

Here is a short lesson on Masonic Funerals.

One of the most solemn services that can be rendered to a Freemason is that of a Masonic Funeral or Burial Service. Our Blue Monitor states that "Funerals are to be performed as a melancholy Masonic duty, and as a token of respect and affection to the memory of our departed brother". Our Masonic Regulations provides for a Master Mason in good standing to be given a Masonic Funeral Service if requested by his immediate family. Entered Apprentices and Fellow Crafts are not entitled to a Masonic Funeral. If the family does not request a Masonic Funeral, a Lodge is not at liberty to put one on without their permission. The Lodge is permitted, however, to hold a Memorial Service in deference to a departed brother to show their respect and to honor his memory.

A Lodge provides Masonic Funeral Services for their members in good standing or may on occasion be called upon to perform a courtesy service for a brother whose mother Lodge is outside of the immediate area, outside the state, or a local Lodge which does not have the personnel to put on said service. If a courtesy service is provided for a brother from outside the state of Florida, the Lodge performing the courtesy must insure through Grand Lodge Channels that the brother was in good standing at the time of his passing and prepare a written report to be sent to the mother lodge upon completion of the service.

All Funeral Services are conducted as a "Called" communication, that is to say, it is just the same as putting on any one of the Degrees. The current officers of the lodge are the responsible party for putting on the funeral service.

When our country was first founded, and Freemasonry took a foothold, the Lodges were most often located near the center of town. When a brother died, the officers and members of the Lodge would meet at the Masonic Temple on the day of the funeral, open the Lodge which was called for the purpose of providing solemn services for a departed brother. Once the Lodge was opened in due form the officers and members would form in procession and process to the home, church, funeral home or cemetery where the Worshipful Master (or his designee) would perform the funeral service with the assistance of his officers, and the Lodge members who were Master Masons would form around the casket in a semi-circle behind the officers. A Lodge in procession is to be under the same discipline as in the Lodge room. Only Master Masons are permitted in the processions and funeral services.

Once the Officers completed the Masonic Service the procession would return to the Lodge room and the Lodge would be closed in due form.

As cities expanded and it became less convenient to process a long distance to a home, church, funeral home or cemetery, most Grand Jurisdictions allowed the creation of Annual Funeral Lodges which would open at the beginning of the year and stay open through the end of the year for the purpose of providing Masonic Funeral Services without the need for members to physically come to the Lodge, open it in due form, and then go to the site of the service. In Florida Lodges are permitted to open an Annual Funeral Lodge for the ensuing year. At Gulf Beach Lodge we do this at Installation. On our Installation Day the outgoing Worshipful Master reconvenes the Funeral Lodge for that year prior to Installation and has the Secretary read the names of the departed brothers. The Funeral Lodge is then closed in due form and in the usual manner. After the Lodge is closed, it is re-opened after Installation in the Master Mason Degree by the newly Installed Worshipful Master for the purpose of providing solemn services for our departed brothers during the ensuing year, and will be continually opened throughout the year. The Great Lights and Lesser Lights do NOT get closed as the Lodge is continually open for funerals.

Should a Lodge decide not to open a funeral Lodge and a member dies, the officers would necessarily have to come to the Lodge and open it specifically for the funeral service, then report to the funeral site after which they would have to come back and close the Lodge.

The proper clothing for a funeral service is a black or dark suit with no pins or insignia, black necktie, white gloves, white apron, a band of black crepe around the left arm, above the elbow, and a sprig of acacia on the lapel. The Master's gavel, Wardens columns, Marshal's baton and all rods should be trimmed with black crepe. While the body is laying in state in the coffin there should be a white apron placed on the coffin, not the body.

There are different types of services that can be provided for a departed brother and are all explained in the Blue Monitor. There is a Funeral at a Church or Home; a Funeral at Graveside; a Short Burial Service; a Funeral Service when the Body is cremated; a Service in the Lodge Room; a Chapel Service; a Masonic Memorial Service. No matter which type of service is rendered the Secretary takes full minutes, just as any other called communication and reads them at the next stated communication. The Worshipful Master presents the widow with a widow's certificate signed by the Grand Master, a widow's pin and card. If there are no Masonic Services the Master delivers the certificate in person to the widow at her home. Our widows stay on our mailing list and we honor them annually with a widow's dinner and provide for them as specified in our obligation.

The funeral Lodge is not to be confused with a Lodge of Sorrow. A Lodge of sorrow is a separate ceremony that honors the memory of our departed brothers and not related to the interment of a body or cremains. Lodges of sorrow are optional ceremonies that are planned and scheduled by the Master of the Lodge during his term in office. Lodges of Sorrow are open ceremonies and public attendance is encouraged.

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