



## MASONIC FUNERAL SERVICE

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*(Optional Graveside instructions given in italicized parentheses)*

**WORSHIPFUL MASTER:** Friends and Brethren, the solemn notes that betoken the dissolution of this earthly tabernacle have again alarmed our outer door, and the spirit of Brother \_\_\_\_\_ has been removed to the land whither our fathers have gone before us.

From time immemorial it has been the custom among the Fraternity of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, at the request of a brother or his family, to accompany his remains to the place of interment and there to deposit them with our ceremonies. In conformity with this usage, and at the request of our deceased Brother whose memory we cherish and whose loss we now deplore, we have assembled in the character of Master Masons to offer up to his memory before the world this tribute of our affection, thereby demonstrating the sincerity of our esteem for him and our steady attachment to the principles of Masonry.

*(Again we are called to assemble among the habitations of the dead, to view the narrow house prepared for all the living. Here around us and in other such places as this, in that peace which the world cannot give, sleep the unnumbered dead. The gentle zephyrs fan their verdant covering, they heed it not; sunshine and storm pass over them, they are not disturbed, stones and lettered monuments symbolize the affections of surviving friends, yet no sound proceeds from them, save that silent but thrilling admonition, "Seek ye the narrow path and the straight gate that leads to eternal life.")*

Again we are called upon to consider the uncertainty of human life, the immutable certainty of death, and the vanity of all human pursuits. Decrepitude and decay are written upon every living thing. The cradle and the coffin stand side by side and it is a melancholy truth that as soon as we begin to live, that moment also, we begin to die. What an eloquent commentary is here exhibited upon the instability of every human pursuit and how touchingly does it echo the sad sentiment of the great preacher who wrote for our perpetual warning the immortal text: "Vanity of vanities. All is vanity."

But our present meeting and proceedings will have been in vain and useless if they do not excite in us serious reflections and strengthen our resolutions of amendment. Be warned my brethren by the passing scene and

postpone no longer the all important concern of preparing for eternity – for that great change which awaits all the living – when the pleasures of this world shall be but poison to our lips and happy reflections from a well spent life shall afford sweet consolation. Thus shall our hopes be not frustrated nor we be hurried unprepared into the presence of that Great Judge to whom the secrets of every life are known. Let us maintain with greater assiduity the dignified character of our profession. May our hope be as bright as the mysteries that shall be hereafter revealed and may our charity be as boundless as the wants of our fellow creatures.

And when at last, having faithfully performed all the great duties we owe to God, to our families, to our friends, and to ourselves, we shall stand in the eternal presence of the Master, may our lives pass such an inspection that it may be given to each of us to eat of the “hidden manna” and to receive the white stone with a new name written that shall insure perpetual and indescribable happiness at His right hand.

- May we be true and faithful, and live and die in love with our Brethren.
- May we profess what is good, and always act agreeable to our profession.
- May the Lord bless us and keep us and may all our good intentions be crowned with success.
- Glory to God in the highest; on earth, peace, goodwill to men.

For as much as it has pleased Almighty God to remove from this world the soul of our deceased Brother, we commit (*prepare*) his body to (*for*) the grave.

Earth to earth **(The Senior Warden places a handful of flower petals on the casket).**

Ashes to ashes (The Senior Warden places another handful of petals on the casket).

And dust to dust **(The Senior Warden places yet another handful of petals on the casket).**

The Secretary will now present, read, and deposit the roll on the casket **(the Secretary reads the Masonic History and places it on the casket).**

Friends and Brother, we bid thee a long farewell. Thou art at rest from thy labors, may it be in peace!

**(Holds up an apron)** The lambskin or white apron is an emblem of innocence and the badge of a Mason. It is more ancient than the Golden Fleece or Roman Eagle, more honorable than the Star and Garter. This emblem I now deposit on the casket of our deceased Brother **(places it on the casket).**

By it we are reminded of that purity of life and rectitude of conduct so essentially necessary to our gaining admission into the Celestial Lodge above where the Supreme Architect of the Universe presides.

**(All Brethren around the casket who have one hold up an evergreen twig, acacia if possible)** But this evergreen, representing that which once designated the temporary resting place of the illustrious dead, is an emblem of our faith and the immortality of the soul. By it we are reminded of our high and glorious destiny beyond the grave and that there dwell in these frail tenements of clay, deathless immortal spirits, over which death hath no power and the grave no victory.

\* This emblem (I / we) now deposit on the casket of our deceased Brother **(all who have them place the sprigs on the casket).**

**\* LANGUAGE FOR MEMORIAL SERVICE**

This emblem (I / we) now deposit in remembrance of our deceased Brother **(all who have them place the sprigs on an appropriately solemn area).**

**\* LANGUAGE FOR CREMATION**

This emblem (I / we) now deposit with the remains of our deceased Brother **(all who have them place the sprigs near the receptacle).**

For as we have committed (*prepared*) his body to (*for*) the grave, we commend his spirit to God who gave it and we cherish his memory in our hearts.

Brethren, the last offices we pay to the dead are in vain except as they constitute lessons to the living. Our beloved Brother who lies before us is unaware of our sorrows and our ceremonies. It matters not now to him whether two or three have gathered around to perform his funeral ritual or that hundreds have assembled with the insignia of the Craft to deposit him in his final resting place. It is of little moment whether the wild winds chant his requiem or it be accompanied with rare and costly music and the minstrelsy of many voices. He has gone to accomplish the destiny of the human race, his body resting in the profound slumber of the grave, to be dissolved once more into the earth whence it came.

What then are the externals of human dignity – power of wealth, dreams of ambition, pride of intellect, or the charms of beauty – when nature has paid her last debt?

In the grave all ranks are leveled, all distinctions vanish. While we drop a sympathetic tear in remembrance of our departed Brother, let us cast around his foibles, whatever they may have been, the broad mantle of Masonic charity; and pay to his memory the commendation that his virtues deserve.

And now my Brethren, let us ponder well the lessons of this hour: we are born to die, but is this the end of Man the aspiring hope of all good Masons? No, blessed be God, we pause not at our first or second steps, but true to our principles look forward for further light. As the embers of mortality are feebly glimmering in the sockets of existence, the Holy Bible, that Great Light in Masonry, removes the dark shroud, draws aside the sable curtain of the tomb, and bids hope and joy to arouse us. It cheers our drooping spirits and points beyond the bounds of time to the breaking light of a resurrection morn, and bids us turn our eyes of hope and confidence to the opening scenes of Eternity.

Then, my Brethren, let us so live that when our dissolution draws nigh, the entrance to that dark valley and shadow of death may be illuminated by the consciousness of a well spent life and the hope of a blessed immortality and may Almighty God in His infinite goodness extend His mercy toward him and all of us.

With those of the immediate family and friends, we can only sincerely, deeply, and most affectionately sympathize in this your hour of bereavement.

Soft and safe to you, my Brother, be this (*your*) earthly bed; bright and glorious be your rising from it, fragrant be the acacia's bloom which there (*here*) shall flourish. May the earliest buds of spring unfold their beauties o'er your resting place and there (*here*) may the fragrance of the summer's last rose linger longest. Though the cold blasts of autumn may lay them in the dust and for a time destroy the loveliness of their existence, yet the destruction is not final, and in the springtime they shall bloom again. So, in the bright morning of the world's resurrection, your mortal frame now laid low in the dust by the chilling blasts of death, shall spring again into newness of life and unfold in immortal beauty in realms beyond the skies.

Until then, dear Brother, fare thee well. Fare thee well.

Let us pray, Brother Chaplain (**an appropriate prayer is presented by the Chaplain, Worshipful Master, or member of the Clergy**).

**ALL:** So mote it be.

# The Masonic Funeral (Memorial) Service of the State of Oklahoma

## Rubric

The Worshipful Master must decide whether to open an Emergent Lodge or to hold a Special Meeting in order to conduct each Masonic funeral service. Should the Worshipful Master decide to hold a Special Meeting, it must be closed that same day.

The Ritual for opening an Emergent Lodge: open on the Master Mason's degree. Dispense with business in the Master Mason degree for the purpose of opening an Emergent Lodge. Declare \_\_\_\_\_ Lodge # \_\_\_\_\_ open on an Emergent Lodge (for the term of the Worshipful Master). Resume on the Master Mason's degree. Close the Lodge of Master Masons. Thereafter if the Lodge wishes to keep an Emergent Lodge open it will be necessary to close the Emergent Lodge for the present year and to open an Emergent Lodge for the upcoming year.

The minutes of an Emergent Lodge should be kept aside and entered into the minutes book at the time the Emergent Lodge is opened with a brief entry that it was opened on (date) for the purposes of conducting Masonic Funeral Services during the term of the sitting Worshipful Master. Additional notations should be made each time the Lodge is convened to show the date, place, purpose, name of deceased Brother, attendance figures, and other relevant information. The final notation is made when the Emergent Lodge is called to labor and closed at the end of the term of the Worshipful Master. The minutes of this Lodge are read and approved by the Lodge subsequent to its closing in the same manner as are the minutes of any other communications.

An Emergent Lodge is considered to be convened when the members gather at the location requested by the family – be it the church, chapel, graveside, or the funeral home – to conduct a funeral service for a deceased Brother. The Worshipful Master should make certain that all necessary items (Masonic history, Holy Bible, aprons, sprigs of evergreen) are brought to the location of the service.

Only Masons in good standing may be interred with the formalities of the Fraternity, and only at their request or the request of a near relative or friend, and only Master Masons may conduct such ceremonies. The Masonic Funeral Service may be conducted by any constituent Lodge at the request of the Lodge having jurisdiction.

Proper Masonic Dress is a clean white apron, white gloves and a sprig of evergreen for each officer participating in the service. The Chaplain should also have a copy of the Holy Bible. Dress aprons, officers' aprons, or Grand Lodge aprons are not appropriate except when the service is being conducted by the Grand Lodge.

Having received notice of the death of a Brother, the Worshipful Master should immediately confer with the family, ascertain their wishes, and explain to them that the Masonic Funeral Service has been adapted for use in the church or chapel for the comfort and convenience of the family and also in the event of inclement weather.

Since we are usually dealing with family members who may or may not be familiar with our Fraternity (and some of whom may be elderly) their comfort should be one of our greatest concerns.

The Secretary must prepare three copies of the Masonic history on which should be inscribed the date and place of birth; dates of initiation, passing and raising; date of affiliation; and date of death, also that the funeral services were conducted by the Lodge and any other matter which may be deemed appropriate or of special interest to the Lodge. One copy is to be deposited in the casket, one copy is to be given to the nearest relative, and one copy is to be retained by the Lodge.

Changing times and funeral customs have made many of our Masonic funeral customs and regulations impractical. For example: family wishes, weather conditions, and other emergencies create situations requiring modifications of the ceremony not provided for in the previous regulations.

The Worshipful Master (or his representative) in charge of the Masonic Funeral Service shall have the right to make such changes as may be appropriate to fit the particular occasion and in keeping with the wishes of our deceased Brother, such as conferring the Masonic service prior to the minister's service. We should remember that the Masonic service is conducted for the comfort and consolation of the family and should be delivered in the order requested.

It is appropriate, after the Masonic service is concluded, for the Worshipful Master to invite the attending minister to pronounce the final benediction. Should the minister not wish to give the final benediction, the benediction should be given by the Chaplain or the Worshipful Master.

Any other members of our fraternity wishing to assist are equally welcome. They will station themselves behind the casket (if possible) or at each end of the casket behind the officers conducting the service. Only the officers participating in the service will deposit the evergreen on the casket.

Any qualified Brother may conduct the funeral service, but the Worshipful Master is ultimately responsible for assuring the quality and dignity of this public ceremony.

The minimum number of Brethren participating in the service should be four, representing the Worshipful Master, Senior Warden, Junior Warden, Secretary, and Chaplain. As much representation as possible by the Lodge is recommended.

The Worshipful Master and Secretary will position themselves at the head of the casket, the Worshipful Master at the corner of the casket nearest the congregation. The Chaplain and the Senior Warden will take positions at the foot of the casket, the Chaplain at the corner of the casket nearest the congregation.

The Worshipful Master (or his representative) is in charge of conducting the service. The Senior Warden deposits flower petals on the casket when indicated by the Worshipful Master. The Secretary presents, reads, and deposits the Masonic history on the casket. The Chaplain holds the Holy Bible and may also present the closing prayer.

It is recommended that the Worshipful Master wear two aprons, the top apron to be removed at the time the Secretary performs his duties. It will therefore be readily available when the Worshipful Master resumes his language.

Since the apron used in the ceremony is retrieved for future use, it is recommended that the apron have magnetic tape sewn on the back to aid in keeping the apron in the casket during the service, especially graveside where the wind can sometimes become a factor.

If the Grand Master, Deputy Grand Master, or either of the Grand Wardens attends a Masonic Funeral or Memorial Service, he will preside over and conduct the ceremonies unless he desires otherwise.

Funeral services for Grand or Past Grand Lodge officers must be conducted by the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge. At the death of such an officer, it is the duty of the Worshipful Master of the Lodge of which the deceased was a member or in whose jurisdiction he may have resided, to notify the Most Worshipful Grand Master and the Grand Secretary by emergency means.