



FUNERAL PLANNING GUIDE & BURIAL POLICY

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The Reverend Fedrick A. Wilson, Pastor

Live Oak AME Church

Mission Statement

The mission of Live Oak AME Church is to make effective and contagious disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Vision Statement

Live Oak AME Church is building a vibrant, faith community where people can come as they are, meet Jesus, grow in their faith, and find a place to serve.

A Word from the Pastor

Dear Family & Friends,

The Live Oak AME Church Burial Policy is designed to serve as a guide to all members of our congregation, family, and friends for the purposes of providing quality pastoral care in times of bereavement. With these goals in mind, our hope is to clarify how funerals are conducted at Live Oak AME Church, specify the recommended procedures for planning one's funeral, and outlining the criteria that determine eligibility for burial in the church cemetery/churchyard.

If you are reading this for the first time during a time of loss, please accept our sympathy. On behalf of the entire church family, we at Live Oak AME Church promise to do all that we can to help you in the love and spirit of Jesus Christ.

Yours in Christian Service,

The Rev. Fedrick Wilson
Pastor

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General Property Utilization Guidelines for Cemeteries and/or other Properties in the AME Church

Live Oak AME Church does not unilaterally have the authority to sell its local church property or any property belonging to the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The selling of any church property held within the trust of Live Oak AME Church is reserved for the trustees of the Central Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, pursuant to the guidelines as stipulated by the guidelines of the latest edition of *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*. A copy of the latest edition of *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal* is available for viewing in the pastor's office.

Additionally, no person or persons own any property of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. All contents contained either below or above ground that is the property of the African Methodist Episcopal Church is owned by the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Therefore, Live Oak AME Church as a custodian of the African Methodist Episcopal Church has full legal authority over these properties pursuant to the latest edition of *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal*. The implications of these legal designations with specific regard to this policy will govern the use of grounds designated as cemeteries of Live Oak AME Church and will be governed by the elected representatives of Live Oak AME Church.

Further, No person owns any plot in a cemetery owned by Live Oak AME Church in trust for the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Instead, individuals can utilize designated spaces referred to as plots pursuant to qualifications established by Live Oak AME Church.

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Checklist for Those Requesting a Funeral

- Whether to be cremated;
- In the case of cremation, whether to have the funeral before or after the cremation;
- Where the funeral is to take place;
- Where the burial is to take place;
- Which cemetery is to be used for the burial;
- What kind of plot should be bought;
- The day and time of the funeral;
- The day and time of the burial;
- Whether to have prayers in the home;
- Whether to have a visitation in a funeral home;
- What hymns and music should be chosen;
- Whether to have flowers in the Church;
- What liturgical color should be used at the service;
- Whether any other group is to be present or partake before or after the service;
- Whether to give a memorial gift to the Church;
- Which tombstone is to be chosen;
- What inscription is to be used.
- Whether to have memorial flowers on the anniversary of death.

Cost

The Pastor does not charge anything for conducting funerals of active members of the congregation. In addition, there is no facility rental fee or burial fee for active members of the congregation. A list of members of the church is maintained by the Board of Stewards.

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Commitment to Pastoral Care

The Ministry of the Pastor and Congregation

The Pastor's ministry is to lead the bereaved into and through the rites of the Church where the voice of the Gospel can be heard with healing power and clarity. As a people of faith, we know that the pain and loss of death must not be minimized or ignored. We understand, the bereaved need to confront and accept the loss of the deceased as well as be given hope. Our Church promises to do our best to support the bereaved – not only at the time of the funeral, but also as the family and loved ones who sorrow, return to the duties of your lives.

Pastoral Services to Members of Other Congregations

Sometimes our clergy are asked to be involved at the funerals of people from other Churches. We affirm that the responsibility and authority for pastoral acts or services rests with the pastor of the congregation where the deceased held membership. If our Pastor is asked to provide pastoral services for members of other congregations, the Pastor will contact the clergy of the Church in which the person held membership before providing the service. Our goal is to aid other Churches in their ministry without interfering. It is hoped that this sign of respect would be returned to us from other clergy and Churches. If the request for pastoral service involves an individual who has had conflicts with his/her Pastor or congregation, the immediate family will be urged to resolve the difficulty prior to receiving pastoral service.

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Funeral Arrangements

How Mourners Worship in Our Tradition

A Christian Funeral is a time when we pause before the mystery of death and life. Funerals are an expression of faith in our salvation, resurrection, and eternal life. As such, we come to worship God and rejoice in the new life he has given us beyond death. We also gather to thank God for the gift given to us in the person of the deceased. Funerals also express the community support that is shown at a time of death as we pray, sing, laugh and cry together.

The Christian funeral is a service of worship and should involve all those present. The funeral serves a support function such that the religious, social, and emotional needs of the mourners are met. In order to achieve these goals, as a general practice any viewings of the remains of the deceased must precede the start of celebration of life services. Once the casket is closed it will not be reopened.

Worship Service Format

At Live Oak, we offer families the choice of a funeral service from *The Book of Worship of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* or special program planned in conjunction with the Office of the Pastor.

Sample Funeral Worship Service:

The Prelude
The Processional
The Hymn
The Prayer
The Scripture
The Musical Selection
The Reflections and/or Acknowledgements
The Musical Selection
The Eulogy
The Closing Prayer

Note: In the African Methodist Episcopal Church, prayer always proceeds the reading of scripture. Further, the order of worship service for any funeral services must be approved by the pastor. Failure to receive pastoral approval may result in a delaying of the funeral or the termination of the deceased individual's rights to be buried in a Live Oak AME Church cemetery or utilize church facilities for the celebration of life services.

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Other Party Participation in Funeral Services

To Fraternal Groups:

Such groups, upon the consent of the Pastor and following the guidelines outlined by the church are welcome to take their place in the celebration of the life of the deceased person.

Regarding Music:

Music selected for use at a funeral should embody high standards of quality, and in general reflect the spirit of Christian confidence, trust, and hope in the Resurrection. The hymns should reflect such themes as the invocation of the Holy Spirit, the communion of saints, hope in the Resurrection. All music selected for use at a funeral must be approved by the Pastor.

To Visiting Clergy:

The Pastor or his or her designee is in charge of the service. If the family wishes to invite other clergy or have them participate in the worship service, they must obtain the permission of the Pastor. The role of all invited clergy at the service is assigned by the Pastor or his or her designee.

On Cremation:

Cremation is becoming more common today. The ashes are the body of the deceased in a changed form. Therefore, we honor them as we honor the body. A funeral can be held with the body present before cremation or with the cremated remains in an urn on a table near the chancel.

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Optional Services

Prayers at the Home

It is recommended that the family of the deceased have prayers at the home of the deceased sometime before the funeral. For those who die with the rites of the Church these prayers will be performed at the time of death.

The Committal

When the body of the deceased is to be transported to a distant interment site, has been donated for medical use, or has been lost at sea, the commendation alone will suffice. The coffin is lowered into the grave. Urns are placed in their resting place. It is important that the mourners see the coffin lowered into the grave and not simply remember it resting on top of the device by which it will later be lowered after the mourners have left, for it gives the mourners a clearer memory of what happened to the body. (The lowering of the casket in the presence of the family is optional and must be coordinated in conjunction with both the church and funeral home.) Earth is cast on the coffin by the Pastor or his or her designee as the body is committed to its resting place. The final blessing and dismissal, is said by the Pastor. Bodies are not interred after sunset or before sunrise.

If an interment service is being held in conjunction with the funeral worship service, either a member of Live Oak's ministerial team or other clergy designated by the Central Annual Conference's representative must preside at the interment of any body in our cemetery.

Bequest

Although the Church will not pressure an individual or a family to make a bequest to the Church, it is encouraged. In our society memorials are often made to secular groups, such as the Cancer Society, and we condone this practice. However, sometimes we as Christians often overlook our duty to leave bequests to the local church for its future upkeep and ministry. The Church will welcome any memorials that you choose to give in honor of your loved one with gratitude, and our Pastor will be glad to meet with you at any time to discuss your needs.

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Anniversaries

The church marks the anniversary of all our ancestors who have transitioned on All Saints Day, which is normally celebrated on the last Sunday in October or on a date designated by the congregation. During this time, a representative from each family of the deceased will be given an opportunity to deliver brief remarks and light a candle in honor of their loved one. Also, flowers may be dedicated to the memory of a loved one on any Sunday.

An additional service that the church offers is a service of prayer and communion with the family of the deceased. Our experiences as a church family have taught us that sometimes the comfort of sharing in the Lord's Supper can be an act of grace connecting the community and family of the deceased with God especially on the anniversaries of deaths when memories of the deceased are sometimes most difficult to cope. Please, see the pastor in order to make arrangements and for more details.

Memorial Book

All names of the deceased buried in the Churchyard are kept in a memorial book and are remembered annually at the time of death in congregational prayers.

Preparing Your Funeral in Advance

You are encouraged to think about your own funeral. With respect for the Church's teaching, outlined in this policy and in dialogue with your family, you may want to leave directions as to how you wish your funeral to be celebrated. The Pastor in conjunction with local funeral homes have the resources and are prepared to offer help in this area. The Pastor is always willing to help you prepare your own funeral.

Guidelines for Use of Cemetery Grounds

Tombstones and other Memorials

Live Oak AME Church owns the cemetery surrounding the church edifice. These are consecrated grounds for use by both members of the congregation and community for the purposes of burial. As such, our cemetery is different than other municipal cemeteries, and the rights of congregants and community members are limited:

1. The strict right of a congregant or community in a cemetery owned by Live Oak AME Church is simply the right to be buried. The erection of a tombstone or monument over a grave, though now customary, remains a privilege. It is an erection on consecrated ground and therefore in strictness requires the permission of the Pastor and Trustee Board of the church.
2. The Trustee Board must approve double head tombstone or monument based on the fact that both members are in active financial status. If one person is an active member and the other person is a non-active or non-member, the family of the deceased non-active or non-member must pay \$1,900.00 for the burial spot.
3. If a family desires to erect a tombstone at the churchyard cemetery without a body, active members will not be charged for the tombstone. Non-members and in-active members will be charged \$100.00 for the tombstone.

Right of Burial

To ensure for posterity that the members of Live Oak AME Church will have burial plots, plots will only be made available under the following circumstances:

1. Burial Services for a **non-member and non-active** member is \$2200.00 (*Cemetery spot \$1900.00 and Funeral or Graveside Service/Pastoral Support \$300.00*). Non-member is a person who is not a member of Live Oak AME Church. A non-active member is any person who is a member but **has not** paid a total of **\$700.00** to Live Oak AME Church for the past two consecutive years (*previous 24 months*) prior to death.
2. Any non-active member that contributes less than \$700.00 for the two consecutive years prior to death will be charged \$2200.00 (*unless otherwise stated by the Pastor and the majority of the Trustee Board*). Any contributions made by the non-active member within the 2 years prior to death will be subtracted from the \$2200.00. (*i.e. If the non-active member paid \$350.00 during the 2 years prior to death, \$350.00 will be subtracted from the \$2200.00 and the family will be responsible for the balance before the Funeral Service and/or Burial.*) For use of the church and kitchen **without burial at the churchyard cemetery**; the charge will be \$500.00. For use of the church, Pastor, and kitchen **without burial at the churchyard cemetery**; the charge will be \$800.00.
3. Non-members or non-active members do not have a choice of burial spot at the churchyard cemetery. The Trustees will assign a spot for burial in a designated area for non-members and non-active members. The Trustee Board must approve double head stones based on the fact that both members are in active financial status. If one person is an active member and the other person is a non-active or non-member, the family of the deceased non-active or non-member must pay \$1,900.00 for the burial spot. Therefore, **spouse and adult children of active members** of Live Oak AME Church **must also maintain active financial status** to have a choice of burial spot.
4. Burial in the churchyard cemetery for children/students (*active member of the church*) and/or child of active members of the church will be waived of any funeral/burial expenses. Burial in the churchyard cemetery for children/students (*inactive or non-member of the church*) and/or child of inactive or non-members of the church will be charged \$1,900.00. There is an additional cost of \$300.00 to have a funeral or graveside service at the church for the deceased. Additionally, our definition of children are persons from ages birth to 18 and students who are enrolled in school from ages 18-25.

If a family desires to erect a tombstone at the churchyard cemetery without a body, active members will not be charged for the tombstone. Non-members and in-active members will be charged \$100.00 for the tombstone.

Cremation burial in the churchyard cemetery for active members will be free of charge. Non-members and inactive members will be charged \$500.00 for cremation burial. If the family of the non-member or inactive member desires to have a Memorial or Graveside Service at the church or cemetery and use the kitchen, the cost will be \$500.00. If the family of the non-member or inactive member desires to only have a Memorial Service or Graveside Service, the cost will be \$300.00.

*Note: Proven active members who attended church on a **regular basis** and in good **continuous financial status may be exempted if member becomes ill or due to age can no longer support the church. The Pastor, Class Leader, and Trustee Board will approve this action.***

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Amendments Procedure & Special Circumstances

Any amendment to the Funeral and Burial Policy must be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the Church Conference. If special provision for burial must be made that are in contrary to this policy, the Pastor should be notified immediately. Please note, that a notification of the pastor is not a guarantee that a request can be granted. However, the Pastor will work diligently to accommodate any possible special request.