**Funerals Performed by Pastors at CedarCreek Church**
The end of life provides a unique opportunity for pastors at CedarCreek. When someone dies, a range of emotions can and will be experienced by the family. If asked to perform a funeral, you are being invited in to sacred space. It’s a chance to both minister to the family and also to those closest to them.

Some of what you might experience is a family who is shocked, numb, and grieving from a sudden and unexpected loss. Or you might find the family to be incredibly relieved by the end of life and honestly feeling a little guilty about that.

Funerals also provide a unique opportunity to share the Gospel with people who may never come to church and perhaps won’t hear about the saving work of Jesus Christ through any means in their life. What’s even more, those who attend will be thinking about the end of life and asking the question, “What is the point of it all?”

Funerals are entirely different than weddings. Consider the following:

Grieve
Remember
Fellowship
Worship

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Weddings** | **Funerals** |
| Focus is on the Bride | Focus is on eternity |
| All about human love | All about God's love |
| Takes months to plan | Takes days to plan |
| Mistakes talked about for years | Mistakes are forgotten quickly |
| Need to coordinate a few dozen people | Just you and a funeral director |
| Lots of contingencies about outside weather | You might need to bring an umbrella |
| They want you to finish your stupid message | They are hanging on your every word |
| so they can get to the open bar |  |

**Funeral Best Practices**
When you are requested to do a funeral, the first step in the process is checking your calendar and making sure the date/time is available for you to perform the funeral.

-If the answer is yes, then you’ll want to set up a time with the family to meet. In this meeting you’ll find out more about the deceased and also start to plan the ceremony.

-You’ll also want to call the funeral director and introduce yourself. If they are not in the office, leave your name, church, and cell phone number.

-Make sure they have the spelling of your name correct as they will very likely be putting it in the obituary.

-Ask them if they have any questions for you or needs

-Ask about sound system capabilities. Do they have microphone or not? Do they have a PA?

-You might want to bring a Bluetooth speaker with you when performing the funeral. Many funeral homes are small and have bad sound systems. A small Bluetooth speaker will do the job.

**Meeting with the family:**-Best place is in their home. They are the most comfortable there and they are the most open.
-The second best is in the funeral home. Why? Their mind is already there and it brings a level of professionalism
-Third option, the church. When you ask someone to meet at the church, they may bring family members who aren’t comfortable being there…so they walk in being guarded.

Start to work through the funeral planning sheet.

*Funeral Planning Sheet (attachment)*Once you have all the information and stories about the deceased, you can go home and start to build the outline. Here are some examples…

*Ed Bellner’s Outlines
Believers Funeral without Graveside Service
Believers Funeral with Graveside Service
Non-Believers Funeral
Overdose Funeral
Child’s Funeral

Luke Example Outline*
**Kids and suicides (Tough Funerals)**
Ask the family the tough questions in your meeting so you don’t get put in a tough spot at the service.
Ask the family “How open are you being and do you want me to be about the way that they died?”

Common practice to ask others to share a funeral. I always ask if they want this… but the family needs to be aware that everything shared might not be positive.

During eulogies, don’t go further than 5 feet away from them. This will help you maintain control and keep things moving along.

Don’t say things like “They are in heaven now” or “I’m sure they are in a better place.” Let the family grieve and ask God for comfort. If they are struggling with the salvation of their deceased family member, you can remind them that God is the just judge and always judges in perfect love. Their family member is in God’s hands now.

**Day of the Funeral**

You must have a merciful leadership. Push and drive while being sensitive to where the family is.

Be ready for a potential fight or an F Bomb coming out of nowhere. It happens!

It is strongly suggested that men wear a nice suit and ladies wear formal attire. Not everyone there will dress up but it is better for you to be overdressed than under dressed.

Make sure you find the funeral director and introduce yourself. Give them a copy of your service.

You can either print off your service or use a tablet. Your choice… but if you go electronic, make sure you have a backup plan in case your device dies.

**Leaving the Funeral Home**

Funeral directors will often give the family one last chance to say goodbye. Stay with the family and the casket. It’s possible that they will lose it or freak out during this moment. Be ready for anything!

When leading the casket out of the funeral home and into the hearse, stay by the head. You will lead the group. The funeral director will tell you what side that is if you’re unsure.

When you get to the hearse, just step aside and let the pallbearers load the casket.

Feel free to ride with the funeral director. Try to build a relationship, ask questions, and get to know them as a person. They love to talk about the oddest funerals they’ve encountered and how they got into the business.

**Interment Service (optional to the family)**

At the graveside – Keep your committal short. Around 5 minutes is great.

Perhaps consider having a chunk of the committal service that you can cut out. If weather is bad or there are other factors, you might want to cut things to just a few minutes.

When in doubt about where to go, stay with the deceased. Give your message from the head of the casket (or close by it).

**Getting Paid**

Many funeral homes will incorporate your fee into their conversation. You can ask the funeral director, “did my fee come up in your conversation with the family?”

If you want to waive your fee, tell the family you do not want an honorarium and let the funeral director know as well.

If the check is made out to CedarCreek, you’ll want to turn it in to the finance department and let them know that you performed a funeral. In this case you will be taxed.

If they give you cash or make the check out to you, you do not have to turn it in to the finance department but you should claim in on your own personal taxes.

**Final Thoughts:**

They will most likely invite you to the “wake” afterward. Don’t feel any obligation to go unless you want to. If this part is taking place at your campus, that makes things last a few extra hours. Make sure you’ve already talked to the family about additional rental fees in the scenario. This is your campus pastors call ultimately and should not interfere with the weekend services in any way.

If using one of the campuses make sure you are reserving rooms and resources in Planning Center Resources.

 You’ll also want to fill out the sacerdotal duties form here:

<https://creekhelp.com/hr-links/clergy/sacerdotal-duties/>

**Questions for Theological Reflection:**
What role does the pastor play when it comes to ministering to a grieving family? What role does he or she not play?

What excites you about performing funerals? What terrifies you?

How would you handle a family who is constantly fighting with each other and cutting each other down?

Why did Paul say that Christians do not grieve like those outside of the faith? 1 Thessalonians 4:13

Obligated to attend Viewings? (Could be a good time to meet the family if you’re struggling to find one)

When to arrive?

In state and out of state

Finding a room to go over your message