



FUNERAL TRADITIONS

A SUMMARY OF THE PRACTICES OF
DIFFERENT FAITHS RELATED TO
DEATH AND FUNERALS.

Editors Note: The following is a collection of information collected from different sources. Effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, but chaplains should always check with local leaders of faith groups to determine current practices in their area.

THE CATHOLIC FUNERAL RITE

Introduction to the Roman Catholic Church

Of all the Christian religions in the world, the Roman Catholic Church is the largest, claiming approximately one billion members worldwide. In the United States there are about fifty-five million members.

Catholics believe that Jesus Christ was the founder of their Church, since He was the one who brought salvation to the world. They also believe that the Church has preserved the teachings of Christ and that the Holy Spirit guides the Church through its ministry.

The Pope is the head of the Church and is the Bishop of Rome. The College of Cardinals serves directly under the Pope and take care of the administrative duties of the Church, as well as electing a new Pope when it becomes necessary. Archbishops serve as heads of archdiocese, which are geographical groupings of the many dioceses across the world. Individual Bishops then preside over a geographical grouping of the hundreds of parishes, with each parish being served by a Monsignor or Priest.

In regard to funeral rites, the Roman Catholic Church believes that all Catholics should be buried from the Church with a Mass. There is no actual charge for being buried from the church. The funeral director should be able to guide the family as to the practices if an honorarium is customarily given to the celebrant.

The appropriate place to conduct a funeral service is in the church where the individual has received the sacraments over his or her lifetime. Theologically this belief is based on the words of St. Monica, the Mother of St. Augustine. As she lay dying, she said to her son, "When I die, dispose of my body any way you wish. All that I ask of you is that you remember me at the altar of God".

Notification of Clergy

The practice of notifying the deceased clergyman when the death occurred was at one time a common as well as sensible practice. Today however, this practice can in no way be considered the usual practice. Factors such as the time of death, the place where the death occurred, and the relationship between the family and clergy each play a role in the family's decision as to the appropriate time to notify the clergy that the death has occurred. This might especially be true in those cases when the death was expected and where the sacrament of the sick had already been administered.

Removal of the Remains

Generally speaking there are no Church restrictions that would prohibit removal of the remains at the time of death. In those cases where the deceased was a clergy or the member of a religious order there may be delays in making removal should there be a desire for special prayers by members of the order prior to removal.

Preparation of the Remains

There are no specific restrictions as to the preparation of the remains of laypersons. Religious articles worn by laypersons should be removed, recorded and replaced after the preparation of the body. The family should then be asked if these religious articles are to be left on the body or removed and returned to the family prior to final disposition. . If the deceased is a clergyman or a member of a religious order, there may be restrictions as to the preparation of the remains. For instance, in some communities it may be requested that the embalming be done in the convent, monastery or rectory rather than in the funeral home. Since the church is considered the family of clergy and members of religious orders, the funeral home should check with the individual within the church, monastery or convent to obtain instructions and authorization to prepare the remains.

Dressing and Casketing the Remains

A deceased layperson should be dressed in clothing selected by the family. Members of the clergy will be dressed in the robes of the station of their priesthood. Members of religious orders should also be attired in the robes of their position. In some religious communities, the role of dressing and casketing the clergy or members of a religious order may be the responsibility of designated members of the specific order.

Religious objects may be placed in the hands, as requested by the family or church officials. The rosary beads are most commonly used, and are usually placed in the deceased's hands. A Crucifix, sacred heart or other objects of religious significance may be placed in the head panel, foot panel, on or near the casket.

Pre-service Considerations

At the time the casketed remains are ready for viewing, they are placed in the funeral home stateroom or chapel, the church or some other appropriate place. In addition to the casket, vigil candles are normally placed at each end of the casket. A prie dieu is placed in front of the casket and a crucifix behind the foot panel of the casket. A Mass Card stand should be placed at a convenient position near the register stand or in the chapel. Prayer cards may also be provided by the funeral home. Depending upon the location chosen for visitation and viewing,

the playing of music and the displaying of flowers may or may not be used

The Wake

A Rosary Service or Wake will usually be held in the funeral home, family home or church the evening before the funeral Mass. The purpose of the Rosary or Wake is to, provide the community the opportunity to share with the family a series of prayers. It is meant to offer a time of reflection on the meaning of life, death and eternal life. A priest, a layperson, a member of the family, or even the funeral director may lead this service. If a priest is to lead the service, the time should be set only after direct communication has been made with the priest. This service is normally scheduled by the family and approved by the church during the funeral arrangement conference. The priest is free to substitute various scripture readings where circumstances indicate a different reading would be timelier. The people in attendance may recite portions (responses) or for simplicity the priest may conduct the whole service. The wake service is not meant to replace the funeral Mass.

Pre-Mass Consideration

The funeral Mass will normally take place at the church. There are several options that may determine the activities of the funeral home staff, the family and those who will be attending the funeral Mass. If the family chooses to meet at the funeral home prior to the Mass they may be led in a series of prayers prior to leaving for the church. If a priest is in attendance he may lead the prayers. However, a layperson, family member or the funeral director may also lead the prayers. At the appropriate time, the funeral director may announce the departure to the church and dismiss the friends, allowing them to pay their last respects before moving outside to their automobiles. After the friends have gone, the family can then be given time for a final private farewell. After the family returns to their automobiles, the funeral home staff can close the casket, placing the Crucifix on top of the casket head panel and prepare to move in procession to the church.

The Catholic Funeral Rite

(The following is the Rite outlined and promulgated by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States of America. This Rite will have variations according to Conference of Catholic Bishops in their particular country.)

The following information was taken from the Order of Christian Funerals with Cremation Rite, published by Catholic Book Publishing Company ©1998.

Vigil for the Deceased

- Introductory Rites
 - Greeting
 - Opening Song
 - Invitation to Prayer
 - Opening Prayer
- Liturgy of the Word
 - Old or New Testament Reading
 - Responsorial Psalm
 - Gospel
 - Homily
- Prayer of Intercession
 - Litany
 - The Lord's Prayer
 - Concluding Prayer
- Concluding Rite
 - Blessing

Transfer of the Body to the Church or the Place of Committal

- Invitation
- Scripture Verse
- Litany
- The Lord's Prayer
- Invitation to the Procession
- Procession to the Church or to the Place of Committal

Funeral Mass

- Introductory Rites
 - Greeting
 - Sprinkling with Holy Water (recalling the deceased Baptism)
 - [Placing of the Pall]
 - Entrance Procession
 - [Placing of Christian Symbols]

Liturgy of the Word
 Old Testament Reading
 Responsorial Psalm
 New Testament Reading
 Gospel
 Homily
 General Intercessions
Liturgy of the Eucharist
 Final Commendation
 Invitation to Prayer
 Silence
 [Signs of Farewell]
 Song of Farewell
 Prayer of Commendation
Procession to the Place of Burial

Rite of Committal

 Invitation
 Scripture Verse
 Prayer over the place of Committal
 Committal
 Intercessions
 The Lord's Prayer
 Concluding Prayer
 Prayer over the People
 Special Rites (e.g. Military, Fraternal Organizations, etc.)

Note: The above is an outline of current practice. It is important to contact the priest who is to celebrate the funeral prior to making Departmental arrangements. It is also a good idea to bring a copy of the Federation Funeral Rite for the priest to review and use.

Other publications of interest regarding celebrations: Sourcebook of Funerals and Sourcebook of Weddings. Both are published by Communication Resources, Inc. 4150 Belden Village St. NW, Canton, Ohio 44718 www.ComResources.com

Guidelines for Cremation

The Church, through the centuries, has followed the practice of burial or entombment after the manner of Christ's own burial entombment -out of respect for the human body and faith in the resurrection. It is still the express will of the Church that this hallowed and traditional practice be maintained. However, recognizing particular circumstances and varying cultures and customs in different

parts of the world, the Church issued an instruction in 1963 on cremation which. Allows some latitude under certain conditions for those Catholics who request their bodies be cremated.

It is evident that the Church no longer prohibits cremation, as long as cremation is not chosen out of any anti-Christian motive or antagonism. However, because the Church will allow cremation does not mean the Church has no exceptions as to how cremation will fit into the scheme of the Catholic Funeral Liturgy.

Because of the structure of the Roman Catholic liturgy and the long-standing tradition of honoring the body of the deceased, the Church presumes that cremation is a process that takes place after the funeral mass and final commendation. It is an alternate option to burial or entombment.

There are always exceptions to every rule or guideline but the norm for Roman Catholics who choose cremation over burial or entombment, is to follow the scheme set out in the Order of Christian Funerals.

1. Wake service (with the body present)
2. Funeral Mass (with the body present)
3. Final Commendation to take place at:
 - a. Cemetery for earth burial
 - b. Mausoleum for entombment
 - c. Cemetery for cremation
 - d. Church for cremation
 - e. Crematory chapel for cremation

When cremation is chosen there is a fourth step beyond the final commendation. The remains (cremains/ashes) are to be buried or entombed in consecrated ground or a columbarium.

Under no circumstances are they to be left with the funeral home or crematory, taken home or scattered. They are to be given the dignity of a Christian burial. With the practice of cremation before funeralization, the Mass is discouraged. It is not permitted to bring the ashes to Church for the funeral mass.

Cremation is an exception to the normal practice of Christian Burial. Post cremation Memorial Masses are an exception to the rule and are not to be confused or seen as a substitution for a Mass of Christian Burial.

THE EPISCOPAL FUNERAL RITE

Introduction to the Episcopal Church

The Episcopal Church is one of the traditionally liturgical denominations. With its roots in the Catholic tradition around 314 A.D., the Anglicans (so called because of their decendancy from the Church of England) were separated from the Pope by declaration of King Henry VIII in the 16th century.

Although a part of the worldwide Anglican Communion, only the churches in the United States and Scotland use the word Episcopal, which comes from the Greek word episkopos meaning bishops. This emphasizes the roles of the bishop as the chief symbols of unity and continuity with the church of all ages, and as the chief pastors.

The Episcopal Church has both Catholic and Protestant ties. They retain all of the ancient sacraments, creeds and orders of the Catholic Church while rejecting the idea that the Bishop of Rome (Pope) has authority over the Church.

Formed in the United States in 1789, there are approximately three million Episcopalians in the United States today.

Notification of the Clergy

Although it is not necessary to notify the clergy prior to or at the time of a death, it is generally accepted and usually appreciated by the priests that they are notified in a timely manner.

Removal of Remains

There are no restrictions for the removal of the remains of lay members. However, there may be restrictions for certain members of the clergy or different orders.

Preparation of Remains

There are no guidelines as to the type or amount of preparations that are to take place. Since members of the denomination accept interment, entombment, and cremation as viable means of disposition, the use of embalming may or may not be desired.

Pre-Service Considerations

For those families choosing a traditional funeral, it is customary to hold visitation at the funeral home.

The Funeral Service

It is strongly encouraged that the funeral service be held in the Episcopal Church. With the exception of the altar, flowers are generally not displayed when the funeral is held in the church. The service begins with the processional of the pall-covered casket, led by the crucifier and followed by the bishop or priest, the casket bearers and casket, and the family.

The Episcopal Church is classified as a liturgical protestant church and, as such, will follow a prescribed order of worship that will be less consistent throughout the country or world. The order is found in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Prior to or during the service, the celebration of the Holy Eucharist (communion) may be observed. The celebration provides observers an opportunity to thank God for His Blessings and to pray for the soul of the deceased.

The focus of the sermon is to teach the church's beliefs concerning death that centers on the view that death is the beginning of a new life, re-united with God. No eulogy as such is normally given as it is considered the prerogative of God to judge and commend.

The use of hymns is commonly practiced with the congregation singing songs dealing with the resurrection and God the Son's victory over death. At the conclusion of the service, the casket is taken from the church in a recessional and the pall removed prior to being placed back in the funeral coach. An American flag or flowers may be placed on the casket at this point.

The Committal Service

If interment or entombment is chosen as a final means of disposition, the committal service will likely be held at the cemetery or mausoleum. The service will be composed of prayer, a short scripture reading, and the symbolic committal of the casketed remains to its final resting place. The priest will often use sand or flower petals to make the sign of the cross on the closed casket.

THE LUTHERAN FUNERAL RITE

Introduction to the Lutheran Church

The Lutheran Church began in 1517 as a protest by Martin Luther, a Catholic priest, who refused to abide certain demands of the Pope and the Catholic Church, marking the beginning of the protestant movement. Today there are over nine million Lutherans belonging to different synods, or branches of the Lutheran Church. Within each synod the local churches are self-governing, electing synod leaders who serve a limited term of office.

The primary differences between various synods are those of observable rites and ceremonies. The doctrines upon which the churches are founded remain similar. Because of the differences, the funeral rite may vary between synods and even churches.

Notification of Clergy

Unless otherwise expressed by a local pastor, it is usually not necessary to notify clergy at the time of death. The family's relationship with the church and pastor will often determine the appropriate point of clergy contact.

Removal of Remains

There are no restrictions or requirements imposed by the church when a member dies. The funeral home staff can expect to make removal when released by civil authorities.

Preparation of Remains

Preparations are usually based on family choice. Embalming is permitted if desired.

Dressing and Casketing Remains

There are no special requirements as to clothing or casketing.

Pre-Service Considerations

Traditionally the funeral was held in the church and this is still a preference among most Lutherans. It is not however, a church requirement and location is left up to the family. Since Lutheran churches are liturgical in their worship style, the location may play a role in the type of funeral held. Flowers may be placed in the church.

The Funeral Service

If the funeral is held in the church, much of the religious paraphernalia that accompanies liturgical services will be used. With the altar as the focal point of the church, the use of acolytes, a cross, candles, a pall, and in some cases incense are a part of the funeral service. Rubrics will be found in the hymnal and other readings may be used.

The use of the pall dictates a closed casket service and often results in viewing the deceased in the narthex of the church before the service. The pall is placed on the casket just prior to the processional into the church. The cross bearer would lead the procession followed by the pastor, the casket bearers and casket, and the family. Communion may be offered as a part of the service. A recessional will return the party to vehicles and final burial. Cremation is discouraged but may be used in some cases. Funerals held at a funeral home may more closely resemble non-liturgical services.

The Committal Service

Internment and entombment are the most often preferred means of final disposition. The service will usually include prayer, scripture reading, and the committal of the body to its final resting place. Flower petals or earth may be used to make the sign of the cross on the casket.

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE FUNERAL RITE

Introduction to the Church of Christ Scientist

The Church of Christ, Scientist is rooted deeply in protestant Christianity, whose followers are members of a religious movement that stresses spiritual healing. Christian Science is based on the teaching that God is wholly good and all-powerful and that man is created by Him. Everything eternal, spiritual, and good is called reality. Whatever is unlike God – injustice, sin, sickness, or grief is called unreal. The principle text, Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures, written by Mary Baker Eddy in 1875, contains the full statement of Christian Science beliefs. Mrs. Eddy founded the church in Boston, Massachusetts in 1879.

Included among the good and real is health, and among the unjust and unreal, disease. Because healing is brought about through spiritual understanding, members of the Church of Christ, Scientist, normally do not seek medical help, including the use of hospitals and physicians. Death is viewed as one more phase of the immortal existence of man.

Notification of Clergy

The Church of Christ, Scientist has no clergy or ministers. The Reader or Practitioner may be the officiate of any service of the Church, including a funeral service. However, any member of the Mother Church (the original church in Boston) may also serve as officiate according to Church By-Laws.

Removal of Remains

Due to the members beliefs toward sickness and healing, most deaths of Church of Christ, Scientists will come under the jurisdiction of a Coroner, Medical Examiner, or Justice of the Peace and will take place somewhere other than a medical facility. The circumstances surrounding the death will determine whether or not any restrictions will be placed on the immediate removal of the remains.

Preparation of Remains

Embalming and public viewing are based on individual customs and wishes of the deceased and family. There are no beliefs within the Church to either encourage or discourage member from being embalmed.

Dressing and Casketing the Remains

The clothing to be worn by the deceased and the casket to be used are left up to the individual preferences of the family. Because of its view toward death, and the fact that a church of laymen without clergy to express official opinion, it appears that the individual and family preference determine most activities involved when death occurs.

The Funeral Service

Funerals for members of the Church of Christ, Scientist are similar to those of other protestant denominations, with a few notable exceptions. The funeral service itself may be held anywhere except the Christian Science Church. Most often this would be in the funeral home or the cemetery, either in a chapel or at the actual gravesite. Since the officiate will either be a Practitioner or a Reader, the funeral director should check with that person to determine the order of service.

The Committal Service

The method of disposition is again left up to individual preference. Earth burial, entombment, or cremation are all possible.

THE MENNONITE (AMISH)

FUNERAL RITE

Introduction

The Mennonites are a denomination of evangelical protestant Christians who settled in the United States in 1683. There are several major bodies within the Mennonites but all are very similar in views. They have been most widely known for their views on issues such as separation of church and state, refusal to take oaths, refusal to take up arms against others, and protest of slavery.

Notification of Clergy

The clergy consists of Bishops or elders, ministers who are pastors, or evangelists and deacons who take charge of congregations in the absence of the minister or Bishop. The family will determine appropriate timing for notifying clergy.

Removal of Remains

There are no restrictions or requirements for removal of remains.

Preparation of Remains

There are no special requirements for preparation of remains. Embalming is allowed.

Dressing and Casketing

The deceased should be dressed in white underwear and stockings. Males may be dressed in a long gown and white shirt with white trousers and vest. Females will be dressed in a long white gown and cape. In some areas the sons may be responsible for dressing their fathers, and daughters for their mothers.

Pre-Service Considerations

Visitation for friends and neighbors may be held for one or two days prior to the funeral. Visitation and funeral may take place in the home or the church. If held in the church, a procession from the home to the church is traditional. With some groups the procession will use a horse drawn hearse, with the family and friends following in their horse drawn buggies.

The Funeral Service

In some older groups the service may be conducted in German. Some may have men seated on one side of the church or home and women seated on the other. Following the procession to the cemetery, the coffin may be placed in a container or wooden box for burial. After the service, the family and friends will return to the church or home for a meal.

THE ORTHODOX FUNERAL RITE

Introduction

The Orthodox Church goes by many titles and names, usually based on locality. An independent council of bishops called a synod governs each church. The term *orthodoxy* means right belief or right worship, hence the claim that the church teaches the *true doctrine* of God and glorifies Him with the *true worship*.

Notification of Clergy

There are no requirements of the church.

Removal of Remains

There are no restrictions or requirements of the church.

Preparation of Remains

There are no restrictions or requirements. A traditional funeral is normal, so embalming is often used.

Pre-Service Considerations

In most cases the rites of a member of the church begin with the Trisagion. It is usually held in the funeral home the evening before the funeral and again the following day immediately before the service. Normally candles will be placed at each end of the casket, a cross behind the casket, and an icon at the foot.

The Funeral Service

A procession brings the casket and family into the church where they are met by the priest. The priest will bless the casket with holy water before the procession moves down the aisle. If the church has a Cantor, he will accompany the priest. The casket is led feet first down the aisle and placed in the Solea with the foot nearest the altar. The casket is usually left open during the service. The service will follow a liturgical order with readings, prayers, and hymns from a special booklet titled the *Parastas* or *Great Panachida*. The final part of the service may include a eulogy.

After the eulogy, the casket is turned so that it is parallel to the Iconostasis and the priest anoints the body with earth and olive oil. In icon is placed at the foot end of the casket and those seated on that side may pass by and kiss the icon. The icon is moved to the other end and the practice repeated for the other side of the church.

The Committal Service

Cremation is considered objectionable in the church so earth burial or entombment is normally used. The Priest will lead in the processional to the burial site. The service will include a litany of readings and prayers by the Priest or Cantor finished with a closing prayer.

THE MORMON FUNERAL RITE

Introduction

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, founded by Joseph Smith is referred to as Mormon from the title of the Book Of Mormon. The various church bodies of Latter Day Saints do not belong to the protestant churches, but claim their authority directly from God.

Notification of Clergy

Technically speaking there are no professional clergy in Latter Day Saints churches. Once a boy reaches the age of twelve he is ordained in the office of the priesthood. Bishops are called from the priesthood to serve for an unspecified time and without compensation. At the time of death the church does not require notification of the bishop.

Removal of Remains

There are no requirements or restrictions on removal of remains.

Dressing and Casketing of Remains

There are no specific casket requirements. The clothing used is dependent on whether the deceased has been through the temple. For those who have not been through the temple, the family will choose clothing. For a man who has been through the temple, the clothing will consist of white undergarments, socks, shirt, trousers, tie, and moccasins. A robe is worn over the right shoulder extending across the chest in a line to the ankle, front and back. A green apron and white sash are placed across the waist. The sash is tied in a bow on the left side and a white cap is placed on the head. The cap has a bow on the left side and string on the right that is tied to the robe.

For a woman who has been through the temple the clothing is similar except that a white veil is draped on the pillow at the back of the head and placed over the face before the casket is closed. In most cases, church members will come to the funeral home to dress the deceased.

Pre-Service Considerations

Visitation and viewings are usually held the evening before the funeral and may take place at the funeral home, the residence, or tabernacle.

The Funeral Service

The funeral may be held in the funeral home, ward chapel, or the tabernacle, but not in the temple. Simplicity is the key word in Mormon funerals. The use of a cross, crucifix, candles, or other such items is not permitted. The use of flowers may also be discouraged. An example order of service would include:

- Prelude
- Invocation
- Eulogy/Obituary
- Musical Selection
- Speaker
- Postlude

The Committal Service

Earth burial is the customary disposition, but other methods are also permitted.

THE JEWISH FUNERAL RITE

Introduction to Judaism

Judaism, thought to date back to, the 16th century B. C. was the first monotheistic religion. Founded by Abraham, Judaism was the foundation for Christianity and Islam. Judaism is based on the doctrine of one God, ancient scriptures (Old Testament) and talmud (oral teachings of the Torah).

There are three religious Jewish groupings in the United States. The Orthodox, who continue the ancient traditions and beliefs, the Reform, who allow greater flexibility and have adapted to modern practices, and the Conservative, who fit somewhere in between the Orthodox, and Reform. They still follow the ancient traditions, but have accepted gradual changes as a natural growth of the religion.

While there are many similar customs, traditions and beliefs of the Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative Jewish, there are also some differences in their practices. The same is true of their funeral customs and practices. The Orthodox, which is the most conservative in their practices will be discussed first, followed by a combined look at the Reform and Conservative which, while not identical, follow many of the same funeral practices. The funeral director should be aware of the various congregations in his or her community and the practices that they follow.

THE ORTHODOX-JEWISH FUNERAL RITE

Notification of the Rabbi

All services and arrangements are under the direct supervision of the local Rabbi and a funeral director. The Rabbi should be immediately notified unless death occurs on the Sabbath (Saturday) in which case he should be notified immediately after the end of the Sabbath. The group leader of Chevra Kadisha Society should also be notified.

Removal of Remains

No removals are to be made from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, unless death occurs in a public place and/or if the body interferes with public health. If death was from a violent cause, all blood stained clothing and other material should be removed with the remains and placed in the casket with the remains. This is done in order to return the entire body back to the elements from which it was created.

With the death of an Orthodox Jew the role of the Sacred Society begins when death has been definitely established. Straw is placed on the floor then covered with a sheet. Members of the Chevra kadisha (men handle men and women handle women) carefully undress the remains and carefully position the body on the sheet face up with feet facing the door. The windows in the room are opened.

The deceased is addressed by name in Hebrew and is asked by the participants to forgive any indignity. While the deceased is being positioned, prayers are recited. The limbs are straightened, eyes closed and the mouth and jaw may be tied with a handkerchief or piece of cloth. A block or pillow should be placed under the head. A candle should be lit and placed at the head of the deceased. All mirrors within the household should be covered. If it is not possible to perform the Hashkava at the time of death, it need not be done before the Tahara. Only observant Jews may handle the body. The body should be covered at all times and handled with dignity and respect. The total proceedings are referred to as Laying Down (Hashkava).

There are many variations in accordance to geographical and individual communities. The funeral directors should contact local Rabbis individually in order to determine the preferred customs of that particular community.

From the time of death, until the time of the funeral, a Shomer (watchman) may remain in the room with the body or within visual distance. The Shomer in the presence of the deceased recites Psalms and traditional prayers for the departed. Smoking, eating, and unnecessary conversation are forbidden in the room with the body. Men and women may serve in the capacity of Shomer for any deceased person. While the body is being maintained prior to Tahara or funeralization under refrigeration, the Shomer should be able to see the door of the unit. These proceedings are referred to as The Watch (Shmira).

Preparation of Remains

If civil laws require embalming, the laws supercede the laws and regulations of the synagogue. If the body is embalmed, the blood is placed in containers and placed in the casket along with the body.

Normal preparation of the Orthodox Jewish body begins with the rite of washing the deceased by the Sacred Society (Chevra Kadisha) as directed by rabbinic authority. Prior to the Tahara, the leader may acquire the necessary sundries to complete the task. The Coffin or casket, called an aron, is a plain wooden pegged box without ornaments or lining. The aron contains no metal parts or animal glues. Holes may be bored in the bottom allowing the deceased to be closer to the earth. Prior to dressing (shrouding) the Tachrichim, broken pottery, Israel earth, wooden instruments, pails and pitchers, sheets torn into strips for washing, and a Tallis for men must be on hand. In the event the deceased dies from a communicable disease, those performing the Tahara may wear protective garments and rubber gloves. If the deceased is male the members of the Chevra Kadisha would be men. If female, the Chevra Kadisha would be made up of women.

Dressing and Casketing

It is the responsibility of the Chevra Kadisha to shroud the body. The Tachrichim should be made of white linen without binding, hems, knots or pockets. The Tachrichim for men consists of seven garments:

Mitznefes	a headdress
Michnasayim	trousers with closed feet
K'sones	a shirt with sleeves
Kittel	a robe with collar and sleeves
Avnet, Gartel	a sash
Tallis	a prayer shawl
Sovev	a small linen bag used as a headrest

The Tachrichim for women consists of eight garments including:

Bonnet	covering for the hair
Midmasayim	pants with closed feet
K'sones	a blouse
Kittel	a long robe
Gartel	a sash
Apron	
Face cover	
Sovey	a linen sheet

The linen bag is filled with straw and Israel earth and is put in the casket as a headrest. Israel earth is also spread on the floor of the casket. After the body has been carefully placed in the casket, personal articles may be included. Any clothes or jewelry that was on the body at the time of death should also be placed in the casket. Once this is done, the casket is closed and generally will not be reopened again. The casket is then removed from the area of preparation, feet first to the site of the funeral.

After being in contact with the remains, being in the same room or at the cemetery, one's hands should be washed prior to entering one's residence.

Pre-service Considerations

Most Orthodox Jewish funerals are held in the funeral home or at the cemetery. Very few are held in the synagogue. If the funeral is to be held at the funeral home, the aron is placed parallel to the front of the chapel or stateroom and covered with a pall. A menorah is placed near the casket. Flowers are not normally used in an Orthodox Jewish funeral. However since there may be some individuals who are not familiar with the customs there may be times when flowers will arrive at the funeral home. The funeral director should determine with the family and Rabbi how to handle this issue.

The Funeral Service

The Rabbi determines the order of the service. No funerals may be held on the Sabbath (from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday). A cantor will often accompany the Rabbi and take part in the funeral service, usually chanting or singing the readings. In many areas, the funeral home will provide transportation for both the Rabbi and Cantor.

The Funeral Procession

The cortege (levaya) may stop at the synagogue. If this occurs, the funeral director should escort the Rabbi to the synagogue door. The Rabbi recites a prayer as the funeral director opens the doors of the funeral coach. This provides one last contact of the deceased with the

synagogue. Once the prayer is over, the funeral director should close the door of the funeral coach and escort the Rabbi back to his automobile. The cortege will then proceed to the cemetery.

The Committal Service

During the procession to the grave the Rabbi may stop the casket bearers seven times to pray. Once the casket reaches the grave the casket bearers place the casket on wooden planks or cloth straps over the newly dug grave in the Jewish cemetery or the Jewish section of a cemetery.

The site around the actual grave is usually plain with no artificial grass, mechanical lowering device or sometimes tent.

The Rabbi recites the final prayers and the family and friends recite the Kaddish. The clothing of the family may be cut or torn at this point in the committal service. The casket is then lowered into the ground. The Rabbi reluctantly shovels earth onto the casket and then lays the shovel down to be picked up by members of the family who also shovel dirt onto the casket until the casket is covered.

On leaving the gravesite, the mourners should wash their hands three times by pouring water on them from a vessel, beginning with the right hand. Their hands are then air-dried.

NOTE: It is important to remember that a number of variations of the orthodox Jewish funeral rite exist. This material should be used only as a guide. Consulting your local rabbinic authority is of the utmost importance.

Laws of Mourning

Upon the death of a member of the Jewish faith, the blood relatives are to observe certain mourning periods. During these periods the relatives are to humble themselves as a display of respect for the deceased. Although they may rend (tear) their garments either on the day of the death or at the committal site, this custom has generally been replaced with a rending of a symbolic ribbon worn on the clothing. The mourners are expected to refrain from work, festivities or amusement during this time. The mourning periods listed below may apply to the Orthodox, Reform or Conservative Jewish faiths.

Shivah: The observance of Shivah begins on the day of the burial and ends on the seventh day after burial.

Sholoshim: a thirty-day mourning period during which the mourners abstain from any festivities or amusement following the death of a relative.

Yahrzeit: The anniversary date of a death. A yahrzeit candle is burned in the home for a twenty-four period. (Note: For the death of a parent, the mourners will abstain from all festivities for a period of twelve months)

THE CONSERVATIVE AND REFORM JEWISH FUNERAL RITES

Introduction to the Conservative and Reform Judaism

One should not assume that the Conservative and Reform (Liberal) branches of Judaism are identical because they are combined in this discussion. While they have some similarities based on their origins from the Orthodox Jewish faith, they also have some distinct differences both in beliefs and practice. These differences, especially as they effect the funeral rite, will be pointed 'out during this discussion.

Notification of the Death

It is of utmost importance that the funeral home, upon receiving the first call, request verbal permission to remove the body from the place of death. It is also necessary to inform the family that embalming is not required by law, only desirable due to natural biological changes that may occur after a death. Unlike the Orthodox Jews, removal and preparation of the Conservative and Reform Jew is not prohibited. There may be times however, in which the funeral home staff will encounter members of the two Jewish groupings following the Orthodox practices.

Notification of the Clergy

It is usually not necessary to contact the Rabbi at the time of death unless it is the desire of the family. Prior to completion: of the funeral service arrangements, the Rabbi should be contacted to confirm the time and place of the service.

Preparation of the Remains

Restrictions are usually not placed on embalming a member of the Conservative or Reform Jewish faith. Verbal permission should be obtained at the time of the first call, followed by written permission during the funeral arrangement conference. There will be times in which the Rabbi or the family, whether for religious personal reasons, prefers the body not be embalmed.

Dressing and Casketing

The deceased may be dressed in any clothing desired by the family and Rabbi. There are instances where it is the request of a family that a shroud be used under the regular clothing or in place of the deceased's clothing.

The casket is the choice of the family. There are no restrictions as to the material it is made of or the type. While some followers of the Conservative or Reform Jewish faith may choose the traditional orthodox wooden casket (aron), the casket may be made from wood, metal or any of the other materials normally used casket construction.

Pre-Funeral Service Considerations

As has already been seen in other areas of comparison, there are more options available in the area of funeral service considerations in both the Conservative and Reform Jewish funerals. Casket placement in the funeral home, either in a visitation area or in the chapel would follow the customary placement of all caskets. Determination as to whether the casket is to be open or closed during this time will be determined by the family in conjunction with their Rabbi.

A Star of David may be placed within the bead panel, behind the casket, or on top of the casket. The placing of a candle near the casket is also optional. Flowers are also optional in accordance to local customs or the family's instructions.

The Funeral Service

One similarity between the Orthodox and the Conservative and Reform Jewish religions is their desire to not hold funerals on their Sabbath (Saturday). However the Conservative and Reform Jewish funerals may be held in the funeral home, the residence of the deceased, the temple or at the gravesite. The Rabbi, often accompanied by a Cantor, will lead the service.

If the funeral service takes place somewhere other than the temple, the cortege will not normally stop at the temple on the way to the cemetery.

The Committal Service

Burial may take place in any cemetery of the family's choosing. The use of artificial grass, a tent and mechanical lowering device are also permitted. During the committal service, the Rabbi will say special prayers and lead the mourners in the recitation of the Kaddish.

THE BUDDHIST FUNERAL RITE

Introduction to the Triadic Religion Concept

In Eastern Asia, religion is understood as TAO. Here, religion means devotion to religious observances, a personal set of religious attitudes, and practices or principles of beliefs held to with ardor. The TAO is a process of nature by which all things change and is to be followed by a life of harmony. It also means art and skills of doing something in harmony with the nature of this thing.

Three Main Religions in the Orient

Buddhism

The teaching of Guatama Buddha is that suffering is inherent in life and that one can be liberated from it by mental and moral self-purification. The place of worship is called Pagoda.

Confucianism

The teaching of Confucius is related to the path of virtuous conduct, moral and ethical principles which regulate individuals and society. The place of worship is the temple.

Taoism

Taoism is a mystical philosophy, founded by Laotzu, teaching the conformity to the TAO by unassertive action and simplicity. The place of worship is a temple.

The funeral rite derives from the principles and practices of the union of these three religions. As an example, the Deceased Altar is related to Confucianism; the Buddha altar is related to Buddhism; and the Burning of Paper Joss things or votive money is related to Taoism.

Notification of the Pagoda

The family notifies the Pagoda and the Bonze (Buddhist priest) of their preference concerning the funeral and disposition. There is no regulation regarding when this is to take place.

Removal and Preparation of Remains

Removal and preparation of the deceased is left entirely up to the family. Rice, gold, or coins may be placed inside the mouth before the funeral.

Dressing and Casketing the Remains

For the Ceremony of the Declaration of Death, all of the family members wear white clothes including hoods or turbans made of white gauze, cry loudly and burst into tears, lament while waiting for the arrival of Bonze. At this time the body is prepared, dressed (no special requirements) and placed on a table next to the casket. When the Bonze arrives, he begins the Service of Encasketing with prayers and benediction. After consulting his “Book of Dates” to have the auspicious or favorable time according to the date of birth and date of death, along with the surviving spouse or son’s birthdates, he then decides the accurate time to put the body into the casket.

Watch (Wake) Service and Visitations

Two tables may be set up as altars. The deceased altar is placed before the casket with the deceased photos, candles, oil lamp, and incense vase, flowers, fruits, and food (a boiled egg is put on top of a bowl of rice). This observance is related to the Confucian cult of the death (ancestors). The “Buddha Altar” is usually placed at the right angle of the “Deceased Altar” and contains incense, candles, and fruits. The Watch Service begins with the Bonze striking wooden bells and saying a prayer. There may be several services between which visitation and viewings are held.

Burial Procession and Committal Service

At the time prescribed by the Bonze, the procession moves from the funeral home to the cemetery. At the graveside Bonze says a prayer and gives final benediction with holy water and incense. A eulogy may be given for the deceased. Cremation is encouraged with the committal service being held before the cremation at the funeral home.

Post-Burial Services

Post burial services are held at the home or the Pagoda once per week for seven weeks. These services help the deceased soul to pass and go through the best reincarnation.

Mourning Period

The mourning period may last from 6 months to three years depending on relationship to the deceased. Mourners are expected to refrain from festivities and amusement, they may wear a black ribbon or band when working.

THE JAPANESE BUDDHIST DEATH RITUAL

Introduction

The Japanese Buddhists differ in custom and traditions from the Indian, Chinese, and Korean Buddhists. Historically all Buddhism is derived from India, but each country and culture has its own unique translation of the original teachings of the Buddha. The Jodo Shinshu sect has set the standard for the death ritual that all others adhere to closely.

Beliefs

Buddhists believe the world is an imperfect place full of suffering and sorrow. The only way to end the suffering is to be released from all physical constraints and become enlightened. All sects pay homage to the Buddha, a mortal being who became enlightened while still on earth. They believe that the soul joins and becomes a Buddha in Nirvana, the Pure Land. There is no heaven or hell, just Nirvana. Everyone will become enlightened when they die, and exist forever in Eternal Bliss.

Before Death

There are no sacraments or prayer given to someone who is dying.

Notification of Minister

The minister may be notified at death on the wishes of the family.

Removal of Remains

Traditionally the makura-gyo, or bedside prayer, is to be performed by the minister before the body is moved. The prayer may also be done at the funeral home before the funeral arrangements are made.

Funeral Arrangements

Upon completion of the Makuru-gyo, the minister will usually join the family for planning the funeral. All Buddhist churches require flowers and Japanese confectionery to be placed on the altar for the funeral, the exact nature of such to be determined by the preference of the minister. Visitations are usually scheduled before the funeral.

Dressing and Casketing Remains

There are no specific guidelines for casket or clothing for laymen. Ministers and prominent church members are to be dressed in their vestments indicative of their position in the church.

The Funeral Service

There are no requirements for time and place, though most are scheduled at night so relatives and friends do not have to take time from work. The casket is placed parallel to the altar and remains open for the entire service, unless specified by the family. The order of service is as follows:

Tolling of the temple bell

Procession

Minister

Casket Bearers

Funeral Director

Casket (head first)

Funeral Director

Chanting of sutras before the casket by officiate

Presentation of Buddhist name: a posthumous name is conferred upon the deceased by the minister, signifying that he has begun his new existence in the Nirvana.

Offering of incense: Before the altar will be several incense burners. This is the most significant expression in the Buddhist religion, always followed by a quick recitation of a verse. The burning of the incense represents the spiritual cleansing of the soul and the transference of one's mortality to Nirvana.

Gatha: The first two verses of a Buddhist hymn will be sung

Opening remarks by the chairman

Eulogy

Sermon

Gatha: The last two verses of a hymn sung

Condolence Message: read to the family on behalf of the congregation

Words of Appreciation: By a representative of the family in response to the condolences

Recessional

Final Disposition

There are no restrictions or requirements in regards to disposition. If burial is chosen a graveside service will be held with the minister present. If cremation is chosen there will be a cremation service either in the chapel or the mortuary with the minister present. After the services the family will return to the temple for a final service to provide closure for family members.

Memorial Services

Memorial services are held periodically to ensure the deceased safe passage to Nirvhana. More practically, these services give mourners a chance to join in fellowship and support through the grieving period. Services are usually held on 7th and 49th day after death, the 1st, 3rd, 7th, 13th, 17th, 23rd, 25th, 50th year anniversary of death, and every 50th year thereafter.