

PLANNING FOR THE JOURNEY

Good morning. I'm Rich Guzik representing the Stewardship Ministry. This year you have received your annual giving statement with a message from the Stewardship ministry, you have heard temple talks regarding stewardship from several members of the congregation, and the February newsletter had an article about "Planning for the Journey." Today I will talk a little bit about some of the planning that you may wish to consider for your journey.

Let me start with a reading from

2 Kings 20:1-6

1 About this time King Hezekiah became sick and almost died. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to see him and said to him, "The Lord tells you that you are to put everything in order, because you will not recover. Get ready to die." **2** Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed: **3** "Remember, Lord, that I have served you faithfully and loyally and that I have always tried to do what you wanted me to." And he began to cry bitterly. **4** Isaiah left the king, but before he had passed through the central courtyard of the palace the Lord told him **5** to go back to Hezekiah, ruler of the Lord's people, and say to him, "I, the Lord, the God of your ancestor David, have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will heal you, and in three days you will go to the Temple. **6** I will let you live fifteen years longer. I will rescue you and this city Jerusalem from the emperor of Assyria. I will defend this city, for the sake of my own honor and because of the promise I made to my servant David."

King Hezekiah was given a warning to prepare for his death, but was given a reprieve of 15 years. I don't know if each of us will be treated like King Hezekiah and be told exactly when our journey here on earth ends and our journey in God's heavenly kingdom will begin, so it would be prudent to prepare for the end of one journey and the beginning of the other. As Christians, we have been in constant preparation for entering the kingdom of God, so today we will concentrate on preparing for the end of our journey here on earth.

The following is an excerpt from the MetroLuthern.org written by Russell Tokheim, February 2009:

"Although most people don't relish thinking about their own mortality, making plans for one's own funeral or memorial service is one of the kindest things a person can do for his/her survivors. There is some interest among Lutheran congregations in the Twin Cities area in encouraging members to have a plan on file with their church.

Such planning is also a way through scripture and music selections to have one more witness to one's faith.

Normandale Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Edina, Minnesota, is one local Lutheran congregation that has held planning workshops for members to plan their own services. Its second funeral workshop in November was sponsored by the church's Center for Healing and Wholeness, a ministry to seniors. This workshop was titled "Sleeper Awake! (Planning Your Service of Resurrection)."

Meredith Holm, parish nurse and wife of Senior Pastor David Holm, said, "My husband has said many times that planning a meaningful funeral or memorial service would be so much easier if we had information from the person. Many times the family doesn't remember under stress the deceased's favorite hymns or scriptures. It's such a comfort to the family to have the person's wishes in writing."

Dr. Jack Swanson, Normandale organist, believes that "having a plan on file makes it easier for the family." Swanson said. "Family members are often unprepared and make poor choices for funeral or memorial services. Planning in advance means selections can be made in a calm, reasoned manner."

Preparing for the future, especially end of life decisions, is not a very pleasant or inviting task. It's just something that we normally do not think about doing. No one wants to think about dying.

When my mother-in-law, Virginia, recently passed away, I was surprised that she and my father-in-law, Ed, both had made some very important decisions regarding their burial, wake, and memorial service, years ago. Their church had a form, which they encouraged all members to complete and turn in to the church office, and also keep themselves. The form documented the type of service, the scripture readings, hymns to be sung, anthems, solos, pastor to officiate, soloist, readers, communion assistants, funeral home, committal ceremony, post service lunch/fellowship, names of pall bearers and relatives and most everything else that needs to be known and decided when someone dies. They also completed a biography that might be included with the obituary. With this information available and these decisions already made, it still took several days to make all of the necessary arrangements and decisions to celebrate Virginia's life and to lay her to rest.

Our church office has a copy of this "Funeral Service Planning Form." You can pick one up from Dana or have her email one to you. If you so desire, you can return the completed form to the church office, which will be kept on file for your family. I found it very thoughtful on Virginia's part to let us know her preferences, so that we did not have to struggle with all of these decisions during our time of grief. I encourage you to be as thoughtful as Virginia.

There are other plans that you might wish to think about – financial planning. You might consider bequeathing part of your estate to United in Faith to help us

to continue to be a community of united disciples offering gifts to the world that can be found no place else.

Today, we have the following information available for you:

- the “Funeral Service Planning Form”, to guide you through the planning of your funeral;
- the brochures from the Stewardship Ministry – “Leave a Legacy” which outlines ways that you might remember United in Faith at the end of your journey on earth and - the “Mission Endowment Fund” which outlines the purpose and management of the fund;
- “Ways To Give” and “Estate Protection Planning” from Thrivent;
- from the ELCA, “Ways to Give” and the “ELCA Foundation” which offers information on ways to implement some of your financial planning with United in Faith in mind;
- a Living Will Declaration to declare your desire regarding receiving life sustaining treatment if you have an incurable and irreversible injury, disease or illness judged to be a terminal;
- and how to register as an organ donor.

You will be able to find some of this information on our church’s website – [www-unitedinfaith.org](http://www.unitedinfaith.org).

Are there any questions?

I want to thank each and every one of you for giving a few moments of your time and pray that this forum today has provided food for thought regarding your journey.

Thank You.

