



**GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH (ELCA)**  
1624 E. Euclid Ave. | Mount Prospect, IL 60058  
847-824-7408 | [www.checkgrace.org](http://www.checkgrace.org)

*Information about  
preparing for a*

## *Celebration of Life in Christ*

*and moving from Grief after Loss  
to new Hope in eternal Life.*

As people of faith in Jesus we hold on to the promise of eternal life even as we face and deal with the reality of suffering, death and grief. Grief is a natural process we need in order to acknowledge the pain of loss.

Faith in God's gracious and merciful goodness helps us to accept death as part of our human nature but has no lasting power over us. Because of Christ's death and resurrection we trust that we will be raised to new and everlasting life.

In living as Christian believers we know that we have already died and risen with Christ in our baptism. Therefore we can go through life by knowing that we will always be in God's presence here on earth and in heaven.

In preparing for the death of a loved one, or in planning to share your wishes for celebrating your own life in Christ with a funeral or memorial service, you may find it helpful to consider a few helpful suggestions as a preparation guide for living and expressing your faith.

### ***Preparations before Death***

- If possible discuss your needs and wishes with each other.
- Share your feelings for your loved one and allow them to be honest; reconcile any hurts by asking for and offering forgiveness; affirm your faith hope and love.
- Contact the church to inform a pastor of the situation and share your pastoral care wishes, and give the congregation an opportunity to offer its prayers.

### ***At the Time of Death***

- Express your love and acknowledge your loss in meaningful ways, pray for trust in God's help and promises; bless your loved one to entrust them into God's care.
- Notify a funeral home and the church to make arrangements for date and time of visitation and service after checking for availability of the church with a pastor.
- Plan a funeral or memorial celebration of your loved one's life with a pastor.

### ***Visitation***

- A time to visit offers opportunity to express final good byes, and show mutual support for one another. This usually takes place at a funeral home but may also precede a service at the church.

### ***Worship***

- A funeral or memorial service celebrates the life and new life by remembering, affirming faith, grieving, and commending a person to God.
- Christians remember God's promises of forgiveness and eternal life in baptism, hear words of comfort and hope, pray for one another, thank God for the grace a person experienced in life, and may also share Holy Communion to celebrate Christ's death and resurrection.
- The service usually takes place at the church but sometimes is held at a funeral home.
- Family members may choose meaningful readings and hymns that express and affirm our faith. Friends or relatives may share their memories in a eulogy. The pastor proclaims the good news of life beyond death in the sermon.

### ***Burial***

- The burial of the body may take place immediately following a service or in private, especially when the body is cremated, in which case a memorial service may replace a funeral with the casket present.
- At the grave side we are reminded once again that our bodies experience death, but that Christ overcame death and promises us resurrection of the body.
- The committal is a final farewell to the earthly existence of a person. We trust that we will see them again in God's heavenly kingdom.
- Placing flowers on the coffin, witnessing the lowering of the casket into the ground, and other expressions of closure help to physically let go.

### ***Luncheon***

- A time to share a meal with others following worship and burial allows for nourishment and fellowship at a time when physical exhaustion can overwhelm and loneliness would be most difficult.
- A simple fellowship reception may be available at the church.

### ***Grieving, Acceptance and Hope***

- The sadness and pain we feel at the loss of someone is real and natural. Grief is the process that helps us accept death and get used to life without a loved one's presence.
- Christians grieve just as other people even though we have a hope that death is not the final end of life with God. Each person grieved differently. It takes time to come to acceptance.
- Remember your loved one; special days can be difficult; find what is meaningful to you; try to seek out the support of the pastor, a Stephen Minister, others in the church, or a support group.

May the comforting and encouraging peace of the crucified and risen Christ be with you always!

To Tell the Good News of Jesus and Touch People with his Love.