



END-OF-LIFE CARE  
AND  
FUNERAL PLANNING

For Eastern Orthodox Church  
Parishioners and Their Families

Prepared by

The Funeral Team  
Annunciation Orthodox Church  
Milwaukie, Oregon

*“As soon as someone has reposed, immediately call or inform a priest, so he can read the “Prayers on the Departure of the Soul,” which are appointed to be read over all Orthodox Christians after death. Try, if possible, to have the funeral in church and to have the Psalter read over the deceased until the funeral. The funeral need not be performed elaborately, but most definitely it should be complete, without abbreviations; think at this time not of yourself and your convenience, but of the deceased, with whom you are parting forever... Let us take care for those who departed into the other world before us, in order to do for them all that we can, remembering that  
“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”*

Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco, 1965

*“...a dead body is an honorable thing, worthy of reverence and respect. We do not tear apart, eviscerate, drain, or burn things we love and cherish. This is the first principle underlying Orthodox burial practices, and was first sanctioned by the disciples of the Lord Who lovingly prepared, anointed, and laid away His precious body, showing such respect and love that the faithful women did not fear to return on the third day to complete their task...”*

*This means that we should avoid unnecessary embalming, autopsy (except when required by law), and the use of make-up on the body of one whom we have loved.*

*...although we must honor the body, carefully planting it in the earth like the grain of wheat mentioned in Scripture (John 12:24), we should not lavish money on costly caskets and other arrangements but give alms and focus our prayers on the soul of the departed one, asking God’s mercy and forgiveness. This is the responsibility not only of the clergy and singers, but of the family as well...”*

Excerpted from Orthodox America, “What about...Funerals?”

Dear Parishioners and Family,

This packet is intended for your use in planning your funeral or that of a loved one. It includes information regarding Advance Directives, guidelines for making end-of-life decisions and the steps to follow in preparing for burial within Eastern Orthodox tradition.

There is much for a person or family to do to prepare for death and burial. In addition to receiving counsel from one's priest, it is imperative that adults prepare for their repose so that they may receive health care and a funeral in accordance with their wishes and Orthodox Christian belief. Also, specific instructions for making health care decisions, known as Advance Directives, should be completed. It is very important to designate a legal Power of Attorney for all business and financial matters. When one's family is not Orthodox, the desire for an Orthodox funeral should be specified in writing with copies of these instructions given to the parish priest, family members and attorney. Once completed, a file with all of the documents that have been prepared including but not limited to Advance Directives, funeral plans, Will, and any other estate related forms, should be kept in a place that may be easily accessed by your family or designated trustee at the time of death. This file should include telephone numbers of your parish priest, health care provider, attorney, family members, and the funeral home and cemetery you have chosen to provide burial services.

Church of the Annunciation Funeral Team  
January 2019

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## Section 1: Guidelines for Families

### A. What You May Expect from Clergy

Your parish priest will help you and your family in the following ways:

1. Assisting you and your family in preparing Advance Directives and instructions for your funeral. Members of the Funeral Team are available to assist you with these preparations as well. Cremation is not allowed in the Orthodox Church. There are numerous optional practices outlined throughout this document, especially regarding the preparation of the body for burial.
2. Providing the customary Orthodox services prior to death. Note to family: If an Orthodox member of your family becomes gravely ill, it is imperative that a priest be called to minister to them and provide Holy Communion while they are conscious. Hospital chaplains may be available to assist you in locating an Orthodox priest, should you be away from your parish.
3. Reading the appropriate prayers at the time of death. This may be done in any setting such as in a home, hospital, or care center.
4. Conducting the funeral service: Orthodox funerals should be conducted in churches, not in funeral homes. The parish priest will schedule the funeral and interment with the family. Because the funeral service may last up to two hours, it is necessary to consider cemetery closing times when scheduling the service. Funerals and burials conducted on a weekend are more expensive. When you have decided upon the date and time for the service, your priest will contact those who will be assisting him:
  - a. Clergy
  - b. Readers
  - c. Choir
  - d. Funeral Team

5. Providing the church registrar with information regarding the deceased, including:
  - a. Date of death
  - b. Cause of death
  - c. Place of burial and date
  - d. Officiating priest at:
    1. Receipt of last Confession and Holy Communion
    2. Funeral and burial

Note: The family is asked to complete an information sheet for the deceased. Once returned, it will be placed in the parish safe with the copy of the cemetery deed. This information is helpful if there are questions that arise regarding an individual's death and burial and for genealogical research.

6. Advising/Communicating with family and Funeral Team

Clergy:

Fr. Matthew Tate: 503.381.3588 (cell)

Church of the Annunciation: 503.659.3646

Funeral Team Leaders:

Julia Leyes and Bethany Banke

## B. Plans You and Your Family Will Need to Make

There are many things to be done to prepare for the death and burial of an individual. The following guidelines are intended to serve both as guidelines and as a check-off list for families in making these plans:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Completing Advance Directives, POLST form, End of Life Care instructions prior to illness or death. Copies of the Advance Directives and funeral instructions should also be given to the clergy, family member acting as the Medical Power of Attorney, and personal physician.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Contacting a Funeral Director to purchase a funeral plan and clarify arrangements for care of the deceased. (see Section 3, Working with Funeral Directors). It may be helpful to have the Rector, Parish Nurse or a member of the Funeral Team accompany you or your family when making these arrangements. (See What You Need to Know About Funeral Expenses in the Resources section)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Purchasing a casket. The parish has caskets that are available for purchase. A Funeral Team member will have the information needed by you or your family. In the event of an unanticipated death, a casket may be obtained at the church; however, arrangements will need to be made for its replacement at the time the funeral is being planned. Caskets may be purchased at the funeral home as well. There is no casket design requirement for an Orthodox funeral. It should be noted that an individual's size may require a larger casket and grave liner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Choosing a burial site (see Section 4, Cemeteries). The parish has a section in the Adams Cemetery, Molalla, OR. Parishioners are able to obtain a site by contacting a member of the Funeral Team and by making payment arrangements with the parish Office Manager.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Planning for the preparation of the body for burial. An optional practice is for family and church members (rather than the Funeral Director) to prepare the body for burial. If your family would like to observe this practice, a Funeral Team member will assist you. You will



need to designate several persons (men for men, women for women) to go to the funeral home for this purpose (see Section 5, Care of the Body After Death). Again, this is an optional practice and not required for Orthodox burial.

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Paperwork:

- + Copies of the Certificate of Death (through the Funeral Director) for notification of death required by insurance companies, banks, and similar institutions.
- + An obituary or funeral notice. Obituaries may be placed in the newspaper or on the funeral director's web page. The costs for death notices and obituaries vary.
- + Disposition of the Body form required by the State Funeral Board. The Funeral Team member assisting the family will see that this form is properly signed and filed with the County and the Adams Cemetery recorder.

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. Choosing six pallbearers.

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. Preparing Koliva for the Panikhida (recipe included in Section 8.)  
Koliva is the boiled wheat dish customarily served after the priest says the memorial service known as a Panikhida.

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. Purchasing the following, which are optional: + Flowers

- + Attendance book for the funeral service
- + Memorial cards (usually prepared by the family but is an optional service of the Funeral Director).

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. Planning a "Mercy Meal" or reception following the funeral. It is customary for a family to arrange for this meal, either at the church following the interment or at a local restaurant or home. Members of the church Hospitality Committee are available to set out the meal provided by the family, thereby offering them time to greet mourners.

\_\_\_\_\_ 11. Choosing a monument (see Section 7, Monuments).

\_\_\_\_\_ 12. Establishing payment for all costs associated with death and burial.  
Note: pre-payment for Funeral Director services is advisable and may allow a family to minimize costs. Costs associated with the reception or “Mercy Meal” will be determined between the family and Hospitality Committee.

\_\_\_\_\_ 13. Collecting the items that will be needed from the family when preparing the deceased for burial:

- + Icon of the deceased’s name saint or of Christ
- + Undergarments/socks
- + Clothing for burial, usually church attire
- + Baptismal cross necklace
- + Burial Crown (optional, Funeral Team will provide)
- + Keepsakes to place in the casket; e.g. prayer book, prayer rope, baptismal candle, etc. (optional)
- + Herbs or rose petals to sprinkle in the casket (optional)
- + Optional: Baptismal robe and/or burial shroud. If the baptismal robe is not available, a burial shroud may be purchased from the church bookstore. Omega Funeral and Cremation Service has a small supply of these as well.

Note: Section 6 includes the above list and provides instructions for preparing the body.

## C. What You May Expect from Church Members

Your clergy and church community are available and expect to assist you and your family in making funeral preparations. Your parish priest will contact the Parish Nurse or Funeral Team to assist you and provide referrals as requested. Members of the Funeral Team are experienced and able to assist the Rector, you, and your family at any point in the process.

1. Assist in the preparation of the body for burial as requested by the family or Funeral Team.
2. Assist the family in serving a “Mercy Meal” if requested. Arrangements for this should be made by the family with the Hospitality Committee. Specific instructions for the meal or reception should be clarified between the family and Hospitality Committee.

Please do not hesitate to request help from your brothers and sisters in Christ.

## Section 2: Guidelines for Advance Directives

In addition to discussing this with your parish priest, you must consider carefully the kind of end-of-life care you wish and what funeral directions you would like to leave for your family. Numerous documents are available to assist you in making these very important decisions. When properly completed, these documents are binding, meaning your family and physicians are obligated to follow them.

There is an abundance of information available on Advance Directives, also called Living Wills. Most states have their own form. Oregon's form is available in Resources and from one's health care provider. This link will provide you with a summary of the form and its intended purpose:

<https://www.osbar.org/search.html?addsearch=advance+directives>

There are three sections in this document: *Appointment of Health Care Representative*, *Health Care Instructions*, and *Declaration of Witnesses*. Each section is fully explained. It is legally binding when properly completed and the person doing it is over 18 years of age. There are special instructions for completing this form by persons with mental illness. Copies of the completed document should be distributed to your priest, family, attorney, and physician. This form does not require notarization or attorney assistance.

The Orthodox Church in America has made available a document entitled "*A Gift for My Loved Ones*" that is like the State's Advance Directive and can replace it provided a financial power of attorney has been designated elsewhere. The entire document is available under the Resources section and may be found on the OCA website at [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org). It includes specific directions for care of the body after death and requires notarization.

For persons who are very elderly or have terminal illnesses, it is advisable to complete a POLST form with their physician or nurse practitioner. POLST is an acronym for "*Physician Orders for LifeSustaining Treatment*". Most states have adopted this form to help

individuals avoid unwanted medical care from emergency professionals in the event of a life threatening event. This form is a signed doctor's order, specifically directing medical personnel to follow the person's wishes in a life and death situation. It is binding for emergency medical technicians and hospital personnel, but it must be displayed or otherwise readily accessible in times of crisis or at admission to a hospital or care facility. Without such a document, medical personnel are obligated to undertake full resuscitative measures regardless of a person's reputed desires or illness.

Please bear in mind that should you be unexpectedly hospitalized, copies of these documents must be made available to the hospital staff to ensure that your wishes are carried out. The POLST document is especially crucial in this circumstance. The HIPAA law (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) prevents providers from including relatives in decision making unless specifically named as persons chosen by the individual to speak on their behalf should they become incapacitated. A designated Medical Power of Attorney may speak for the patient if properly designated in the person's Advance Directive.

Completion of the parish form, "*Instructions for My End-of-Life Care*", available as a resource in both English and Russian, is advisable for those individuals whose family is not Orthodox to make clear their funeral instructions. While the parish form is not a legal document it may be considered binding if filed with one's attorney and physician. A copy of the form should be included with your file containing your completed advance directives and POLST form and other end-of-life documents. Cremation is not allowed in the Orthodox church if an Orthodox funeral is desired. For those who are not Oregon residents, copies of your state's Advance Directives may be found on this website:  
<http://www.caringinfo.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=1>.

Your health care provider will have POLST documents that are recognized in the state in which you reside. It is very helpful to have a list of policies and other financial information that will be needed to settle your estate. Be sure your representative has access to your computer files with necessary passwords and knowledge of those insurance and finance companies who will need to be informed of your passing.

Be sure your family can find all of your funeral documents and that your POLST is posted on your refrigerator or in your bedroom.

Unexpected death or catastrophic illness is a crisis for everyone.

**Question:** If you died today, would your loved ones know how to access vital information and documents, and would they be able to settle your affairs without added stress and grief?

Do they know the passwords to your cell phone, computer and files/accounts?

Does your spouse/partner have joint ownership of your home and bank accounts?

Do they know about all of your insurance policies and investment accounts?

Are your deeds, policies and bank accounts in both names?

Do they know where your assets are and how to manage them?

Could they find your instructions for end-of-life care and your funeral?

Would they have access to the funds needed to provide for your funeral and burial?

If your answer to any of these questions is, “No”, you have work to do!

## Section 3: Working with Funeral Directors

Finding a funeral service that will allow you to observe Orthodox funeral customs can prove challenging. Members of the clergy and Funeral Team are familiar with local directors who are flexible and familiar with Orthodox burial practices. When funeral plans are purchased in advance of a death, it is helpful to have a Funeral Team member or family representative during the negotiations. At the outset, it is important to learn if the director you are interviewing will accommodate Orthodox traditional burial practices, such as not embalming the body, family/church preparation of the body (if desired), family provision of the casket, and private transport of the casket to the church and cemetery. Each service offered by a funeral home increases the costs associated with burial. Normally, all that is necessary for the preservation of a body prior to burial is that it be refrigerated unless burial is to occur within 24 hours of death. Embalming is not mandatory in Oregon, and in most states provisions are made for specific religious customs. If the Funeral Director is insistent about embalming, consider calling other providers. Cremation is not an option for those Orthodox Christians desiring an Orthodox funeral and burial.

It is helpful at the funeral to provide maps to the cemetery and explain that there will not be an escort. If a police escort is desired, scheduling of the funeral and procession to the cemetery will need to be planned with the officiating priest and the police personnel. The funeral director can also facilitate this at some cost to the family.

Section 6 of this packet includes specific instructions for preparing the body for burial at a funeral home for those families wishing to participate in this aspect of burial. It is helpful to review these instructions with the funeral director when negotiating their services. It is possible to prepare the body in the home, following death and before the body is picked up by the funeral director. A family member will need to schedule a meeting with the funeral director within 48 hours of their picking up the body if no previous arrangements have been made.

Note: The parish has worked closely with Omega Funeral and Cremation Service, [www.omegaservices.com](http://www.omegaservices.com).

## Section 4: Cemeteries

When there is no church cemetery or family plot in which to be buried, it is necessary to choose a site from among those in the city in which you wish to be interred. Municipal cemeteries may be the most economical. Your funeral director is available to assist you in choosing a burial site.

Parishioners may contact a member of the Funeral Team to purchase plots in the Church of the Annunciation section at Adams Cemetery in Molalla, Oregon. Securing sites requires a \$25 down payment and regular payments thereafter until the plot is paid in full. A deed will be issued to the purchaser. It is important to know that this purchase is only for the plot and does not include opening and closing of the grave at the time of burial.

When planning a funeral and burial consider the following:

1. Find out when the cemetery closes. Many close as early as three o'clock in the afternoon. Keeping the cemetery open after closing times may incur additional costs. It is wise to allow extra time between the end of the funeral service and the interment.
2. Will a concrete liner and/or a vault be required for the grave? Minimal requirements in most municipalities include a concrete liner. If the family plans to move the grave at a later date, a vault must be purchased. Adams Cemetery requires a concrete liner. Some cemeteries allow green burials. These are not allowed at Adams Cemetery.
3. Opening and closing the grave. Customarily, Orthodox burials include lowering the casket into the grave followed by members of the funeral party adding flowers and shovels full of dirt over it at the conclusion of the graveside service. You may have to be very insistent regarding your desire for this practice. Your Rector and Funeral Director may be able to assist you in making this request.



It is a good idea to ask the cemetery to provide extra shovels for this purpose or for the family to bring some. A temporary marker will be placed on the grave after interment.

## Section 5: Monuments

When making arrangements with a cemetery it is helpful to inquire about restrictions on monuments. Some cemeteries require flat monuments; others allow upright designs. Monuments may be moved with a burial vault.

The Church of the Annunciation section in Adams Cemetery follows the guidelines of the cemetery board regarding monuments. Their instructions may be found in the Resources section.

Adams Cemetery allows any kind of monument, provided it is set in a concrete base that allows unobstructed mowing around it.

The Funeral Team must be contacted when a monument is ready for placement, as it requires locating and marking the site for the company doing the installation.

## Section 6: Care of the Body after Death

In some parishes it is customary for relatives and friends to prepare the deceased for burial. It is an optional practice that has been offered and utilized by families at the Church of the Annunciation with the help of the Funeral Team for over two decades. The practice is a loving act that helps those who are grieving. Families who have prepared their loved ones have found it to be deeply moving and a great help to them in the grieving process.

Preparation may be done in the home after death or in the funeral home. Depending upon the place and circumstance of the death, it is rarely not allowable. Again, cremation is not allowed if the deceased desires an Orthodox funeral and burial.

Instructions follow for those families desiring to participate in preparing their loved one for burial. Body preparation is carried out in a prayerful and loving manner and guided by members of the Funeral Team. Families may ask as many individuals as they would like to help. Those hesitant to touch the body may choose to read the Psalms instead. The preparations may take from one to two hours and may be done just prior to the beginning of the funeral. Generally, the funeral home can assist the family by providing a private room for bathing and dressing of the body and placement in the casket. Preparation of a body for burial does not include aspects of after care that involve packing or manipulation of the deceased. Funeral directors will see to any specific care that is within their scope of practice. The family needs to provide burial clothing as well as the customary cross, baptismal candle (if available) and icon.

### Readers:

With incense and taper lit, say a prayer for the deceased and those preparing the body. Then, the reader starts reading the Psalms by beginning with Psalms 118-119 and then chanting from the first until the process is complete and the body is laid in the casket. If possible, stay with the body, reading Psalms, until the transport vehicle arrives.

Those preparing the body:

Fill a bowl with warm water. Two or three people wash the body under the direction of the Funeral Team member. Gloves may be used. Start by washing the hair, carefully lifting the head and rinsing. As you are quietly and prayerfully working, drape the body with towels to preserve modesty. When washing is completed, dry the body and hair.

With hands, the body is lightly anointed with olive oil mixed with myrrh. Excess oil is wiped off with cloths.

Dress the body with undergarments and the clothing provided by the family with the Baptismal robe or shroud (if desired) placed over the torso and feet. The robe may be cut to fit the body and then stitched on after placement. Cutting the garment up the back allows for better arrangement when the body is placed in the casket. Padding is used over the body if there are places under the garment that need to be filled in.

Place the body in the casket. Most caskets are lined, however you may wish to line it with a quilt or blanket. A small pillow may be placed beneath the head. Secure the burial crown across the forehead. Arrange the necklace, icon, prayer book, herbs etc., around the upper torso and head. It is helpful to stitch the cross onto the clothing so that it remains in place when the body is moved and during the funeral.

#### A. Checklist for Those Preparing the Body:

- Psalter
- Incense
- Icon of Christ or patron saint (to be placed in the casket)
- Tapers & matches
- Olive oil
- Myrrh oil to add to the olive oil (may be purchased at health food stores where essential oils are sold)
- 2-4 wash cloths

- 3-4 large towels
- Twin sized sheet
- Bar soap
- Shampoo
- Brush/comb, nail clippers, tweezers
- Curling iron (optional), extension cord
- Large stainless steel bowl
- 2-4 pairs of rubber gloves
- Large plastic bag for soiled items and wet towels
- Scissors
- Needle & thread (helps to secure the cross when the body is placed in the casket)
- Padding (if clothing needs to be filled in)
- Undergarments/socks
- Formal (church) attire or the clothing provided by the family
- Baptismal robe or burial shroud if robe is not available (optional)
- Optional: Burial Crown: a 1½-2 inch-wide white band of cloth or ribbon for the forehead, long enough to go around the head and be secured in back with a tie or hair clips. A deesis and the words “Holy, Holy, Holy” are usually embroidered or printed on the middle of the band. A member of the Funeral Team will provide one if the family wants to use it. (It is traditional for mourners to kiss the crown as they give their farewell to the deceased.)
- Baptismal cross (worn at all times by Orthodox Christians)
- Icon (e.g. patron saint, Theotokos, Christ), baptismal candle
- Keepsakes to place in the casket might include a prayer book, prayer rope, photos, etc.
- Herbs or rose petals to sprinkle in the casket
- Casket (this may be delivered in advance to the funeral home unless one is purchased there)

## B. At the Funeral

The pallbearers carry the casket, feet first, into the church. They place it in the center of the church on the appropriate stand or wooden

bier, with feet facing the altar. Except in certain circumstances the coffin lid is opened. Those who prepared the body should check the placement of items in the casket, as they may have been disturbed during transport. The lid should remain open until the priest closes it during the funeral service.

At the conclusion of the service, the pallbearers carry the casket to the car or hearse. At the cemetery, they carry it to the gravesite.

## Section 7: Meaning of the Memorial Services of the Church by St. Simeon of Thessalonica

### Boiled Wheat (Kutiya or Koliva)

The boiled wheat is offered because man is also a seed and like a fruit from the earth. Like a seed he is now placed in the earth, and he will be raised up and blossom forth again by the power of God. [Recipe is in Section 8]

### Third Day Service

The third day service is celebrated for the reason that the reposed one received his being through the Trinity, and having been translated, he hopes to be changed back to the ancient beauty in which man was first made before the Fall, or one better [at the Resurrection].

### Ninth Day Service

The ninth day service is celebrated that his spirit may dwell together with the holy spirits, the angels, since it is immaterial as is their nature. They are ranked according to nine orders, and in three trinities they proclaim and praise God in Trinity.

### Fortieth Day Service

The fortieth day service is celebrated in the memory of the Savior's Ascension forty days after His Resurrection and that the reposed one, when he is resurrected, may be taken up in the clouds to meet the Judge, Our Savior and Master, and thus be with Him forever. (I Thessalonians 4:17).

### Third, Sixth, Ninth and Twelfth Month Services

Now the third, sixth and ninth months are also celebrated to proclaim the Trinity, the God of all and His glory, and on behalf of the deceased. For by the Trinity a man is fashioned, and when his is loosed from the body he returns to Him, and by the Trinity he hopes for the Resurrection. And thus, we also perform memorials at the end of the [first] year because we proclaim the Trinity, and the year is divided into four trinities [of three months each]. Additionally, the end of the year is celebrated because it is the consummation, and our God the Trinity is the Life of all and the cause

of being, and He shall be the restoration of all and the renewal of human nature.

#### Annual Memorial Services for the Dead

Each year [thereafter] the relatives observe the memorial of the departed to demonstrate that he lives and is immortal of soul and he shall be restored when the Creator raises up his body. And the offering of boiled wheat [Kutiya] bears witness that, as Christ died according to the flesh and was raised up and lives, that we too, as St. Paul says, 'shall be raised up and live in Him.'

Note: These are guidelines and not necessarily the practice of every Orthodox Church.



## Section 8: Koliva Recipe

*“Truly, truly, I say unto you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” John 12:24*

### Ingredients:

1 ½ cups uncooked wheat berries

14 oz. sliced almonds

16 oz. Raisins

Honey to taste

Cinnamon to taste (not much is required)

Whole almonds to decorate the top, may be yogurt coated

Boil wheat berries in 6 cups of water for two hours. Add water as necessary during cooking.

Drain well after cooking. Place in a large mixing bowl and add sliced almonds, raisins, honey and cinnamon. Mix thoroughly.

Place in serving dish. Make a cross over the top with the whole almonds. Decorations may vary among different ethnic traditions.

Serves approximately 12 people.

Recipe courtesy of Ms. Lois Herring, Church of the Annunciation, Milwaukie, Oregon.

*Koliva is a traditional dish offered to those attending the Panikhida service. The spelling is sometimes “Kutia” or “Kolyva” depending on the ethnicity of the recipe and traditional practice being honored. It is served in the sanctuary. Families may choose to make it themselves or the Funeral Team will ask a parishioner to do it on their behalf.*