New York Buddhist Church

**FUNERAL GUIDELINES**



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*It is difficult to know what to do when a loved one has passed away. We hope this Guide will assist you in this situation.*

*Please feel free to call the church office if you have any questions or concerns. The office can arrange for you to meet with the Minister. You may also contact the minister directly.*

**This guide contains:** *procedures for planning a funeral, religious services and their meaning, and a planning worksheet.*

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**Introduction**

While this Guide is intended to help arrange a funeral upon a death, funeral plans can also be made well in advance. In many ways, planning in advance can be highly beneficial. It allows you or a loved one to decide exactly how you would like any funeral or memorial service to be conducted and it substantially eases the burden that may be placed on family members or loved ones at what is often an emotional and stressful time.

You can make funeral or memorial service plans, even if the need is not imminent. You can also make an appointment to speak with the resident minister to ask more detailed questions and obtain additional information.

# WHAT TO DO RIGHT AFTER DEATH

**Contact your doctor or coroner**. As soon as death occurs, you should contact your doctor or coroner. This will allow the body to be released to the funeral home.

If a death occurs at home, you should immediately contact your doctor, hospice nurse or coroner who will issue a medical certificate of death. This will allow the body to be released to the funeral home. In New York State, a funeral director is required to oversee burials, cremations and other funeral arrangements.

**Contact your minister or the Church** office as soon as possible. If you desire a “*Makuragyo*” (Pillow Service) just before death or immediately after death, the Minister should be informed of your request. The Makuragyo Service would usually be with family members and close friends and may be held at home, hospital or at the Funeral Home. This service is not as common as in the past, but it is one of the traditional services.

If you are unable to make the funeral arrangements, you may select some family member or close friend to act on behalf of the family to make the funeral arrangements. This is critical in order to have one contact that the

funeral home and the church can call for instructions.

# Speaking with the Minister

Contact the minister or church office as soon as possible. At the time of this first contact, let the minister know if you would like a *Makura-gyo*. It is the first service conducted following death, usually performed at the death bed to ease the pain and comfort the immediate family and friends. It is a traditional service, although not as commonly performed today as in the past. If there are reasons that such a service cannot be performed at the bedside (e.g., all family members cannot attend quickly enough), you can discuss other arrangements with the minister and the service can be performed at the funeral home or mortuary.

The following information should be provided to the minister upon this first contact:

* If the family or friends would like to have the New York Buddhist Church assist in any way to help plan a respectful funeral service, the name and relevant contact information for the family member/person who will be communicating and making decisions with the minister with respect to funeral arrangements. Appointing this person is highly desirable in order to avoid confusion and misunderstanding. A meeting (or phone calls) will be scheduled to plan the service
* Exact location of death
* Full name of the deceased
* Deceased’s date of birth, date of death, immediate family members (living and deceased), existing *Homyo* (Buddhist name), if available
* Any other details of the funeral service that may have already been planned, e.g., contact information of participants such as the chairperson, ushers, receptionist(s), etc.

**Contact a funeral home.** The New York Buddhist Church can refer you to a funeral service we have worked with. You may use them or a funeral home of your choice. The funeral home will make arrangements to pick up the body, and,depending on the funeral home, have various services you can select.

# Speaking with the Funeral Home

Once the funeral home is selected, they will work with the doctor or coroner, and minister to make the arrangements. The funeral home will need the following information.

1. Exact spelling of full, legal name.

1. Birth date and birth place
2. Social Security number
3. Address
4. Length of residence
5. Name of spouse
6. Name and birth place of father
7. Maiden name and birthplace of mother
8. Cause of death
9. Place of burial or cremation

The funeral home should offer information on the following:

1. Preparation of body
2. Casket or Urn selection
3. Physical facilities for funeral and final service
4. Funeral cortege and cars
5. Cremation or burial arrangements
6. Obituary notices

They may also assist in the following services:

1. Obtaining the Death Certificate
2. Providing a cremation certificate in the event of cremation.
3. Social Security death benefits
4. Insurance claims
5. Veterans and union benefits

The funeral home and the minister may also ask you if there were any wishes of the deceased, feelings of the family members, cost considerations, accessibility of the final resting place. This information is important for both the funeral home and the minister to choose the proper arrangements.

# Contact relatives and close friends

Contact relatives by phone, in person or by electronic means (email or text) as quickly as circumstances allow.

# TYPES OF FUNERAL SERVICES :

Funeral services are not only a means of providing comfort, but also serve as an expression of how Jodo Shinshu teachings interpret this event. The funeral service is intended to guide our attention towards the infinite life of the deceased. The funeral service is a beginning, not an end. It expresses our gratitude for this life and reminds us that through the Buddha’s Name, Namo Amida Butsu, we shall awaken to the infinite life of our loved ones; the life that has never abandoned or forsaken us; the life that embraces us beyond time and space.

***Important note:*** *Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, special considerations will need to be taken relating to sanitation protocols, social distancing, mask wearing, limiting chanting and gatha singing, amongst other things. In lieu of in person services, virtual streaming services may be arranged. These considerations can be discussed with the Minister.*

Funeral Service (with casket) or Sogi-Memorial (with urn).When meeting with the minister, he will ask you what type of service you would like.

This includes the following:

* Funeral or Memorial Conference
* Printing of program
* Funeral or Memorial Service including presentation of *Homyo* (BuddhistDharma name)

**Funeral Service with casket**.

The service is held either at the funeral home or church. A meeting with the minister must take place before the service in order to go over all important aspects of it. [To prepare for this service, a meeting with the minister will need to be arranged. The considerations needed are…\**(see worksheet at end of this document to clarify and aid you with this).*] Preliminary decisions that should be made are:

1. Determine if the funeral will be at the church or funeral home.
2. If visitation is requested, plan on when and where this will take place.
3. If cremation is requested, planning for this should also be discussed.
4. Decide for a chain call or announcement will be required.

**Funeral Service with an urn (Sogi-Memorial Service)**

This service also can be held either at funeral home or church. The process in planning this service is similar to the Funeral Service with a Casket, but with a Sogi Memorial, a Hearse will not be required.

If the funeral is held at the temple Hondo: the following should be considered:

**Officiant:** The resident minister of the New York Buddhist Church shall officiate all services conducted at the temple.

**Guest ministers**: If the family wishes to request the participation of a guest minister, please make that request through the resident minister. Protocol requires the invitation to be made in this manner. Any duties to be performed shall be assigned by the resident minister and the family will be responsible for any additional honoraria, transportation and lodging costs for the guest minister.

**Music**: Music during the Funeral Service is optional. If the family does request to have music, the temple may assist in finding a musician who is familiar with our funeral procedures and customs. In the event you wish to select your own, please be sure that the musician is familiar with Buddhist funerals, customs and music.

**Chairperson**: Should be familiar with the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist tradition. The Chairperson facilitates the funeral program. Words and messages by the Chairperson should be brief and to the point. The Chairperson need not be a family member, relative or close friend.

**Words of Remembrance:** If you would like to have special words of remembrance, designate the person or persons to speak.

**Flowers:** It is the family’s responsibility to arrange for and log all flowers received. Flowers for the altar will be provided by the church. If the family would like to make a contribution towards the altar flowers, they can make a separate donation labeled altar flowers. The church can also make suggestions as to appropriate arrangements. All flowers must be removed from the church following the service. No flowers should be left at the church.

**Photographs**: If you would like to display photographs, please bring them in an appropriate format or frame to facilitate display on the altar or other areas.

**Refreshments after the Service:** If the Service is held at the church, any refreshments served is at the discretion of the family. If the family wishes to arrange refreshments at the church in the annex building, it should coordinate delivery and cleanup with a representative(s) of the Sangha who has volunteered to assist in this regard. The family will be responsible for handling delivery and cleanup of any refreshments. Each funeral home may have different policies on refreshments.

**Arrival Times:** Family members and service participants should arrive at least 45 minutes before the service.

# Family Memorial Service (*Hoji*)

In Buddhism, there are additional services that help the family to cope with the death and remember their loved ones. Traditionally, following the main service, there is a schedule of follow-up services.

1. **The 7th Day Service** (this is sometimes conducted with the family and close friends immediately after the main Funeral service.) This is usually done at temple, but may be arranged with minister.
2. **The first Obon service after the death**, the family would participate in the **Hatsubon** (literally first Obon) service. The family is encouraged to participate in the Obon Odori or Obon dancing to honor the departed.
3. **Monthly Memorial Services** (Shotsuki Hoyo)are normally held at the church on the first Sunday of the month and families are encouraged to attend the service on the anniversary of the death for sutra chanting and to make offerings dedicated to loved ones who passed during that month.
4. In addition to the yearly memorial service, the **Special Memorial**

**Services** are traditionally observed on the 7th day, 49th day, 100th day, 1st, 3rd, 7th, 13th, 17th, 25th, 33rd, and 50th years.

*The practice of counting years in the Asian system begins with the year of death being the first year so the second year memorial would be one year after the death. These services can be observed at the monthly memorial service or if the family wishes to have a private service with family and close friends, they may request a* ***Hoji Service*** *and they can schedule arrangements with the minister or Temple office*.

# AFTER THE SERVICE: ARRANGEMENTS

**Acknowledgments**. The family should acknowledge those who participated in the funeral service. The listing below indicates customary types of acknowledgments and to whom they are made. Specific amounts are at the family’s discretion but the church can provide guidelines and suggestions. Acknowledgments should be made as soon as possible after the funeral service.

# Church or other organizations – monetary

# Pianist, Custodian – monetary

# Pallbearers, ushers, etc. – card

* **Minister** – monetary
* **Chairperson** – gift or card
* **Koden** (monetary gifts from friends) – card and/or stamps
* **Flowers** – card

# Email or letters – card or email

# Finances. *The following are customary expenses incurred when a family member passes away.*

1. Casket or urn
2. Plot, niche, vault or temple *Nokotsudo* (for storing the urn)
3. Burial fee
4. Marker or headstone
5. Upkeep of final resting place (yearly Eitaikyo contribution)
6. Death Certificate
7. Funeral home charges (body preparation, other services)
8. Acknowledgments
9. Legal paperwork and advice
10. Ministerial fees
11. Church fees

**FUNERAL PLANNING WORKSHEET**

**Name:**

**Date of Birth: Date of Rest:**

**Address:**

**Spouse:**

**Children & Grandchildren:**

**Contact person:**

**Name:**

**Phone #:**

**Email:**

**Relationship:**

**Brief history of deceased:**

**SAMPLE FUNERAL PROGRAM**

# Chairperson Pianist

(Sample) **Order of Service:**

**Kansho** (Tolling of the Bell)

**Kanzen Dokkyo** (Sutra Chant in front of Casket or Urn): by Minister

**Homyo** (Presentation of Buddhist Name): by Minister

**Opening Words**: byChairperson

**Sutra Chanting** “Shoshinge”: by Minister and Congregation

**Incense Offering** (by Family, Relatives, Pallbearers and Guests)

# Incense Offering (by Representatives)

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# Eulogy

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Gobunsho** and **Dharma Talk by Minister**    **Gatha** (family remains seated)  **Words of Appreciation**    **Closing Remarks** by Chairperson  **FINANCIAL GUIDELINES**: *The following Guidelines are* ***suggested*** *amounts. These figures provide a starting point for discussion with the Minister while reviewing service arrangements with family or representative). We recognize that financial conditions may alter a family’s ability to contribute these suggested amounts.*    **Makuragyo** (bedside pillow service)  $250 Orei/Appreciation to Minister    **Family Viewing Service** (at Funeral Home)  $250 Orei/Appreciation to Minister   Funeral Service (with casket) or Sogi-Memorial (with urn), includes: Funeral or Memorial Planning Conference  Printing of program  Funeral or Memorial Service  Presentation of Homyo (Buddhist Name) If held at the Church\*(please ask Minister or Church Treasurer about guidelines) $ 500 Donation to Church  $ 500 Orei/Appreciation to Minister  $ 50 Orei/ to Pianist (if requested)  $ 50 Custodial Service If held at Funeral Home $250 Donation to Church  $500 Orei/Appreciation to Minister    Donations to the church, and orei to minister, pianist and custodian should each be placed in separate envelopes and given to the minister or church office after the Service.   Hoji Service If the family wishes to have a Hoji (family memorial service), please make arrangements with the Minister.  $100 Donation to Church  $100 Orei/Appreciation to Minister   Nokotsudo (Columbarium) If you wish to place your family member’s ashes at the temple, please contact Rev. Earl Ikeda to discuss arrangements.  \*It is customary to make a yearly donation of $250 for each family member to the Eitaikyo Fund for perpetual care. **This covers all church expenses related to the upkeep of the final resting place.**  \*\*If you wish to place ashes at the Columbarium at Cypress Hills Cemetery, please see the Minister to discuss the timing and donation for opening and placing ashes within. | | |  |  |
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