

# **My Service of Hope and Remembrance**



## **LOVE That Lasts**

### **Legacy Planning Guide**

A Gift of Faith, Clarity, and Love for My Family and Church Community

Elk River Lutheran Church - ELCA  
November 2025 Update

## A Letter from Pastor Nathan & Pastor Anne

Dear Friends,

We have walked with many families in times of loss, and we have seen how meaningful—and how challenging—it can be to plan a service for a loved one. Again and again, we hear families say, “*I wish I knew what they wanted*” or “*I hope we’re choosing something that honors them.*”

Planning your own funeral or memorial service is not a morbid task. It is a faithful gift—an act of love, clarity, and witness. By taking time to reflect on what matters most to you—your faith, your story, your values—you are leaving a final message that proclaims hope to those who will gather.

This guide is meant to help you:

- Reflect on the legacy of faith and love you want to leave.
- Make choices about scripture, music, and message that reflect your story.
- Ease the burden on your family by communicating your wishes clearly.
- Proclaim, even in death, the good news of Jesus Christ and the promise of resurrection.

Thank you for taking this faithful step. In doing so, you are offering a final act of love—creating a legacy that will bring comfort, clarity, and hope to those you care about. May this process bring you peace, and may your plans bear witness to the **LOVE That Lasts** and the promise of God’s eternal care.

With love and gratitude,  
– Pastor Nathan & Pastor Anne

## Section 1: Purpose & Tone of My Service

What do I hope those who gather at my service will experience or feel?

*(Please check as many as apply and/or add your own words.)*

- Comfort and peace in God's promises
- Joy and celebration of life
- Honesty and authenticity about life's struggles
- Gratitude for the gift of community and relationships
- Hope in the resurrection and eternal life
- Encouragement to live with purpose, faith, and compassion

## Burial, Cremation, or Other Wishes

- I prefer burial
- I prefer cremation
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Type of Service

- Funeral service (with body present)
- Memorial service (no body present)
- I leave this decision to my family

## In my own words, I hope people leave my service...

Write a sentence or two that describes the "vibe," message, or spiritual impact you desire:

## Section 2: Congregational Music

Music is a powerful expression of faith, memory, and emotion. It can bring comfort, tell your story, and remind your loved ones of the hope we share. Congregational singing is especially meaningful because it unites the community in one voice—supporting one another in both grief and faith.

### **Please choose 3–4 pieces of music for your service.**

We recommend that at least two of these be congregational hymns or songs (typically for the processional and recessional). Singing together during these moments helps shift focus from the movement of the family to the presence of the whole community, standing together in love and faith from beginning to end.

You may also include special music—either sung live by a soloist or played as recorded music. These selections can be deeply personal and meaningful, and may reflect your faith, your story, or a favorite message of hope.

### **As you consider your selections:**

- You may choose from the list provided, or add your own music that has been meaningful in your life.
- Please review lyrics carefully to be sure the tone reflects what you want to communicate about your life, faith, and the message of hope you want to leave.
- Our regular musicians (Lisa Griffin, accompanist, and Taylor Quinn, Director of Music Ministry) typically lead hymns and offer special music. *If you have family members or close friends you would like to sing or play, please indicate that below.*

Congregational Song #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Congregational Song #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Congregational Song #3: \_\_\_\_\_

Congregational Song #4: \_\_\_\_\_

Optional Additional Song: \_\_\_\_\_

Optional Additional Song: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Music or Solo Details (optional):

Is there someone you'd like to sing or play a specific song?

*List names or options below.*

## **Examples of Hymns from our red ELW (Evangelical Lutheran Worship) Hymnal**

### *Hymn number and name*

779	Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound
856	How Great Thou Art
732	Borning Cry
838	Beautiful Savior
781	Children of the Heavenly Father
773	Precious Lord, Take My Hand
---	The Old Rugged Cross
824	This Is My Father's World
742	What a Friend We Have in Jesus
595:	Jesus Loves Me!
787	On Eagle's Wings
623	Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me
597	My Hope is Built on Nothing Less
660	Lift High the Cross
422	For All the Saints
661	I Love To Tell the Story
592	Just As I Am, Without One Plea
629	Abide with Me
765	Lord of All Hopefulness
789	Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us
890	Battle Hymn of the Republic

### **Contemporary Music Ideas (secular & religious):**

- "Go Rest High on That Mountain", Vince Gill
- "Supermarket Flowers", Ed Sheeran
- "Scars in Heaven", Casting Crowns
- "How Great Thou Art", Carrie Underwood
- "10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)"
- "Hallelujah" Leonard Cohen
- "Remember When" Alan Jackson
- "What A Wonderful World", Louis Armstrong
- "Tears in Heaven", Eric Clapton

### **Section 3: Scripture Readings**

Please choose 2-4 scripture readings for the service. Many people find it helpful to choose one Psalm and one Gospel reading (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John).

We've included a list of scripture readings broken into these three categories (Gospel Readings, Psalms, and Other Scripture Readings). Each reading lists the book of the Bible, chapter and verses, then a brief summary, and finally, the whole reading. This list has been created to be a helpful guide in choosing scripture readings, please feel free to explore other readings not on this list.

Also consider if there are family members or close friends you would like to ask to read.

#### **Scripture I would like included (And why it's meaningful to me):**

1.) \_\_\_\_\_  
Why it's meaningful to me:

2.) \_\_\_\_\_  
Why it's meaningful to me:

3.) \_\_\_\_\_  
Why it's meaningful to me:

4.) \_\_\_\_\_  
Why it's meaningful to me:

#### **Who I would like to read:**

## **Scripture Readings:**

### **Gospel Readings**

#### **John 14:1-6 (*Jesus prepares a place for us*)**

1 [Jesus said,] Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. 4 And you know the way to the place where I am going." 5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

#### **John 3:16-17 (*God so loves the world*)**

16 "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.

17 "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

#### **Matthew 11:28-30 (*Jesus says, come to me*)**

28 "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

#### **John 6:35-40 (*Jesus says, "I am the bread of life"*)**

35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

36 But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.

37 Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away;

38 for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.

39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

40 This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day."

#### **John 12:23-26 (*Farming image: Only when a grain of wheat dies does it bear fruit*)**

23 Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

#### **Mark 10:14-16 (*Jesus says, "Let the children come."*)**

“But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, ‘Let The little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.’ And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.”

### Psalms

#### **Psalm 23 (*The Lord is my shepherd*)**

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.  
2 He makes me lie down in green pastures;  
he leads me beside still waters;  
3 he restores my soul.  
He leads me in right paths  
for his name's sake.  
4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley,  
I fear no evil;  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff—  
they comfort me.  
5 You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.  
6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
my whole life long.

#### **Psalm 121 (*The Lord watches over us*)**

1 I lift up my eyes to the hills—  
from where will my help come?  
2 My help comes from the Lord,  
who made heaven and earth.  
3 He will not let your foot be moved;  
he who keeps you will not slumber.  
4 He who keeps Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.  
5 The Lord is your keeper;  
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.  
6 The sun shall not strike you by day,  
nor the moon by night.  
7 The Lord will keep you from all evil;  
he will keep your life.  
8 The Lord will keep  
your going out and your coming in

from this time on and forevermore.

**Psalm 27:1-9 (*The Lord is my light and my salvation*)**

1 The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When evildoers assail me to devour my flesh— my adversaries and foes— they shall stumble and fall.

3 Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war rise up against me, yet I will be confident.

4 One thing I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.

5 For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will set me high on a rock.

6 Now my head is lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the Lord.

7 Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me!

8 "Come," my heart says, "seek his face!" Your face, Lord, do I seek.

9 Do not hide your face from me. Do not turn your servant away in anger, you who have been my help. Do not cast me off, do not forsake me, O God of my salvation!

**Other Scripture Readings**

**Romans 3:3-11 (*Dead and alive in Christ*)**

3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

4 Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

6 We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.

7 For whoever has died is freed from sin.

8 But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.

10 The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

**Revelation 21:1-6 (*New heaven and new earth*)**

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them;

they will be his peoples,  
and God himself will be with them;  
4 he will wipe every tear from their eyes.  
Death will be no more;  
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,  
for the first things have passed away.”

5 And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.” 6 Then he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.

**II Timothy 4:6-8 (*I have fought the good fight, finished the race, kept the faith*)**

6 As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

**Romans 8:31-35,37-39 (*Nothing can separate us from the love of God*)**

31 What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?  
32 He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?  
33 Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.  
34 Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.  
35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?  
37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.  
38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,  
39 nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Romans 14:7-9 (*Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's*)**

7 We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. 8 If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

**Hebrews 12:1-2 (*We are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses.*)**

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us,  
2 looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

**I Corinthians 15:55-57 (*The sting of death, but victory in Christ*)**

“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-14 (*For everything there is a season...*)**

1 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:  
2 a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;  
3 a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;  
4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
5 a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;  
6 a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away;  
7 a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
8 a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.  
9 What gain have the workers from their toil?  
10 I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with.  
11 He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.  
12 I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live;  
13 moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil.  
14 I know that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has done this, so that all should stand in awe before him.

**Isaiah 43:1-5 (*Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.*)**

1 But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.  
2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.  
3 For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.  
4 Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life.  
5 Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you;

**Ephesians 2:4-10 (*By grace we have been saved through faith*)**

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

6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,  
7 so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—

9not the result of works, so that no one may boast.

10 For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

**Philippians 3:20-21 (*Our citizenship is in heaven*)**

“But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.”

## **Section 4: Speakers & Participants**

This section helps ensure your story is shared with the voice, tone, and people who reflect your wishes. Please share as much or as little as you feel comfortable—these are guided options, not requirements.

### **Primary Speaker or Eulogist(s)**

Who would you like to speak about your life and faith? You may list specific names, relationships, or general preferences (e.g., “one family member and one close friend”).

**Preferred speaker(s)/eulogist(s):**

### **Tone or Guidance for Speakers (optional)**

This helps those sharing to honor your voice. Examples include: light-hearted with humor, focused on faith, story-driven, simple and sincere, hopeful, joyful celebration, etc.

**Tone or guidance I prefer:**

### **Confidential Note (optional)**

Is there anyone you would prefer not to speak publicly at your service?  
(This will be held in confidence and used only to honor your wishes.)

**Private note:**

### **Pastoral Leadership**

At Elk River Lutheran, for members' services, both Pastor Nathan and Pastor Anne typically participate and share leadership in the service. Usually, one pastor preaches while the other assists.

If you have a preference for who preaches—or if there is another pastor or clergy member you would like to lead or be involved—you are welcome to indicate that below. *Please know your preference will be honored with care and without offense.*

**Preferred pastor/clergy to preach or participate:**

## **Section 5: Life Reflections**

This section provides meaningful guidance for your pastor and loved ones in telling your story accurately and beautifully.

### **My Life Story (bullet points or highlights):**

*Use the space below to write freely or jot down bullet points.*

I was born in...

My family and relationships...

Key chapters or callings in my life...

What brought me joy or purpose...

How I experienced God's presence...

### **Values & Legacy**

What matters most to me:

One lesson or message I hope people remember from my life:

A message I would like my loved ones to hear (optional):

## **Section 6: Obituary Information**

Providing these details can be a tremendous gift to your family.

### **Personal Details**

Full name (and preferred name/nickname):

Date and place of birth:

Baptism Date & Location

Confirmation Date & Location

Parents' names (if desired):

Spouse/Partner:

Children/Grandchildren:

### **Story & Life Details**

Primary occupation(s) or calling(s):

Military or civic service:

Church or community involvement:

Significant hobbies, passions, or traditions:

**Final Details**

I would like memorial gifts to be given to:

A favorite scripture, hymn lyric, or quote I would like included in my obituary or memorial folder:

## Section 7: Practical Arrangements

These details help your loved ones know your wishes and ensure your plans are carried out with care. If you have already made arrangements, please indicate below. If you have not yet made plans, you can use this section to document your preferences.

### Funeral Home Arrangements

Have you made pre-planned arrangements with a funeral home?

- Yes, I have pre-planned (not prepaid)
- Yes, I have prepaid
- No, I have not made any arrangements

Funeral Home Name (if applicable):

Contact Person / Phone Number:

### Final Resting Place

Please share any plans already in place or your wishes for burial, cremation, or placement of ashes.

Please indicate your plans or wishes for your physical remains. You may choose one of the options below or use the space provided to describe your preferences.

**Burial (casket or cremated remains)**

- I already own a burial plot

Cemetery name/location: \_\_\_\_\_

Plot number (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

- I wish to be buried at the following cemetery (not yet purchased):

\_\_\_\_\_

*Note: Burial plots may be used for either a casket or an urn containing cremated remains.*

**Cremation**

Please indicate what you would like done with your cremated remains:

**Placement Options:**

- Interred in a burial plot

Cemetery/location: \_\_\_\_\_

- Placed in a columbarium niche

Columbarium/location (church or cemetery): \_\_\_\_\_

Niche number (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

- Kept by family (in an urn)

- Scattered at the following location (if legally permitted):

\_\_\_\_\_

**Additional wishes or instructions:**

**Military Honors (for veterans)**

If you have served in the military, you may be eligible for military funeral honors. These typically include a flag presentation and the playing of “Taps,” and can be arranged through the funeral home or the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Some individuals choose to include these honors as part of their final witness; others prefer a simpler service without military elements—either is a faithful choice.

**I am a veteran:**  Yes  No

If yes, please complete the following:

Branch of service: \_\_\_\_\_

Rank at discharge: \_\_\_\_\_

*Branch and rank will be required to schedule military honors. Please note this information can be found on your DD-214 (discharge paperwork).*

**My preference regarding military honors:**

- I would like full military honors included if possible  
 I prefer not to include military honors in my service  
 I am unsure—please explore options on my behalf

**Where I prefer military honors to be conducted (if included):**

- At the church service
- At the cemetery
- At a national cemetery (honors are typically conducted there)

**Have arrangements already been made through the VA or funeral home?**

- Yes
- No, but I would like these arrangements to be made if eligible

**Notes or additional wishes:**

**Reception Preferences**

What kind of gathering would you prefer following the service?

- Coffee and bars/light refreshments
- Light lunch (sandwiches, salad, etc.)
- Full meal (including a hot entrée)
- I leave this decision to my family

**Additional notes (optional):**

## **Section 8: People to Notify**

In times of loss, it can be difficult for family members to remember everyone who should be contacted. This section allows you to ensure no one is unintentionally overlooked—especially friends, extended family, neighbors, or important people from different times in your life who may not otherwise hear the news.

**Please list anyone you would like to be notified of your passing and the details of your service.**

Name -- Relationship -- Contact Info (Phone/Email/Address)

## Section 9: Final Reflection

Please complete the following sentence in your own words. This is the heart or message you hope people will take away from your service.

**“At my service, I want people to know...”**

*(This could be a message of faith, love, gratitude, hope, or encouragement—whatever is most important to you.)*

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## **Congratulations! You finished this holy and important work.**

What happens next?

- We invite you to bring this document to the church so we can make a copy to keep on file.
  - Then we would also recommend that you let your family know you have done this work. You are welcome to share it with them now or simply let them know where these final arrangements are and that there is also a copy at the church.
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## **Closing Prayer**

**“Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit. I trust in your promises of resurrection and everlasting life. May my life and my death be a witness to your love. Amen.”**

