensitive to how the message will be understood by some in the audience from different religious backgrounds. As an illustration, I once conducted a funeral for a family that included at least one person with a Mormon background. Knowing that in advance made a significant difference in how I explained “salvation,” since in Mormon theology that is equivalent to resurrection—something that is promised to all. Everyone will be “saved” in Mormonism, though they understand that vastly different than we do. In our increasingly pluralistic culture and with the large numbers of immigrants from other cultures (eastern in particular), such considerations are becoming more vital all the time. It is not at all uncommon in many parts of our country to have a funeral audience that includes those from Buddhist and Hindu backgrounds, etc.

In nonchristian funerals (though unfortunately not limited to them) there may be a greater likelihood that other organizations will be involved. I am thinking here in terms of the lodges and other fraternal organizations. Perhaps the best way to handle such situations is to request that these groups handle the graveside/committal service. Doing so prevents the misconception that church and lodge are compatible organizations. If a family insisted that they be included in the regular service, I would include them at the end, beginning the service and concluding my portion with a benediction and then stepping aside for whatever other group is involved. I would not return to the podium once others have taken the funeral service in a different direction, nor would I escort the casket to the hearse. (Be sure the funeral director is aware of this in advance.) The same would be true of military participation. Though I have no theological issue in such cases, it is best not to confuse the “religious” aspects of the service with secular ones.

**Conclusion**

Death is never easy—not for the family and not for the pastor. Yet it need not be feared. The Christian need not fear death since he has the hope of God’s promises. The family need not fear death; though it will bring grief and loss, they too have a Christian hope that will serve to carry them through difficult days. As a pastor you should not fear funerals. It will give you an opportunity to minister the comfort of the Word of God in a very personal way both to your own people, as well as to friends and family who will attend the funeral service. Many of them would not otherwise come to hear a sermon. Though funerals are often unexpected and unplanned, do not dread them, but learn to use them as opportunities to minister.

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**Post-presentation notes:**

2. In all cases, check the legal implications of any of my suggestions in your own state with an attorney (*not* a funeral director).

This paper does not purport to offer legal advice, though it does point out the sort of legal issues that need to be considered.

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107 I am assuming here a “4-point” position, that Jesus’ death was sufficient for all (though efficient only for the elect) and that the gospel may be freely offered to all, but even many of my brothers who prefer a “5-point” formulation can agree on some similar statements.
Appendices

1. Sample Funeral Sermons (A-1)
2. Funeral and Casket Price Lists (A-7)
3. TFC Facts for Consumers (A-9)

I have included two sample funeral services with this article, one of mine and one of my father’s. They are not necessarily “perfect models,” but they will give you something for your files—and when you do your first funeral, you’ll be looking for something to see how others have done it.  

In the second appendix I have reproduced several price lists from local funeral homes. I have omitted the names since this is not intended to be an official list, but it will give you an idea of what prices are in this area. Such prices vary widely, so do not be surprised if they are higher in a large metro area.

The third appendix is a brochure from the Federal Trade Commission with consumer info re. funerals.

1. Sample Funeral Sermons

The Funeral of Blanche Shupp

Osterhout Bible Church, Tunkhannock, PA
August 12, 1972
Victor W. Decker, Pastor

Scripture Reading from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Prayer

One morning in March 1912 the composer, C. Austin Miles, was reading from the Gospel according to John chapter 20. As he read about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the visit of Mary Magdalene to the garden tomb on the first Easter morning, he said, “It seemed as though I became a part of the scene as I saw Mary kneel at Jesus’ feet, and looking into the face of the risen Christ she cried, ‘Rabboni!’ ” Inspired, he took his pen and as fast as he could form the words, wrote:

I come to the garden alone,
While the dew is still on the roses;
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear,
The Son of God discloses.
He speaks, and the sound of His voice
Is so sweet the birds hush their singing,
And the melody that He gave to me,
Within my heart is ringing.
I’d stay in the garden with Him
Though the night around me be falling,
But He bids me go; through the voice of woe,
His voice to me is calling.
And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own,
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever know.

108 My father, Victor Decker, is a BBS/Johnson City grad. He started the Osterhout Bible Church in Tunkhannock, PA while a student and pastored it for 53 years. This manuscript is one he gave me as a model when I was preparing to conduct my first funeral. It is included here with his permission.
Today, we too can walk and talk with Christ, be assured that we belong to Him, and that He loves us still. To us, too, it may seem that “the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has every known.” We may long to stay in His presence forever. But, He’ll bid us go, as he did Mary, and sometimes through “a voice of woe” for this old world still needs our witness concerning the grace and love of our Lord Jesus. And going, we can sing:

I’ll walk with God from this day on
His helping hand I’ll lean upon;
This is my prayer, my humble plea,
May the Lord be ever with me.
There is no death, tho eyes grow dim,
There is no tear when I’m near Him.
I’ll lean on Him forever
And He’ll forsake me never.
He will not fail me as long as my faith is strong,
Whatever road I may walk along
I’ll walk with God, I’ll take His hand,
I’ll talk with God, He’ll understand.
I’ll pray to Him, each day to Him,
And He’ll hear the words that I say.
His hand will guide my throne and rod
I’ll never walk alone while I walk with God.

For a few brief moments I would direct your attention to God’s Word for purposes of comfort, strength, and guidance. Admittedly, we are in a time of deep need. The loss of a loved one is always a shock to the emotions; the empty loneliness which follows cannot be denied; and, whether we choose to vocalize them or not, there are insistent questions that haunt our minds. Such times are times for reality. It is a time to honestly and humbly face our needs, to accept God’s provision, and to allow our own lives to be enriched by the experience of grief. My only purpose in standing before you this afternoon is to help you to these ends.

First, let us acknowledge the reality of our loss.

A faithful and loving wife and mother has been taken from us. By ties of blood she sustained this relation to one man, four children, and to their families. But, by ties of love and service, the place of her tent was enlarged and her wings were spread to cover many more who were drawn by her big heart and good table. Often her house appeared like a hotel for number of occupants—but it never was. It was always a home and a haven. What a testimony that so many of you have learned to call her “Mother.” We will all miss her, and we will never forget her.

Also, a godly woman and dedicated Christian worker has been taken from us. For many years she taught in our Sunday School and in Good News Clubs. She served as a member of the Child Evangelism Fellowship Committee and as a member of the Ladies’ Missionary Society. Every member of our church missionary family has been entertained in her home. Whenever we have gathered at the church for 24 years, whether for ministry, prayer, or business, we could always count on Blanche to be in her place. Her Christianity was no Sunday Show—It was real, vital, stable, and steadfast. It didn’t take an Easter, a Christmas, or some special occasion to bring her out. She was always here—a pillar of strength, support, and encouragement, “always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

And so the question comes, “Why has she been taken?” But the answer is simple and obvious. She has done enough. Her labors are over, but the fruit remains. She has matured as a field of ripened grain, and God has gathered her into His garner. Through faithfulness she has earned a great reward, and heaven is the place where such are handed out. Her entrance has been abundant, and she has already heard her Saviour say, “Well done thou good and faithful servant.”
Second, let us look inward to those areas of our empty loneliness. I submit that there are three provisions for this need: the provision of God’s Word and Spirit, the provision of memory, and the provision of opportunity for service and fellowship.

When Jesus was preparing His disciples of His imminent death and return to heaven, He said, “I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit.... I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you” (John 14:16–18). For a long time Jesus has not been physically present on this earth. But the Holy Spirit has been here, and still is. He can fill the areas of empty loneliness in your hearts and lives if you but trust Him to do so.

Memory can serve you well too. Josiah has said on three recent occasions, “I have no regrets,” and then added, “unless it is for all the hard work she has had to do.” How different this is from the experience of regret that haunts so many at a time like this. Let me remind each of you, how you live will determine how you will die. I suggest that you have no reason even to regret the hard work. Many manage to get through this world without much hard work, but they aren’t the happy and productive people. Contributing little or nothing, they get nothing in return. When they are gone, they are hardly missed. No labors follow them. No fruits remain. No rewards await them. Yes, she did a lot of hard work, and so should you. Thank God for precious memories.

Service and fellowship can serve you. Put your hand where hers has been. Fill in the gaps where she once stood. Take up the reins that she has laid down. These are the reasons why you are left behind for awhile.

Finally, about those insistent questions. I am going to state them very directly and pointedly and answer them authoritatively from the pages of God’s Word.

Where is Blanche today? As one who lived and died with personal faith in Jesus Christ as her Lord and Saviour, she is “absent from the body, and present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8). Blanche is in heaven.

Will we see her again? If you have repented of your sin and trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour you will, otherwise you never will. Long ago David confidently spoke concerning a son of his who preceded him in death, “But now he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall got to him, but he shall not return to me” (2 Samuel 12:23).

When will we see her? In just “a little while” (John 16:16). When we who believe in Jesus leave this world by way of death, or by way of the rapture (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13–18), we too will go to be where she already is, with Christ in heaven. We will see her again.

What can we now do by way of a tribute of respect, by way of erecting a monument to her memory? We can follow her example of faith and faithfulness. May God help us so to do.

Benediction

Scripture at the graveside John 5:24–29
may have been, it hurt very deeply when your heard the news. I will confess to you that her pastor felt the very
same way.

To pretend that there is no grief this afternoon would only be to fool ourselves. But I am so glad that the

grief is only one side of the story. For although we are separated from her, she has been ushered into the

presence of Jesus Christ. As should all who know Jesus Christ as their Savior, she has waited for that day for

many years. Now it has been realized. She has also been reunited with loved ones who have gone on before. For

Gen it has not been a disappointment. No, it has been a promotion—a graduation to glory. Let me remind you

of that blessed hope in the words of Scripture.

Scripture reading: 1 Thess. 4:13–18

Congregational hymn #505

Prayer

Announcements:

• Committal service at the mausoleum, Indianfields Township Cemetery
• Dinner will be served here at the church afterward.
• The family has suggested that memorial gifts would be appropriately directed to either the Thumb

Organization for Speech and Hearing, or to The Country Church.

Music: Darlene Brown and Joan Sayers are going to sing two numbers for us now. Both were favorites of

Gen and have been requested by the family: He Touched Me and Something Beautiful.

Message

Many years ago Charles E. Fuller announced on the Old Fashioned Revival Hour radio program that the

following Sunday he would speak on the subject of heaven. During that week the following letter was received

from an old man who was very ill.

"Next Sunday you are to talk about Heaven. I am interested in that land, because I have held a clear title to a bit of

property there for over fifty-five years. I did not buy it. It was given to me without money and without price. But the

Donor purchased it for me at a tremendous sacrifice. I am not holding it for speculation since the title is not

transferable. It is not a vacant lot.

"For more than half a century I have been sending materials out of which the greatest Architect and Builder of

the Universe has been building a home for me which will never need to be remodeled nor repaired because it will suit

me perfectly, individually, and will never grow old.

"Termites can never undermine its foundations for they rest on the Rock of Ages. Fire cannot destroy it. Floods

cannot wash it away. No locks nor bolts will ever be placed upon its doors, for no vicious person can ever enter that

land where my dwelling stands, now almost completed and almost ready for me to enter in and abide in peace

eternally, without fear of being ejected.

"There is a valley of deep shadow between the place where I live in California and that to which I shall journey in

a very short time. I cannot reach my home in that City of Gold without passing through this dark valley of shadows.

But I am not afraid because the best Friend I ever had went through the same valley long, long ago and drove away all

its gloom. He has stuck by me through thick and thin, since we first became acquainted fifty-five ears ago, and I hold

His promise in printed form, never to forsake me or leave me alone. He will be with me as I walk through the valley of

shadows, and I shall not lose my way when He is with me.

"I hope to hear your sermon on Heaven next Sunday from my home in Los Angeles, California, but I have no

assurance that I shall be able to do so. My ticket to Heaven has no date marked for the journey—no return coupon—

and no permit for baggage. Yes, I am all ready to go and I may not be here while you are talking next Sunday evening,

but I shall meet you there some day."

[Tan, #2183]
Genevieve held a title to a lot on Norman St., some property in Bay City, and a cottage in West Branch. But she also held a clear title to a bit of property in Heaven. She did not buy it. It was given to her as a gift. She has held that title for many years. Her ticket had no date on it. Only the One who gave her that ticket knew when her trip was scheduled. We now know that it was scheduled for shortly after noon on January 2, 1986. She left on that journey, not in her new car, but accompanied by her Savior and escorted by the angels through a very short valley and then into her heavenly home.

I can assure you today that Genevieve is in heaven. I have conducted a number of funerals where I could not say that with confidence. But I have no doubt about the genuineness of Gen’s profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

I would like to direct your thoughts just briefly this afternoon to a passage of Scripture which emphasizes that very matter. Hopefully it will be an encouragement to you and will also challenge you to examine your own life. We can do nothing more for Gen. There is nothing more she needs. But we can use this time of sorrow for our own good. I am sure it would please Gen very much to know that through this service some of you made some significant spiritual decisions.

Scripture reading: Philippians 3:12b–21

Last Friday Gen reached the goal; she won the prize for which God had called her heavenward in Christ Jesus. You see, her citizenship was not that of the United States of America. Oh yes, she was considered that for a few years, 71 to be exact. But that was just a temporary matter. Her real citizenship was in Heaven. She had eagerly awaited her Savior from there. She has finally had the chance to meet the Lord Jesus Christ face-to-face.

*Face to Face*

Face to face with Christ, my Savior,  
Face to face—what will it be?  
When with rapture I behold him,  
Jesus Christ who died for me!  
Only faintly now I see Him,  
With the darkling veil between  
But a blessed day is coming,  
When His glory shall be seen.  
What rejoicing in His presence,  
When are banished grief and pain,  
When the crooked ways are straightened  
And the dark things shall be plain.  
Face to face—O blissful moment!  
Face to face—to see and know;  
Face to face with my Redeemer,  
Jesus Christ who loves me so!  
Face to face I shall behold Him,  
Far beyond the starry sky;  
Face to face, in all His glory,  
I shall see Him by and by!

— C.E. Breck

The same Jesus whom Gen met face to face last week will also one day transform the lowly bodies of believers to be like his glorious body. This body here will one day be raised and glorified. And not just Gen’s body. All who have trusted Christ can look forward to that Resurrection Day when they too will receive a body just like the glorified body of Jesus Christ.
But that day has not yet come. In the meantime we have some serious responsibilities. This same passage in which God provides the comfort and assurance of heaven also has an exhortation and a warning regarding life on earth.

Let me re-read for you verses 18 and 19 of Philippians 3. “As I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in the shame. Their mind is on earthly things.” That is an appropriate description of a great many people today. Even many who profess to be Christians are more concerned with the physical, earthly things than they are with spiritual and eternal things. We live in a day when now is the only time that is important. The ultimate of life for many people is in personal, immediate pleasure—hedonism. God’s Word says that such a preoccupation will result in destruction. If the experiences of this weekend teach you nothing else, remember that you have no more assurance of tomorrow than Gen did last Friday. You may be younger and perhaps more healthy, but that is no guarantee that you will be granted 71 years.

You need to make the very same preparation for that time (whenever it is) that Gen made so many years ago. If you desire the assurance of heaven spoken of in these verses, and which Gen Hodges had, then you, too, need to trust Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. Perhaps you have heard it before, but if so let me remind you once again what it means to be a Christian in the biblical sense of that word.

No one becomes a Christian by being born in a Christian country, by being good, by going to church, by being baptized, by giving money to the church or to charity. Salvation cannot be achieved by your good works. You must recognize that you have sinned and that by doing so you have incurred God’s wrath and are under the sentence of death. You have only an eternity in hell to dread. There is no hope of eternal life or heaven for sinners.

But there is good news. Although you can do nothing on your own to deserve heaven, God has made the provision for you. He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to die in your place. Jesus was not just a good man and a great teacher. He was God. He was also the sacrifice for your sin as he died on the cross. He bore the guilt and penalty for your sin in his own body on the tree. But he did not stay dead. Three days later God raised him from the dead to prove beyond any shadow of doubt that the sacrifice had been accepted.

But the provision of that sacrifice does not save you. That provision must be accepted by faith. It is a gift that must be received before it can be enjoyed. You must believe that Jesus died for you. Your hope of heaven and of eternal life cannot be in anything you do—it must be totally in what Jesus did for you if you are to be saved.

Gen had that faith. Today she is enjoying it. I trust that you too have that kind of faith. Nothing else will do when you stand before God. I would urge you to place your faith in Jesus Christ today if you have never done so. If you have don that, then you will be able to sing with us hymn #501 and mean it. I hope that you can.

Congregational hymn #501

Benediction:

And now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13:20–21
2. Funeral and Casket Price Lists

**Casket Price List**
These prices are effective as of May 2, 2006, but are subject to change without notice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Product Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Interior</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Paragon Mahogany</td>
<td>Solid Mahogany</td>
<td>EggShell Velvet</td>
<td>7,020.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Premier Mahogany</td>
<td>Solid Mahogany</td>
<td>Champagne Velvet Interior</td>
<td>4,995.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Y39 Aegion</td>
<td>32 Oz. Copper</td>
<td>Champagne Velvet</td>
<td>4,495.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Y46 Tapestry Rose</td>
<td>32 Oz. Copper</td>
<td>Moss Pink Velvet</td>
<td>4,495.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Greyson</td>
<td>Premium Stainless Steel</td>
<td>Silver Velvet</td>
<td>4,400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Truman Walnut</td>
<td>Walnut Veneer</td>
<td>Champagne Velvet</td>
<td>4,030.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Embassy Cherry</td>
<td>Cherry</td>
<td>Velvet</td>
<td>1,550.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Sapphire</td>
<td>16 Ga. Steel</td>
<td>Light Blue Velvet</td>
<td>1,550.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Barkley Oak</td>
<td>Solid Oak</td>
<td>Rose Red Crepe</td>
<td>1,650.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Lexington Maple</td>
<td>Solid Maple</td>
<td>Rose Red Crepe</td>
<td>1,650.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Tigereye</td>
<td>16 Ga. Steel</td>
<td>Silver Crepe</td>
<td>1,550.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>U478 Sydney Blue</td>
<td>20 Ga. Steel</td>
<td>Ivory Crepe</td>
<td>1,550.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Goldstar</td>
<td>20 Ga. Steel</td>
<td>Silvercrepe Crepe</td>
<td>1,550.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Q02 Earth Tone</td>
<td>20 Ga. Steel</td>
<td>Crepe</td>
<td>1,375.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Misty Blue</td>
<td>20 Ga. Steel</td>
<td>Crepe</td>
<td>1,375.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Serenity Cremation Casket</td>
<td>Popular</td>
<td>Moss Pink Crepe</td>
<td>1,240.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Star Copper</td>
<td>20 Ga. Steel</td>
<td>Rose Red Crepe</td>
<td>1,200.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Antique Silver</td>
<td>20 Ga. Steel</td>
<td>White Crepe</td>
<td>1,125.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Newport Cremation</td>
<td>hardwood</td>
<td>Crepe</td>
<td>950.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Newpoint Star Silver</td>
<td>20 Ga. Steel</td>
<td>Crepe</td>
<td>950.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Pacific Pine Cremation</td>
<td>Pine</td>
<td>Crepe Interior</td>
<td>950.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Star Silver</td>
<td>20 Ga. Steel</td>
<td>Ivory Taffeta</td>
<td>925.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batesville Casket Company</td>
<td>Newpointe Cloth Covered</td>
<td>Grey Doeskin</td>
<td>Ivory Crepe</td>
<td>850.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia Casket Company</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>20 Ga. Steel</td>
<td>Oyster Crepe</td>
<td>975.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milco Industries, Inc.</td>
<td>Mercury Blue</td>
<td>20 Ga. Steel</td>
<td>Blue Crepe</td>
<td>1,325.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milco Industries, Inc.</td>
<td>London Blue</td>
<td>20 Ga. Steel</td>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>1,065.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schuykill Haven Casket</td>
<td>Smithfield</td>
<td>Solid Popular</td>
<td>Rose Tan Crepe</td>
<td>1,180.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Outer Burial Container Price List**
These prices are effective as of May 2, 2006, but are subject to change without notice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Product Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wilkes-Barre Burial Vault</td>
<td>Wilbert Bronze</td>
<td>Concrete, Bronze</td>
<td>11,900.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilbert</td>
<td>Bronze Truine</td>
<td>Concrete, 32 Oz. Bronze Overlay</td>
<td>4,150.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilbert</td>
<td>Copper Truine</td>
<td>Concrete, 16 Ounce Copper Base</td>
<td>3,600.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilbert</td>
<td>Camco Rose</td>
<td>Concrete, 26g. Stainless Steel</td>
<td>3,030.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilbert</td>
<td>SST Truine</td>
<td>Concrete, 26 G. Stainless Steel</td>
<td>3,030.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilbert</td>
<td>Venetian</td>
<td>Concrete, Marbelon</td>
<td>1,800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilbert</td>
<td>Continental</td>
<td>Concrete, Plastic</td>
<td>1,470.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilbert</td>
<td>Monticelle</td>
<td>Concrete, Concrete</td>
<td>1,230.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilbert</td>
<td>Wilbert Bronze Ün, Vault</td>
<td>Concrete, 32 Oz. Bronze Overlay</td>
<td>970.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilbert</td>
<td>Copper Truine Ün, Vault</td>
<td>Concrete, Copper</td>
<td>910.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilbert</td>
<td>SST Truine Ün, Vault</td>
<td>Concrete, Stainless Steel</td>
<td>850.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilbert</td>
<td>Concrete Liner</td>
<td>Concrete, Marbelon</td>
<td>800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilbert</td>
<td>Venetian Ün, Vault</td>
<td>Concrete, Marbelon</td>
<td>620.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilbert</td>
<td>Monticelle Ün, Vault</td>
<td>Concrete, Concrete</td>
<td>540.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilbert</td>
<td>Cherry Ün,</td>
<td>Concrete, Concrete</td>
<td>110.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Professional Services

## Basic Services of Funeral Director/Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our professional service charge includes, but is not limited to: Consultation, availability on a 24-hour basis, consultation with family and clergy, assistance of staff in all necessary phases of arrangements, obtaining, preparation and filing of necessary notices, consents, certificates of disbursements, obtaining, physician's certification, preparation and placement of obituary notices, planning of funeral arrangements, and coordination with those providing other portions of the funeral, e.g., cemetery, crematory, vault company, and others as required. Also included in the charge are overhead expenses related to our facility such as insurance, building and utility expenses, parking lot and grounds, maintenance, equipment, furnishings, inventory, clerical and administrative costs, recordkeeping, staff benefits, legal and accounting fees, state and federal levies, and charitable donations. This fee will be added to the total cost of the funeral arrangements you select. (THIS FEE IS ALREADY INCLUDED IN OUR CHARGES FOR DIRECT CREMATIONS, IMMEDIATE BURIALS, AND FORWARDSING AND RECEIVING OF REMAINS.)</td>
<td>$1,495.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Embalming of Deceased

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artifical embalming for immediate coroners' preservation and sanitation. Includes all supplies and minor restoration, also includes going to hospital for preparation prior to autopsy/or organ donation. Exception in special cases, embalming is not required by law. Embalming may be necessary, however; if you select certain funeral arrangements, such as a funeral with a viewing. If you do not want embalming, you usually have the right to choose an arrangement which does not require you to pay for it such as direct cremation or immediate burial.</td>
<td>$495.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Dreesing, Cosmetology and Hairdresser (Following transfer in)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cosmetology, Chemical preservation of body</td>
<td>$395.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Facilities and Equipment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of Facilities for Viewing</td>
<td>$250.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal day's visitation period, or any part thereof</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personnel for Church Services</td>
<td>$250.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilities &amp; Staff for Funeral Ceremony</td>
<td>$250.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our services include supervision of the funeral, staff to attend the funeral ceremony, set-up and use of facilities for the ceremony.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memorial Service at Funeral Home</td>
<td>$250.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Without body present) Our services include coordinating the memorial service, supervision of the memorial service, staff to attend, set-up and use of facilities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Grave-side/Committal Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our services include: accompaniment of remains to cemetery, supervision of graveside service and staff to attend service as needed.</td>
<td>$150.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Equipment for Church Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$275.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Automotive

### Transfer to Funeral Home - Local

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Within 25 miles of local service radius) Additional miles outside local service at $2.50 per mile</td>
<td>$175.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Use of Hearse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Beyond 25 miles, add $2.50 per mile)</td>
<td>$275.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Use of Limousine - Local

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Beyond 25 miles, add $2.50 per mile)</td>
<td>$275.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Flower Car or Floral dispostion Local

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$75.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Lead car/ clergy car/ Flower car Local

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>($2.50 per mile outside local area)</td>
<td>$75.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Transportation/Local

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Out of town Transportation</td>
<td>$150.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Out of town Transportation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$150.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## MERCHANDISE

### Merchandise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burial Clothing</td>
<td>$90.00 to $175.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burial Clothing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Casket Price Range

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A complete casket price list will be provided at the Funeral Home.</td>
<td>$1,200.00 to $6,500.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cremation Urns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cremation Urns</td>
<td>$110.00 to $1,400.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Outer Burial Container Price

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A complete price list will be provided at the Funeral Home.</td>
<td>$850.00 to $3,800.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>