

To Each Brother From The Funeral Committee



Our role as Masonic Brethren:

Regarding Masonic Funerals, Article 359. (396). of the Laws of The Grand Lodge Of Texas reads thusly:

“To Whom Extended. Burial with Masonic ceremonies is a privilege, which pertains to all Masons, including Entered Apprentices, Fellowcrafts, and Master Masons, by virtue of their membership. It may be extended to worthy non-affiliated Masons if the Master of the Lodge so determines. It shall be the duty each Lodge except as otherwise provided in this Chapter, to conduct the funeral ceremonies, in accordance with Masonic customs and usages, in all cases where it was the expressed wish of a member in good standing and is concurred in by his near relatives. In the absence of such expressed wish, the ceremonies shall be performed over the remains of such deceased member when requested by his near relatives after his death.

Upon request it may be extended at the discretion of the Master of the Lodge to worthy non-affiliated Masons if he so determines, and to worthy suspended Masons who have been suspended for non-payment of Lodge dues.”

With that bit of obligatory “legalese” out of the way, let us examine the more important aspects of our Masonic Funeral Service. For it is not our Masonic Law, but our actions and deeds that are of any real significance when the Great Architect of the Universe calls one of our Brothers to the Celestial Grand Lodge on High.

There are few occasions when Freemasons may perform their public ceremonies, e.g., laying of cornerstones, open installation of officers, the periodic public educational program, and so on. By far, the most common is our Masonic Funeral Service. It is at this time that most non-Masons are introduced to Freemasonry – perhaps, for the very first time. It is at and during that somber service that most people present will form their opinion and perception of our Fraternity. Not being members of our Ancient Craft, and generally knowing very little about Freemasonry, they are often very curious as to who we are, what we stand for, and what is it that we believe in as an organization.

Conducting Masonic Funeral Services is as old as the Fraternity itself. In the days of Operative Masonry, stonemasons buried their own with great solemnity and reverence. The deceased Brother was a man they had worked with side-by-side for years – perhaps, even their entire lives. They extolled his virtues and the contributions he had made to the Craft’s work. They spoke of the Eternal Life after death, and the need to perform “goode worke” toward all humanity throughout the course of a man’s life. The entire guild and all of their families turned out in force to mourn their Brother’s passing, and to express their sympathies to the Brother’s family. This tradition has been carried forward for centuries to our present day Speculative Masonry.

The first thing any non-Mason will observe is the size of the turnout. If it is small, they may conclude that his Lodge did not hold the deceased Brother in very high esteem. Or, even worse, that Freemasons are much too busy with their own private lives and interests to practice the tenets of Charity and Brotherly Love of which we so loudly boast. In other words, they may conclude that we do not practice what we preach. If the turnout is large, the non-Mason is likely to come away with a very different impression of both the Fraternity and the deceased Brother.

Always remember that a Masonic Funeral Service is the final tribute we can pay to our fallen Brother. That is the appropriate time to thank the Brother’s family for allowing him to share his time on Earth with our Fraternity. No, you may not have known the Brother personally, but if he was a member of your Lodge, he certainly deserves your presence at his funeral service. If he was a Brother, then he is entitled to all of the “lights, rights and benefits” of being a Freemason – and that certainly includes a well-attended Masonic Funeral Service. Attending these services are, in many ways, just as important as attending Lodge meetings – perhaps, even more so, because, as we can do nothing more for our Brother, the Funeral Service is really for the benefit of the deceased Brother’s family and friends, and it exhibits our genuine care and concern for one of our own.

For those that may have forgotten, the Masonic Funeral Service is one of the most beautiful pieces of literature ever written. Simple, honest, and straightforward, it offers each of us an opportunity to reflect upon our own mortality, and to reaffirm our individual faith in the Supreme Grand Master of Heaven and Earth. It draws forth its inspiration and words of comfort not only from our Volume of Sacred Law, but also from many of the world’s greatest literary geniuses. No one can listen to our service and not be impacted by the gentle, yet powerful, words that touch the heart of every person present – both Mason and non-Mason alike.

Consider the sobering passage from our Masonic Funeral Service: ***“When we look about us we see the marks of change and decay written upon every living thing. The cradle and the coffin stand side by side...and, it is a solemn truth that as soon as we begin to live, that moment we begin to die”***

One day, and we know not when, each one of us will be that Brother who has passed from sight. One day, each one of us will have ended our journey in this life. As your then cold and lifeless body is commended to the grave eternal, will you want your Masonic Brethren to be present and among those that mourn you, and to offer comfort and consolation to your loved ones?

As stated in our funeral service, you can do nothing more of a material nature for the departed Brother. Nevertheless, you can cherish his memory, and offer the tribute of respect and love to the late Brother’s memory.

Of even greater importance, you can be there to extend our fraternal sympathy to our Brother's deeply afflicted and sorrowing family in their bereavement. We must tell his loved ones, and demonstrate it by our physical presence, that our promises to be true to them are not hollow or empty words. We owe our Brother something, and this may be the very last opportunity we will ever have to repay that debt.

Brethren, if you receive a call from your Lodge or see a Masonic Funeral Notice in your local newspaper, take the time out of your busy lives to make this final act of respect and tribute. No, you may not have personally known the Brother, but he was your Brother – and that alone is enough to justify making the effort to attend and to demonstrate to the world that we Freemasons do, in fact, sincerely care about each other – both in life and in death.

Each of us will one day cross death's threshold. After spending years in the Masonic Fraternity, how would you feel if most of your Lodge Brothers were too occupied with their own self-interests to attend your Masonic Funeral Service? How will your loved ones feel about the organization you belonged to for so many years cannot even muster more than a small handful of members to stand around your casket?

This is one obligation and commitment that each of us should earnestly strive to fulfill even if we cannot always attend Lodge meetings. Let us demonstrate before the world that we are men who practice Brotherly Love – all the way to the grave's edge.



Are You Considering A Masonic Funeral?

Many a member has expressed interest in having his Lodge perform a Masonic funeral upon their death. This is your right as a Mason. But how does one go about making this preparation and where can such a service take place?

First, a Masonic funeral is held at the request of a departed Brother or his family. Second, the service may be held in a chapel, home, church, synagogue or Lodge room with committal at graveside, or the complete service can be performed at any of the aforementioned places without a separate, committal. Also, a memorial service may be requested, however, you should make your wishes known to your immediate family. The Masonic service may be held in conjunction with a religious service and/or other fraternal service such as Legion or Elks or may be the only service performed. This is at the pleasure of the family, the only restriction being that the Masonic service, once started, must be completed without interruption for another service.

Discuss this with those responsible openly and frankly. It is highly recommended that you: (1) put your wishes in writing, (2) give a copy to the person who will handle your affairs, and (3) place another copy with your will, insurance papers and other valuable documents so that your survivors can clearly comply with your expressed wishes.

Whether or not you desire to have a Masonic funeral, keep in mind that the emotional anguish and trauma suffered by the survivors (more often than not), affects their ability to think with the clarity they normally possess. This is a normal reaction and it is not unusual for widows and others to be at a loss and unable to recall important dates, anniversaries, events, personal interests and major accomplishments of the deceased, therefore everybody should consider preparing an autobiographical profile of their life and updating it as necessary to keep it current. The contents should include such information as: date and place of birth, number of brothers and sisters, marriage(s), number of children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, etc., religious affiliation, favorite scripture(s), hymn(s), song(s), church offices held, occupation or vocation, social accomplishments, recognitions or awards, membership in fraternal or civic/service clubs, offices held, dates of military service, rank held and any major medals, citations or commendations earned, also any public offices held. By way of additional information, include such things as hobbies (art, etc.) educational and professional accomplishments. You will want to record travels or unusual experiences you have had, not only as a child, but also special events that took place as you were growing up. You may want to record your own account of certain family events that stand out in your memory and share why these events were important to you. Take the opportunity to write down all those good thoughts that will make you look good. It is a lot easier to edit what you have written than it is to try to create a profile of isolated and fragmented memories. This may also be a good time to consider taking out a funeral expense insurance policy as a means to alleviate any financial concerns for your family when the time comes. Lastly, please consider the welfare of your Lodge and if you would be willing to contribute to an endowment fund, to ensure that future generations will be able to enjoy the same benefits of membership in this wonderful fraternity, as you were allowed to.

The funeral - properly planned for - can be a source of great comfort and healing to loved ones and friends, especially when those present get an accurate profile and better insight into the life of the person they have come to honor. This data is also invaluable to the person conducting the service. For all of these reasons, we have compiled the following questionnaire for you to complete and hope that it will be helpful to all concerned.

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