New York Buddhist Church

FUNERAL GUIDELINES



332 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10025

T: 212-678-0305

email: nybc332@gmail.com

web: newyorkbuddhistchurch.org

*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.*

**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** if death occurs at home or otherwise outside a hospital or care facility. As soon as death occurs, you should immediately contact your hospice nurse, doctor or coroner. He or she will record the official time of death which will allow the body to be released to the funeral home. If death occurs at a hospital or care facility, the facility will have procedures in place which 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.** If you desire a “*Makuragyo*” (Pillow Sutra) just before death or immediately after death, the Minister should be informed as soon as possible. The Makuragyo Service is usually attended by 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.

*\*Please contact us at 212-678-0305 or by email at nybc332@gmail.com*

If you are unable personally to make the funeral arrangements, you may select a family member or close friend to act on behalf of the family to make the funeral arrangements. It is critical for the funeral home and the church to have one designated contact person who provides instructions and is responsible for making decisions.

# 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 *Makuragyo*. 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. 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 would like to have the New York Buddhist Church assist in helping to plan the funeral service, please provide the name and contact information to the minister of the person who will be communicating and making decisions with respect to funeral arrangements. Appointing this person is necessary to avoid confusion and misunderstanding. A virtual, telephonic or in-person meeting 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 (information required may vary from state to state).**

1. Exact spelling of full, legal name of the deceased
2. Birth date and birthplace
3. Social Security number
4. Address
5. Names and addresses of immediate next of kin (surviving spouse and children)
6. Name of father
7. Maiden name of mother
8. Cause of death
9. Whether a burial or cremation are planned
10. 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 about any wishes of the deceased family members, cost considerations, accessibility of the final resting place. This information is important for both the funeral home and the minister in order 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, and whether you desire a private, by invitation only or one that is announced and may be attended by any family members and friends, with/without reception following.

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 if a chain call or announcement will be required.

The matters requiring consideration also includes the following:

* Funeral or Memorial conference
* Order of program for Funeral or Memorial Service including presentation of *Homyo* (BuddhistDharma name)
* Printing of program

If the service is to be held at a funeral home or another location away from the New York Buddhist Church, the family is responsible for the minister’s transportation in both directions.

**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 to go over logistics of this type of service and other important aspects unique to this service.

Preliminary decisions that should be made are:

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

This type of service also can be held either at the funeral home or at church. Because of family logistical considerations, this type is frequently selected by Sangha members. While it is best to have the Sogi-Memorial as soon as possible, it is often scheduled within 49 days after death.

For either type of service, if the funeral is held in the church Hondo: the following should be considered:

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

**Guest ministers**: If the family wishes a guest minister to participate in the service, that request should be made to the church minister who will invite the guest minister to participate; protocol requires the invitation be made in this manner. Any duties to be performed shall be assigned by the NYBC minister. The family will be responsible for any additional honoraria, transportation and lodging for the guest minister.

**Music**: Music during the Funeral Service is optional. If the family wishes to have music, the family may make appropriate arrangements.

**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 in all flowers received. Flowers for the altar table are provided by the church. White flowers without thorns are preferred for Buddhist funerals. If the family wishes to contribute towards the altar flowers, please make a separate donation labeled “altar flowers.” The church can make suggestions about 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.

**Reception and Refreshments after the Service:** If the reception following the service is held at the church’s annex building, the family is responsible for arranging for appropriate refreshments, delivery, and cleanup with a representative(s) of the Sangha and volunteers. The family is responsible for handling delivery and cleanup of all 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 through the grieving process and to remember their loved ones. Traditionally, the following services succeed the main service.

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 the church but may be arranged elsewhere 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.

**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. It is customary to make a donation to the church at this service.

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 schedule arrangements with the minister*.

# AFTER THE SERVICE: ARRANGEMENTS Acknowledgments: the family should acknowledge those who participated in the funeral service. The listing below indicates customary types of acknowledgments. Specific amounts are at the family’s discretion. A*cknowledgments 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

1. Chairperson – gift or card
2. Koden (monetary gifts from friends) – card enclosing book of stamps
3. Flowers – card
4. 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
  3. Burial fee
  4. Marker or headstone
  5. Upkeep of final resting place (yearly Eitaikyo contribution)
  6. Death Certificate
  7. Funeral home (body preparation, other services) or cremation certificate
  8. Acknowledgments
  9. Legal paperwork and advice
  10. Ministerial fees
  11. Church fees

**FUNERAL PLANNING WORKSHEET**

**Name:**

**Date of Birth: Date and Time of Death:**

**Address:**

**Spouse:**

**Children & Grandchildren:**

**Contact person: Relationship:**

**Name:**

**Phone #:**

**Email:**

**Brief history of deceased:**

**SAMPLE FUNERAL PROGRAM**

**Officiant:** [Minister] **Date:**

# Chairperson Pianist

***Order of Service:*** *(sample)*

**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

**Sanbujo** (Three Respectful Callings) followed by **Hyobyakumon** (dedication)

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

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

# Incense Offering (by Representatives)

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# Eulogy and/or Remembrances

***FINANCIAL GUIDELINES:*** *Please refer to separate sheet outlining financial guidelines. You are welcome to discuss these arrangements with the ministers.*