FUNERAL FOR A STILLBORN CHILD

Pastoral Guidelines

In the loss of an infant parents and loved ones experience deep spiritual and psychological needs. The importance of a funeral service as an aid in the grief process and as an affirmation of Christian hope cannot be overestimated. Parents and family may wish to have an abbreviated private service at the hospital or home, or may wish to share with the church family at a church funeral.

Laws regarding registration of fetuses and disposal of the body vary from state to state, and families should check with hospital administration and funeral directors before making final decisions about disposing of the body.

The immediate pastoral concern is for the parents of the child. The pastor can help provide an atmosphere of acceptance and love where parents are encouraged to express their feelings.

If the fetus is full or close to term, the parents should be encouraged to hold the child, name it, and speak of it as a person. This may seem very hard at the time, but opportunity for this should be allowed.

Parents may experience shame and guilt and may seek answers where there are no answers. Support from the family, hospital staff, and pastor are important as parents begin the grief process. Grieving cannot be hurried, and support needs to be offered through the long weeks and months that follow the death. Pastoral support will also be needed if there are subsequent pregnancies and births. Support groups for those who have lost a child at birth can also offer help. Hospital administrators, doctors and midwives, and other clergy can make helpful suggestions about support groups in the area.

FUNERAL FOR A STILLBORN CHILD
(Adapted from the form used in the Church of Scotland.)

*All who are able please stand.

The following or similar words may be spoken, responsively or in unison:

*Votum

Our help is in the name of the Lord,
Maker of heaven and earth.
*Sentences*

Praise the Lord  
**The Lord’s name be praised.**

Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life.  
If anyone believes in me,  
even though that person die,  
so shall that person live.  
And whoever lives and believes in me will never die.  
“Come to me, all you who labor and are overburdened,  
and I will give you rest.”  
Grace to you and peace.

*(The leader may touch the parents’ heads in blessing.)*

*Hymn (Optional)*

**The Naming of the Child** (At the discretion of the family)

*The leader says:*

What name do you give your child?

*The parent(s) respond:*

**We name him/her __________.**  
*(The parents may give the significance of the name.)*

**The Lessons**

*Some of the following lessons may be read, including one from the Old Testament, one from the Epistles, and one from the Gospels:***

**THE PSALMS**

Ps. 23  
The Lord is my shepherd.

Ps. 27  
The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Ps. 30:1-5  
I cried to you for help.

Ps. 42  
Hope in God, for I shall again praise him.

Ps. 46  
God is our refuge and strength.
Ps. 84 How lovely is your dwelling place.
Ps. 90 Lord, you have been our dwelling place.
Ps. 103:1-5, 8-18 Bless the Lord, O my soul.
Ps. 118 O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.
Ps. 121 I lift up my eyes to the hills.
Ps. 130 Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.
Ps. 139 O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

2 Sam. 12:16-23 David and the death of his child.
2 Sam. 18:32–19:2 Absolom’s death.
Isa. 35:1-10 Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.
Isa. 40:11 He will feed his flock.
Isa. 49:8-13 For the Lord... will have compassion.
Jer. 31:15 Rachel is weeping for her children.
Lam. 3:22-26, 31-33 The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.

THE EPISTLES

Rom. 8:18-25 The creation waits with eager longing.
Rom. 8:26-31 If God is for us, who is against us?
Rom. 14:7, 8 We do not live to ourselves.
I Thess. 4:13-18 We do not want you to be uninformed about those who have died.
I John 3:1-2 See what love the Father has given us.

THE GOSPEL

Matt. 5:1-12 The Beatitudes
Matt. 11:28-30 Come to me, all you that are weary.
Matt. 18:1-4 Unless you become like children.
Mark 10:13-16 Let the little children come to me.
John 14:1-6 Do not let your hearts be troubled.
John 14:27 Peace I leave with you.

The Prayers

O God who loves us as a perfect Parent, your words have brought comfort and strength to your people through the ages.
Confirm to us also the truth of your promises, 
that we might receive the strength and peace we need. 
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of eternal comfort, you alone can heal our broken hearts. 
You alone can wipe away our tears. 
You alone can give us the peace we need. 
You alone can give us the strength to carry on. 
We ask you to be near to those whose time of joy 
has been turned into sadness. 
Awaken us to your presence.
encourage us by your strength, 
and may our love for one another 
be deepened by the knowledge of your love for us all. 
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The following prayers may be used if the child was near or full term.

Lord Jesus Christ, you took little children into your arms 
and you laid your hands upon them and blessed them. 
Assure us that you have taken our child N_____________ into 
your arms and into your care, 
and that together we are enfolded in your love. 
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Creator and Keeper of Life, we acknowledge that our child 
N_____________ is your child, loved since before the 
foundation of the world. Grant us such trust in the finished 
work of Christ our Savior that we shall look with hope 
toward a full knowledge of this child N_____________, 
whose earthly life we have shared but little, 
and whom we entrust to your care. 
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE PRAYER OF COMMENDATION

We commend this child N_____________ to your safekeeping. 
Grant him/her rest eternal, 
and bring us all into the light and peace of your presence. Amen.
THE COMMITTAL (may be omitted)

We entrust this child N_________ into the hands of God,
earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust,
having our whole trust and confidence
in the mercy of our God,
and in the victory of Jesus Christ our Lord,
who died, was buried, and rose again for us,
and who is alive and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

THE LORD’S PRAYER (in unison)

*Hymn (optional)

*Benediction

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in
the knowledge and love of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of
God be with you always. Amen.

Suggested Hymns

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<th>TUNES</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>All My Hope</td>
<td>Michael</td>
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<td>Tryggare Kan</td>
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<td>Jesus Loves Me</td>
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<td>The King of Love</td>
<td>St. Columba</td>
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<td>The King of Love My Shepherd Is</td>
<td>Dominus Regit Me</td>
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<td>Lord of All Hopefulness</td>
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<td>Lord of the Living</td>
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<td>O Lord of Life</td>
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<td>The Lord’s My Shepherd</td>
<td>Brother James’ Air</td>
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The Lord’s My Shepherd
My Shepherd Is the Living Lord
Our Lives are Filled with Sorrow

Evan
Glen
Es Kommt Ein Schiff
Geladen (Psalter Hymnal 491)

NOTES:


