



The Methodist Church of Southern Africa and Funerals

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Does the MCSA have a policy about funerals?

Like all Christian churches, the Methodist Church conducts funerals or memorial services for those who die, as a memory, as an act of seeking healing for our grief, and above all, an act of faith- recognising that God is the God of the living and the dead, that Jesus promised to go and prepare a place for those who die (John 14) and that Jesus is the first, but all of us will follow in the Resurrection of the dead (See 1 Corinthians 15)

2. Who is supposed to pay for a funeral when they use Methodist facilities?

The church is not a commercial undertaking. It does happen that people wish to use a Methodist Church building for events. In this case one needs to be certain what the event is, and whether it falls in line with the mission of the Church. In cases when a Church which is in good relationship with the Methodist Church wish to use our buildings for a funeral, this is acceptable. A donation would be acceptable if a group wanted to make use of the church building.

3. What is the definition a Methodist in good standing?

A Methodist in Good Standing is a person who has no charges pending against them, and is not under suspension. More detail is contained in our Rule of Life:

The directions we accept as our rule of life from the early Methodists fall into three principal groups:

- a. that of 'doing no harm, avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is more generally practiced'.
- b. that of 'doing good by being merciful after one's own power, doing good of every possible sort to the bodies of people as well as to their souls and, as far as possible, to all'.
- c. that of 'attending upon all the ordinances of God'. These include public worship of God, observance of the Lord's Supper, maintenance of Christian community, private prayer, reading the Scriptures, and habits of self-discipline.

4. Can a church accept a donation for services rendered?

Yes, but it cannot demand a donation.

5. Are Methodist ministers allowed to bury non-members?

Jesus says, "Come to me all you who are heavy laden" (Matthew 11). Following the teaching and example of Jesus, we do not turn anyone away. John Wesley says: "You have nothing to

do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go not only to those that need you, but to those that need you most. It is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care of this or that society; but to save as many souls as you can; to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance." This refers to the deceased, and even more so, to their loved ones.

6. Is the minister the only person expected to conduct funerals?

No. Local Preachers may conduct funeral, and where necessary, a Member may even in extreme cases, conduct a funeral.

7. Can ministers of the Methodist Church be hired to perform funerals and weddings etc.?

No. We are Ministers of the Gospel, and are not for hire.

8. What does the Methodist church teach about giving and tithing?

When one asks how much one should give, one must go to the Bible. Here only one portion is mentioned - the tithe or one tenth (2 Chronicles 31:4-12). There are many other passages that refer to the practice of tithing. It was certainly continued in New Testament times, as one can see from passages such as Luke 11 : 42; Luke 18 : 12. The truth of the matter is that we are not really giving to God when we tithe. We are then paying what we owe. We begin to give only when we give more than our tithe.

The New Testament, although it recognizes the Old Testament practice of tithing, sets a very different standard for giving. The Old Testament likes to set detailed regulations for life, e.g. the Commandments, but the New Testament is more concerned with the state of a person's heart. Jesus always said that if a person's heart is put right then his behaviour would be changed for the better (Luke 6: 43 - 45).

Jesus therefore does not set a fixed percentage that one should give. This does not mean that we may give as little as we want to. Jesus says that the only standard for Christian giving is that one should give as much as one possibly can (Luke 21:1-4). This is sometimes referred to as sacrificial giving: it is kind of giving we read of in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, Mark 12:41, and the Widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17.

We give because we know that everything belongs to God, we give because we are grateful, we give because worship is more than singing or praying – it touches the most sensitive part of a human being- their pocket, we give because we know we do not have to hold too tightly onto our worldly possessions for we trust God to supply our needs. We give because we know that the Church is one of God's instruments in the world through which mercy flows, and we are part of that church.

9. Is there a link between giving and Methodist membership?

The Laws and Discipline states: 3.15: They are expected, **as far as possible**, to contribute to the funds of the Church and to do some form of Christian service. Membership can never be on the basis of what a person gives (or what a person wears). Those with the least might be most in need of the grace of God as is evidenced in the love and care of the church.

10. Do we allow cremations?

We do. Sometimes people are buried in the earth, sometimes at sea, and are sometimes cremated. There are even times when we do not know where a body of a loved one is. But we believe that God who is merciful and powerful is able to raise us to life on the last day, irrespective of what kind of bodily remains there are.

11. How much should we pay for a funeral?

We show love and respect to a loved one who has died, by remembering them and honouring them, seeking to have a funeral service that is respectful and appropriate. The amount of money spent on a funeral is not an indication of our love (or sometimes our feelings of guilt). It is not our way in the Church to accrue debt or to deprive the surviving family of a living by spending excessive amounts of money on funeral arrangements.

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