

Memorial Service Planning Checklist

Triumphant Cross Lutheran Church • Dothan, AL

When a loved one dies, you are suddenly asked to make dozens of decisions — dates, venues, music, readings — while carrying grief that has no bottom. This checklist separates the logistics from the deeply personal choices so that each can be given the attention it deserves.

1. The Administrative Foundation

- Set the date and location — coordinate with funeral home, church, or venue
- Designate a family liaison to handle vendor calls
- Estimate headcount for seating, programs, and reception catering

2. Building the Order of Service

Traditional Flow: Prelude → Welcome → Liturgy/Readings → Eulogy → Reflection → Postlude

- Confirm order of service with officiant/pastor
- Lutheran/Liturgical: plan for baptismal theology, funeral pall, restricted eulogies
- Secular/Celebration of Life: plan for open-mic sharing and personalized elements
- Print final order of service for bulletin

3. Selecting the Music and Hymns

- Choose opening hymn
- Choose middle reflection hymn or song
- Choose recessional hymn
- Coordinate with musician or organist
- Test venue sound system
- Decide whether to print lyrics in bulletin

Common choices: “Amazing Grace,” “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” “How Great Thou Art”

4. Curating Scriptures, Readings & Poetry

- Select an Old Testament passage
- Select a Psalm
- Select a New Testament / Gospel reading
- Consider secular readings or poetry for non-religious services
- Assign readers — provide printed scripts in large font

5. The Tributes and Eulogy

- Confirm who will speak (pastor, family, friends)
- Set time limits — main eulogy: 5–10 minutes
- Plan any open-mic sharing for the reception (not the formal service)

6. Printed Program & Keepsakes

- Full name, dates of birth and passing
- Complete order of service text
- Thank-you note to attendees
- Gather 30–50 photos for slideshow or memory board

Scripture Themes for the Service

Organizing scripture around a single theme gives the service a unified voice. Choose one set below, or mix readings across themes.

✝ Theme of Faith — Trust in the Unseen

Old Testament: [Isaiah 40:29-31](#)

“He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless... those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles...”

Psalms: [Psalm 46:1-3](#)

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change...”

New Testament: [Hebrews 11:1, 12:1-2](#)

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen... let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.”

✝ Theme of Hope — The Promise of Resurrection

Old Testament: [Lamentations 3:22-26](#)

“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness...”

Psalms: [Psalm 121](#)

“I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth...”

New Testament: [John 14:1-3](#)

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places... I go to prepare a place for you.”

✝ Theme of Love — An Unbreakable Bond

Old Testament: [Song of Solomon 8:6-7](#)

“Set me as a seal upon your heart... for love is strong as death... Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.”

Psalms: [Psalm 103:13-18](#)

“As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him... the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.”

New Testament: [Romans 8:38-39](#)

“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers... nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Theme of Grace — Peace and Redemption

Old Testament: [Isaiah 25:6-9](#)

“Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces... Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us... let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

Psalm: [Psalm 23](#)

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

New Testament: [Ephesians 2:4-8](#)

“God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.”

A Personal Note

Nothing is more comforting than a well-chosen scripture passage. For my sister's memorial, we chose the “Love” theme but with some of her favorite verses.

Psalm: [Psalm 139:7-18 — Love is Inescapable](#)

“Where can I go from your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.”

New Testament: [1 Corinthians 13:4-13 — Love is Eternal](#)

“Love is patient, love is kind... Love never ends... And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”

The Gospel: [John 3:16-17 — Love is Redemptive](#)

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”