Funeral service

A funeral service is conducted by a pastor in a church or chapel or at an open grave or at the home of the deceased one, whatever the relatives agree upon with the pastor (Church Order, chapter 2, clause 22).

If the funeral service is held in a church or chapel, an Easter candle may be lit to burn during the service.

Before the funeral, the pastor should meet the relatives of the deceased one for a discussion. If invited by the relatives, the pastor should, if possible, also be with them as they gather together after the service.

At the funeral of a stillborn baby or a person whose remains are missing this order for a funeral service is used as applicable.

In selecting music one should remember that a Christian funeral is also an occasion of worship. If a church musician (kanttori) participates in the funeral, he/she is responsible for the music and should be consulted about it.

If flowers are laid by the coffin indoors, that may be done before the hymn (# 1) or after the benediction (# 13). If the flowers are laid in the beginning, an additional hymn or some other music may come before that is done.

When the body of the deceased one is taken to the grave in a procession, a cross can be carried at the head of the procession. A hymn may be sung while walking to the grave.

In matters of detail, local customs of burial should be observed.

I Gathering

1. Hymn

An instrumental prelude or some other suitable music may precede the hymn.

2. Invocation and greeting

The invocation and greeting may be said or sung.

Invocation

P In the name of the Father, and of the B Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Greeting

P The Lord be with you

C and with your spirit.

3. Introductory words

The pastor speaks in his/her own words or uses one of the alternatives given here. If these introductory words are followed by a confession of sins, they should lead to the confession.

P Dear Christian congregation, we are here to see NN off to rest. The hope of resurrection sheds its light on this occasion. Trusting in the victory of Christ, we entrust in God’s hands a person joined in baptism to Christ’s death and resurrection. We trust in the promise of God’s word: “Christ died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him.” (1 Thess. 5:10)

OR

P Relatives and friends of NN, our hearts are filled with sorrow and longing because he/she has passed away. We commit him/her in God’s hands. We put our trust in Christ. Christ has overcome death, and he says, “I am the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades.” (Rev. 1:18)

OR

P Dear friends, we have gathered to see NN off to rest. We do this before God and trusting in his promises. We hear God’s word about the frailty of life, the Christian hope and eternal life.

Let us ask God, then, that the cross and resurrection of Christ would comfort us at this hour and that the hope of eternal life would shed its light into our sorrow. We put our trust in Christ and leave our dear one in God’s hands [and confess our sins with these words].

OR

Yhteiseen rippiin johdettaessa.

P Dear family of NN and relatives and friends, our hearts are filled with sorrow and longing because he/she has passed away. We commit him/her in God’s hands. We feel sorry and distressed because we have not lived as we should have; so many times we should’ve done otherwise. Let us turn to God; he is gracious. Let us confess our sins and our neglect of what is right.

4. Confession and forgiveness

Confession of sins

The confession may be read in unison. Kneeling is also a possibility. The confession may include silent personal prayer preceded by an exhortative or introductory phrase such as “Hear my silent confession as well.”

Two alternative confessions are given here.

Holy God, we confess before you

that we have sinned

by thoughts and words,

by what we have done and what we have left undone.

Remember us in your merciful goodness.

You know how we have broken your commands,

but forgive us for the sake of Jesus Christ.

OR

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.

Lord, hear my voice,

let your ears be attentive to my prayer.

If you, O Lord, keep sins in mind,

Lord, who can stand?

But grace is yours; you forgive,

so that we would live fearing you.

I wait for you, O Lord,

I wait for you with all my soul

and put my trust in your word.

Forgiveness

P May the almighty God forgive us our sins

and lead us to eternal life.

C Amen.

5. Psalm

Several alternatives are given below, but some other Psalm may be used instead, particularly a Psalm that follows the time of the church year.

The Psalm may be sung or said, concluded by “Glory to the Father...” (except during the last two weeks of Lent). One of the antiphons given here may precede and follow the Psalm.

Antiphon

Rest eternal grant him/her, O Lord;

and let light perpetual shine upon him/her.

OR

I know that my redeemer lives.

Job 19:25

OR

I wait for you, O Lord,

and put my trust in your Word.

Ps. 130:5

Psalm

The Lord is my shepherd,

I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures;

he leads me beside still waters;

he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths

for his name’s sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,

I fear no evil;

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff—

they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord

my whole life long.

Ps. 23

OR

Lord, let me know my end,

and what is the measure of my days;

let me know

how fleeting my life is.

You have made my days a few handbreadths,

and my lifetime is as nothing in your sight.

Surely everyone stands as a mere breath.

And now, O Lord, what do I wait for?

My hope is in you.

Hear my prayer, O Lord,

and give ear to my cry;

do not hold your peace at my tears.

Ps. 39:4 – 5, 7, 12

OR

As a deer longs for flowing streams,

so my soul longs for you, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

When shall I come

and behold the face of God?

Why are you cast down, O my soul,

and why are you disquieted within me?

Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,

my help and my God.

Ps. 42:1 – 2, 5

OR

Lord, you have been our dwelling place

in all generations.

Before the mountains were brought forth,

or ever you had formed the earth and the world,

from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

You turn us back to dust, and say,

“Turn back, you mortals.”

For a thousand years in your sight

are like yesterday when it is past,

or like a watch in the night.

You sweep them away; they are like a dream,

like grass that is renewed in the morning;

in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;

in the evening it fades and withers.

So teach us to count our days

that we may gain a wise heart.

Ps. 90:1 – 6, 12

OR

The Lord says, “Those who love me,

I will deliver;

I will protect those who know my name.

When they call to me, I will answer them;

I will be with them in trouble,

I will rescue them and honor them.

With long life I will satisfy them,

and show them my salvation.”

Ps. 91:14 – 16

OR

Bless the Lord, O my soul,

and all that is within me,

bless his holy name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul,

and do not forget all his benefits—

The Lord is merciful and gracious,

slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

For as the heavens are high above the earth,

so great is his steadfast love

toward those who fear him;

as far as the east is from the west,

so far he removes our transgressions from us.

As a father has compassion for his children,

so the Lord has compassion

for those who fear him.

As for mortals, their days are like grass;

they flourish like a flower of the field;

for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,

and its place knows it no more.

But the steadfast love of the Lord

is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him.

Ps. 103:1 – 2, 8, 11 – 13, 15 – 17

OR

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.

Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,

Lord, who could stand?

But there is forgiveness with you,

so that you may be revered.

I wait for the Lord,

my soul waits,

and in his word I hope;

O Israel, hope in the Lord!

For with the Lord there is steadfast love,

and with him is great power to redeem.

Ps. 130:1 – 5, 7

OR

O Lord, you have searched me

and known me.

You know when I sit down and when I rise up;

you discern my thoughts from far away.

You search out my path and my lying down,

and are acquainted with all my ways.

For it was you who formed my inward parts;

you knit me together in my mother’s womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

My frame was not hidden from you,

when I was being made in secret,

intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.

In your book were written all the days

that were formed for me,

when none of them as yet existed.

How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!

How vast is the sum of them!

I try to count them—

they are more than the sand;

I come to the end—I am still with you.

Ps. 139:1 – 3, 13 – 18

[Gloria Patri]

Glory to the Father and to the Son

and to the Holy Spirit

as it was in the beginning and is now and always,

from everlasting to everlasting. Amen.

The antiphon is repeated.

6. Prayer

The call to prayer may be followed by a moment of silent prayer.

P Let us pray.

1. Almighty God, heavenly Father.

With the suffering of your Son

and his joyous resurrection

you have opened us a way to eternal life.

Help us to put our trust in Christ with all our heart.

We praise you now and we’ll continue one day before you in glory.

Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ

our Lord,

who lives and reigns

with you and the Holy Spirit forever.

2. God, our Father,

encourage us to grieve

when it is time to mourn and weep.

Protect us in our sorrow

so that we would not think about the darkness of death only

but also remember the hope of eternal life.

Teach us to put our trust in your Son Jesus Christ

who has overcome the power of death.

Console us

and help us to face tomorrow

confidently and feeling safe.

Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ

our Lord.

3. Christ, our Savior,

you know the anguish we feel

when death comes close to us.

You know how difficult it is to give up a person

who has been close to our hearts.

You loved us to the end

and met the horrors of death.

We entrust NN in your care.

Comfort us in our sorrow.

Hear us, O risen Lord.

4. God of grace and lovingkindness,.

give eternal rest to our brother/sister NN

who has departed from this life.

Light up his/her last journey with your glory

and allow us to cherish his/her remembrance today

in the hope of the life to come.

May your holy angels carry him/her

to join the fellowship of [your] blessed ones.

May he receive peace with you in Paradise.

Let the sufferings and intercessions of your Son be his/her safeguard.

Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ, your dear Son.

C Amen.

II God’s Word

7. Scripture reading

and a message to the bereaved

ALTERNATIVE A

Scripture reading

Before a short homily, one or several of the following passages is read. Other Bible verses suited to the occasion (see alternative B) or the time of the church year may also be read.

The reader announces the passage to be read.

A verse from a Psalm or some kind of music or a moment of silent meditation may follow as a response to the reading.

Romans 8:18 – 21

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

Romans 8:24 – 27

For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Romans 8:31 – 35, 37 – 39

If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:53 – 37

For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

“Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

“Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:1 – 5

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling—if indeed, when we have taken it off we will not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 18

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call and with the sound of God’s trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

1 Peter 1:3 – 7

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Revelation 7:9 – 10, 13 – 17

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying,

“Salvation belongs to our God

who is seated on the throne,

and to the Lamb!”

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?” I said to him, “Sir, you are the one that knows.” Then he said to me,

“These are they who have come out of the great ordeal;

they have washed their robes

and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

For this reason they are before the throne of God,

and worship him day and night

within his temple,

and the one who is seated on the throne

will shelter them.

They will hunger no more, and thirst no more;

the sun will not strike them,

nor any scorching heat;

for the Lamb at the center of the throne

will be their shepherd,

and he will guide them to springs of the water of life,

and God will wipe away

every tear from their eyes.”

Luke 1:78 – 79

By the tender mercy of our God,

the dawn from on high will break upon us,

to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Luke 2:29 – 31

Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,

according to your word;

for my eyes have seen your salvation,

which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples.

John 5:24 – 29

Jesus says, “Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life. Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; and he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and will come out—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

John 6:37 – 40

Jesus says, “Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.”

John 11:21 – 26

Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.”

John 14:1 – 6

Jesus says, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

And you know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

At the funeral of a child:

Mark 10:13 – 16

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Short homily

The pastor addresses the congregation in his/her own words or by reading one of the models given below. The homily can deal with topics such as these:

– facing sorrow

– points of contact with phases in the life of the deceased one

– the transience of life

– preparing for death

– a Christian’s hope

– resurrection and eternal life

– recalling baptism

– Christ has overcome death.

You, the relatives of NN have been struck by grief; you have lost a person close to your hearts. We have now gathered to see him/her off on his/her last journey [to the grave]. We think about his/her life and recall the good things that came to us from and through him/her. This fills our hearts with gratefulness and respect.

We are here under God’s eyes. He speaks to us in his word, and we approach him in prayer. We entrust the deceased one in God’s care along with you who are bereaved. We pray that he would help you to deal with sorrow, and we put our trust in Jesus Christ who has overcome death.

Death is part and parcel of human existence. In this world the birth of new life comes side by side with death. All of creation is bound to pass away; each one of us must leave when the time comes. Death is final and unknown, and that is why it is scary to think about. Death takes away a person who has lived near us, so we can no longer hear the familiar voice or communicate or look at each other eye to eye. We can no longer show a dear person our love and care. Death has severed even our closest bonds.

In the face of death we understand that each of us should be ready to go. God’s word persuades us to put our trust and hope in Jesus Christ. He has atoned for our sins with his own death. God has raised him from the dead and prepared imperishable life for us through him. Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live.” (John 11:25)

OR

Dear friends, we have come together to say goodbye to a person dear to you. We feel painfully that we are mortals. Death is a part of life; it’s like a wind blowing on us, picking up a twig here and there. Some of you have lost a person who was very near and dear, and sorrow has become real to you. Death is irreversible; its power is greater than ours—but not greater than the power of God. We pray today that God would be with you as you grieve, and that he would give you strength for the days to come and your whole life. God’s help also comes near in people with whom you can share your sorrow and longing.

The reality of death is also portrayed in words of the Bible. Our life is compared to a vanishing dream, flowing water, and the beauty and frailty of grass and flowers. These images show us the time that is given to us and then taken away. Our days and years also contain all the possibilities of life. God has given this time to us—not only for private use, but also for sharing it with one another. The value of the time we have comes true in work and at home, together with our dear ones and in service of others. The unique value of time can be clearly seen with eternity in the background. We thank God for everything good that NN gave to us during his/her life.

Each one of us will one day come to the end of the trail. In his word, God exhorts us to also think about our own death and eternity. We do not know the hour of death; usually it catches us by surprise. What do we take a hold of when human supports disappear and we have to completely give up this life?—God and his grace provide a firm foundation in death as well as life. Our Savior Jesus Christ has experienced all the pain that is a part of human life and more: as the atoning sacrifice for our sins, he died on the cross for all of us. Risen from the dead, he overcame the might of death. He assures us, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live.” The Christian church passes on this message of love and grace to us. When we believe in Jesus and the forgiveness of sins, we can take courage. Jesus is the Way from the shadows of death to eternal light.

Bells toll for us as we are taken away one by one, and the earth takes us in its bosom. Faith in Christ is more than we can see down here. The hope of resurrection opens up a view to the glory where there is no more illness, suffering or death. The community of the followers of Christ waits for this resurrection. Our hope will come true, the hope expressed in the book of Job with the words, “I know that my redeemer lives. He will say the last word on earth.” (Job 19:25)

ALTERNATIVE B

Scripture meditation

This meditation is divided in four parts: Life is fleeting, preparation for death, Christian hope, and eternal life. One or more passages of scripture are selected for each part. Meditative speech and Scripture reading take turns. A verse from a Psalm or some kind of music or a moment of silent meditation may follow as a response to the reading.

Life is fleeting

R Let us listen to God’s word that tells us how fleeting human life truly is.

Job 14:1 – 2,5 (the NRSV text has been modified in verse 5)

A mortal, born of woman,

few of days and full of trouble,

comes up like a flower and withers,

flees like a shadow and does not last.

A mortal’s days are determined,

and the number of months in life is known to you.

You have appointed the bounds that cannot be passed.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 – 8

For everything there is a season,

and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born and a time to die;

a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

a time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build up;

a time to weep, and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;

a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

a time to seek, and a time to lose;

a time to keep, and a time to throw away;

a time to tear, and a time to sew;

a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

a time to love, and a time to hate;

a time for war, and a time for peace.

Ecclesiastes 12:7

The dust returns to the earth as it was,

and the breath returns to God who gave it.

Isaiah 38:12

My dwelling is plucked up from me

like a shepherd’s tent;

like a weaver I have rolled up my life;

he cuts me off from the loom.

Isaiah 40:6 – 8

A voice says,

“Cry out!”

And I said,

“What shall I cry?”

—All people are grass,

their constancy is like the flower of the field.

The grass withers, the flower fades,

when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;

surely the people are grass.

The grass withers, the flower fades;

but the word of our God will stand forever.

Hebrews 13:14

Here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

Preparation for death

R Let us listen to God’s word that tells us about preparing for death.

Psalm 90:12

Teach us to count our days

that we may gain a wise heart.

Psalm 139:23 – 24

Search me, O God,

and know my heart;

test me

and know my thoughts.

See if there is any wicked way in me,

and lead me in the way everlasting.

Mark 13:35 – 37

Jesus says: “Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

Revelation 2:10

Christ says: “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Revelation 3:11

Christ says: “I am coming soon; hold fast to what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.”

Christian hope

R Let us listen to God’s word that tells us of the hope that a Christian has.

Psalm 62:1 – 2, 5 – 7

For God alone my soul waits in silence;

from him comes my salvation.

He alone is my rock and my salvation,

my fortress; I shall never be shaken.

For God alone my soul waits in silence,

for my hope is from him.

He alone is my rock and my salvation,

my fortress; I shall not be shaken.

On God rests my deliverance and honor;

my mighty rock, my refuge is God.

Psalm 68:20

Our God is a God of salvation,

and to God, the Lord, belongs escape from death.

Psalm 73:23 – 26

I am continually with you;

you hold my right hand.

You guide me with your counsel,

and afterward you will receive me with honor.

Whom have I in heaven but you?

And there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you.

My flesh and my heart may fail,

but God is the strength of my heart and my position forever.

Matthew 6:20 – 21

Jesus says: “Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

John 6:68 – 69

Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.

Romans 6:23

The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Hebrews 10:19 – 20

We have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us.

Hebrews 10:35 – 36

Do not abandon that confidence of yours; it brings a great reward. For you need endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

1 John 4:9 – 10

God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Eternal life

R Let us listen to God’s word that tells us about eternal life.

Psalm 16:5 – 11

The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup;

you hold my lot.

The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;

I have a goodly heritage.

I bless the Lord who gives me counsel;

in the night also my heart instructs me.

I keep the Lord always before me;

because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;

my body also rests secure.

For you do not give me up to Sheol,

or let your faithful one see the Pit.

You show me the path of life.

In your presence there is fullness of joy;

in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Isaiah 65:17 – 18a

I am about to create new heavens

and a new earth.

the former things shall not be remembered

or come to mind.

But be glad and rejoice forever

in what I am creating.

John 3:16 – 17

Jesus says: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

John 6:44 – 47

Jesus says: “No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life.”

Romans 14:7 – 9

We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

2 Corinthians 4:16 – 18

So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

2 Timothy 4:7 – 8

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Hebrews 4:9 – 11a

So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God; for those who enter God’s rest also cease from their labors as God did from his. Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest.

Revelation 14:13

I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord.” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “they will rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them.”

III Committal

\*8. Creed

The creed is said in unison.

C I believe in God,

the Father almighty,

Creator of heaven and earth,

I believe in Jesus Christ,

his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit

and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,

was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven,

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic Church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting.

\*9. Words of committal

Alternatively, these words may be said at the grave (# 16).

P Believing in the risen Jesus Christ we [rise to] entrust NN (full name) in the hands of God.

OR

P In faith in the triune God we entrust NN (full name) in his hands to wait for the day of resurrection.

The pastors throws or pours sand three times on the coffin (a sign of the cross may be drawn with the sand) and says:

NN (given names),

you have come from the earth,

and you must become earth again.

Jesus Christ, our Savior, will wake you up on the last day.

OR

NN (given names),

you are dust of the earth,

to dust you will return.

Jesus Christ, our Savior, will wake you up on the last day.

OR

NN (given names),

the Lord gave,

and the Lord has taken away;

blessed be the name of the Lord.

Jesus Christ, our Savior, will wake you up on the last day.

OR

What is sown in corruption

is raised in incorruption.

Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life.

Or, at the funeral of a stillborn baby or a small child:

[NN (given names, if the child had any),]

God, our Father, has created you.

You may rest in his arms.

Jesus Christ, our Savior, will wake you up on the last day.

10. Hymn

Instead of a hymn, some other suitable piece of music may be used.

11. Prayer

One of the following alternatives or a prayer written beforehand with family members of the deceased one is used.

P/R Let us pray.

1. Holy God, you allowed the suffering of your only Son on the cross when he died for us. When he was buried, you made our graves into places of rest. With his resurrection you have vanquished death and opened for us the way to eternal life. We entrust in your hands [our dear friend/sister/brother] NN who has passed away.

Lord, the rest of us are still on our way, and we need strength for many tasks. Therefore we pray: Help us to find a living relationship with Christ; remove our fear and guilt. Support and comfort us in our sorrow. Encourage us to live with confidence and a good conscience. When everyday worries blur our vision, keep us from losing sight of our everlasting goal. God, give us the joy of Easter and the hope of resurrection. Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

2. Almighty God, O victor over death, you gave up your beloved Son Jesus Christ to be crucified for our sake, and you raised him from the dead to give us eternal life. We ask you in prayer: lift up your countenance upon us. Teach us to remember that we do not have permanent dwellings here. Stay close to those who mourn; give them consolation as they long for their loved one. Help us to put our trust in your grace and live according to your will, so that we may one day rise with all your faithful ones to everlasting life. Hear us for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

3. God, our Father, grant NN your eternal peace for the sake of your beloved Son Jesus Christ. Let your eternal light shine upon him/her. Be merciful to him/her and give him/her everlasting life. O faithful Lord and Savior, you have redeemed him/her with your holy, precious blood. For the sake of your name take him/her in to your divine glory and the company of your saints. Have mercy upon us also and lead us on the way of life so that our journey might end well, leading to the resurrection of the righteous. This we ask for the sake of your love.

4. God of steadfast love, you have released your servant NN from the sorrows and battles of life. We thank you for the grace that you have shown to him/her and to us. Help us to use well the time that you give us, so that we would be ready to leave this life when you call for us. Comfort the bereaved and support them in the midst of suffering. Let the day come when all of creation will be set free from its bondage to decay into the freedom and glory of your children. Hear our prayer for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

5. O God, you have established boundaries for our life. You alone know the number of our days. We thank you for the life of NN that you have brought to a conclusion.

Lord, you see how longing takes over our thoughts. Stay close to us and close to the one you have called away from us. Give us support step by step as we tread the way of sorrow. Give us confidence that you will help and uphold us in days to come.

O Holy God, your love is stronger than death. We thank you because you gave Jesus to us to be our Savior and to make up for our sins. Help us to rely on forgiveness. Give us the peace that passes all understanding. Attach our hearts to your word; guide us on the way of eternal life. Hear our prayer for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

At the funeral of a person who suffered much.

6. God, our heavenly Father, you wipe away tears from the eyes of your own. You know what the life and suffering of NN were like. Give him/her eternal peace and rest with you. You know everything; you know the questions that have been left unanswered. Teach us to stay in your care with all our burdens and to bear the burdens of one another. Lead us on the way that will take us home to you and to the glory of heaven. This we ask for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

At the funeral of a person who died suddenly.

7. Almighty God, we are here before you, perplexed and unable to grasp what has happened. You know our distress; you know what we need. Let the suffering, death and resurrection of our Savior be our refuge and hope and consolation. Give us strength as we are faced by the sudden death of NN. We thank you for all the good that came to us through his/her life. We leave him/her in your hands and pray: be close to family members as they grieve. Allow us to meet one another before you in heaven. Hear us for the sake of your beloved Son Jesus Christ.

At the funeral of a victim of violence.

8. Compassionate God, you see our anguish and grief. Stay with us and ease our pain. Comfort us with your presence and give us strength to live and bear this sorrow. Help us to trust in your love and to overcome hatred; help us to forgive. Thank you for hearing and understanding our cry. We want to hand all of our pain, bitterness and suffering over to you; we leave ourselves in your hands. Grant NN eternal peace. Give us your peace; give us a reason to live. Hear us for the sake of your beloved Son Jesus Christ.

At the funeral of a person who committed suicide.

9. O gracious God, we cry to you from the deep as we grieve. Stay with us in our pain, we pray. You alone know what the life and death of NN were like. We entrust him/her to your grace. You know how difficult life can be, and you know our inmost thoughts. Carry us in your arms as we mourn, and give us your peace that passes all understanding. We put our trust in our Savior Jesus Christ.

At the funeral of a stillborn baby.

10. O gracious God, we can’t understand why this little child never got a chance to live among us, but we trust that he/she is safe with you among your angels. We trust in the redemptive work of Jesus, and we give this child into your fatherly arms. Stay near NN and NN (names of the parents) and the whole family and grandparents and relatives as they mourn. Give them consolation when painful questions fill their minds. Give us strength for days to come. Hear us for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ.

At the funeral of a little child.

11. O gracious God, you see our sorrow and disappointment and our feelings of emptiness by NN’s little coffin. Stay close to us and guard our hearts and minds. Take care of us with your grace and love. We thank you for the life of NN and everything that he/she brought to us. Be with us now that we have to give up this child. Take him/her into your arms and take him/her home to heaven. Lead all of us there for the sake of your beloved Son Jesus Christ.

At the funeral of a child.

12. Dear heavenly Father, our hearts are filled with grief by NN’s coffin. You gave him/her to us and you took him/her away. Teach us to trust in you. Thank you for allowing us to keep him/her among us during the brief time that he/she lived. Keep him/her safe in the company of your angels. Stay with NN and NN (names of the parents) and the whole family and grandparents and all who mourn. Give them strength to live with the pain of sorrow. Lead us all home to heaven through our Savior Jesus Christ.

At the funeral of a teenager.

13. God, we don’t understand why the life of NN was so short. The frailty of life has forced us to stop, and sorrow surrounds us. We want to rely on you, and we pray: stay with us as longing fills our hearts. We thank you for all the good and beautiful that NN’s life brought to us. We praise you for the gift of holy baptism; we thank you for your grace that keeps us safe and carries us through death. In this hope we commit him/her in your hands. We put our trust in Jesus Christ; he is the resurrection and the life.

At the funeral of a person who lived a long life.

14. God of steadfast love, you gave NN a long life. By your call he/she has now been released from temporal hardships. Grant him/her eternal rest. We thank you for all the goodness that came to us through him/her. Teach us to build our lives on your word and to seek what is good and right and what really endures. Help us to rely on your grace and to live according to your will so that we may finally reach our heavenly home to meet you and our dear ones there.

At the funeral of a person who lived a long life.

15. God, our Father, you gave NN a long life. You have harvested ripe grain. Take him/her to your rest. We thank you for the gifts you gave him/her for this life and the life to come. Thank you for moments that we shared when people of different generations came together. Let those things that were good and precious in his/her life be an example and learning experience for us. Help us to walk in faith and hope along the way that leads to eternal peace and glory. Thank you for preparing a heavenly home where generations can be reunited.

C Amen.

Prayer number 16 has been taken from the order for a Burial service with holy communion (hautausmessu) that has not otherwise been translated into English.

This intercessory prayer is made up of three parts (labeled A, B and C). Three alternatives are given here for each part; one alternative is selected for each part to form the complete prayer. As indicated below, there is a moment of silence between parts B and C.

The call to prayer and the amen may be sung or said.

16.

Part A (the beginning of the prayer):

The pastor or a reader starts with one of these three alternatives:

1 O God, we have been touched by death. You see how fragile we mortals are. We love life but are forced to give it up. We make plans, but our work is left unfinished. Distressed and perplexed, we lift our eyes to you. You sent your beloved Son to live among us and share with us our sorrows and pains. In him you have opened us a way to imperishable life.

2 O God, death casts its shadows on us. Only you know our days; they are in your hands. Only you are permanent when our life flees away. You understand the painful thoughts and emotions that fill us when death comes and takes a dear person from us. You comfort panicking hearts by pointing at your Son Jesus Christ and by urging to run to him for refuge.

3 God of steadfast love, you know that death has taken a dear person away from us and filled our hearts with grief and longing. Our life is guided by your hand, and when death comes, you give rest to all who put their trust in you. Our eyes are searching for the light that radiates from the resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ. That light calms our sorrow and longing into thanksgiving and hope.

Part B:

1

P/R God, we thank you for the gift of life, for every day that you have given. We especially thank you now for the life of NN. Help those who grieve to treasure and remember all the good things they received from him/her. Give them strength to encounter the sorrow brought by the loss of their dear one. Uphold them with hope that helps them to face tomorrow and all the days to come. Give all of us an experience of the sweetness of being close to you.

You have given us your holy word. Lead us to look for strength in that word and to feel the love that you show to us. We thank you because our Redeemer lives.

God, you also know the thoughts that are difficult to put in words. We bring all of our grief and perplexity to you, and we trust in the promise contained in your call, “Seek my face!”—O Lord, we do want to seek you; do not hide your face from us! Hear us now when we also bring our silent prayer to you.

(silence)

2

At the funeral of a person who died suddenly.

P/R O God, life is a mysterious journey for us. We live in this moment, not knowing anything for sure about the coming day. You are the only one who knows, O God, and you are hidden from our understanding.

Wordless, anxious anguish grips us by NN’s coffin. You understand the turbulence in our minds when we rebel against everything that has happened. Only you know the answer to our bewildered question: why? Why was he/she wrenched away from us so suddenly? Why was there so much that had to be left unfinished? Soothe our pain and take care of us in our distress. Help us in our anguish and grief to rest in you and to leave our dear departed one in your hands.

(silence)

3

At the funeral of a person who lived a long life.

P/R God, you have called NN to rest. We miss him/her because we can no longer see him/her among us. Be with us in our sorrow. We thank you for his/her long life and and what he/she did among friends and relatives of various generations. Let everything that was sound and good continue to bless us and remind us of the value of life.

God, we thank you for past generations that have toiled to create opportunities for our lives. Help us now to do our part and take care of one another. Bring up perseverance, love and tenderness in our lives. Lead us to live according to values that are rooted in your word. Give us hope for this life and the life to come.

(silence)

Part C (conclusion):

1

P God, we praise you for the salvation prepared for us by your Son Jesus Christ! Have mercy upon us! Help us to walk in faith along the way that is illuminated by the light of resurrection. Thank you for faith, hope and love that sustain us all the way to eternity. Hear us for the sake of our Savior.

2

P God we thank you for the death of your beloved Son; let it bring us life and hope. Grant faith and security into our hearts, and give us peace that surpasses our sorrow and uncertainty. Hear us for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

3

P God, we thank you because our Savior has vanquished the power of death with his death and resurrection. When our days are over, dismiss us in peace according to your word. Take us to the heavenly fatherland, where light never gives way to shadows of suffering and death; take us there to meet each other. This we ask in the name of your Son Jesus Christ.

C Amen.

12. Lord’s prayer

The Lord’s prayer is said in unison.

C Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,

and the glory are yours

now and forever.

Amen.

IV Conclusion

13. Benediction

The benediction may be said or sung.

P The Lord bless you and keep you;

the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you:

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

In the name of the Father, and of the B Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

14. Concluding music

A hymn or some other suitable piece of music is used. If the funeral service has been held indoors and the coffin is to be taken to the grave, the funeral procession may start moving during the music.

15. Prayer at the grave

The prayer may also be said after the coffin has been placed in the grave.

P Let us pray.

1. Almighty God, heavenly Father. You let your only Son suffer death on the cross on our behalf. He was buried, and so you sanctified our graves to also be places of rest. We pray: prepare our hearts with your Holy Spirit to be dwelling places of your Son, so that he might stay in us, and we might stay in him. When our days are over, let us put down our cross and find peace after our afflictions, and finally rise on the last day to eternal life. Hear us for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

2. Dear heavenly Father. We entrust NN in your hands. We put his body to rest in a grave to wait for the dawn of resurrection and new creation. Our Savior died and was buried, and so he sanctified our grave to be a place of rest. You, O God, woke him up from the dead, defeated death and opened up heaven to those who believe.

Jesus Christ, our Savior. We lift our eyes up to you. Have mercy on us and give us a living hope. Take us to the resurrection and eternal life.

3 Heavenly Father, help us to remember that your Son rested in a grave. After we die, let us also rest safely and wait for new life. Remove our fear and teach us to trust that for Jesus’ sake we can pass through death and the grave into your heavenly kingdom. Hear us for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

16. Laying the body in the grave

If the funeral service has not taken place at the grave, the coffin is now lowered into the grave. A hymn may be sung at this time.

Words of committal

If the words of committal have not already been said (at # 9), the pastor says them here.

Finally, flowers are placed by the grave, and a hymn may be sung in conclusion.