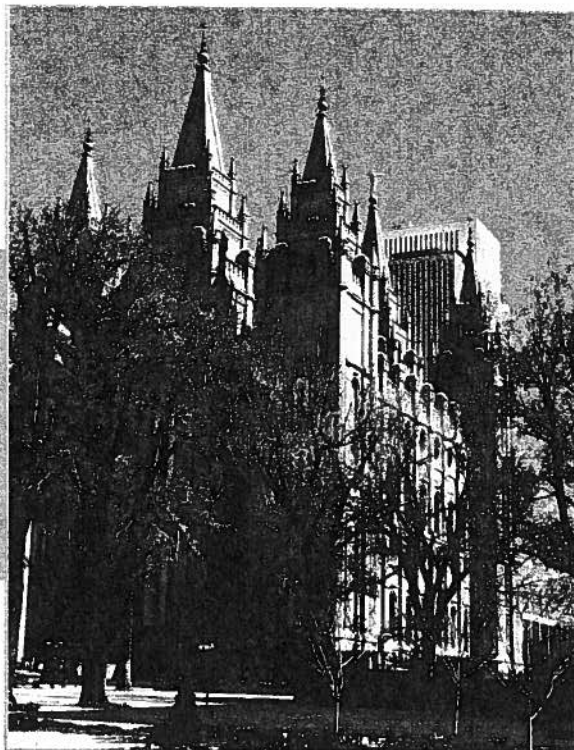


Mormon Funerals: What Directors Need to Know

By Alice Adams



The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had its beginnings in 1820 when 14-year-old Joseph Smith began to have visions of the restoration of the church of Jesus Christ. Through visions of the Angel Moroni, young Smith received a new revelation of golden tablets (Book of Mormon) and claimed he received a call to prophecy in the name of the Most High, because existing churches no longer proclaimed the true gospel.

Some of Smith's early opponents broke away in 1852 and formed The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Beloit, Wisconsin.

Smith's followers later settled in the Great Salt Lake Valley of Utah with Brigham Young as governor who, like Smith, taught the legitimacy of polygamy in 1890.

The theology of the Mormon Church is a form of Protestant orthodoxy, but declares the Book of Mormon to be the Word of God, and also teaches that Israel, including the 10 lost tribes, will be restored and Zion finally established under the personal reign of Christ.

In addition to the Bible, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also uses three other books—The Pearl of Great Price, The Doctrine and Covenants and the Book of Mormon—in its instruction. The Book of Mormon contains an early

account of Jesus coming to the Americas after His resurrection and establishing His Church in America.

The Mormon Church has a membership of close to four million, about 80 percent of whom live in the United States.

The Mormon funeral is very similar to a traditional Christian funeral although the event is somber and peaceful, leaving all who attend with the feeling of hope that families will be reunited after this life. Families are free to determine their own preferences regarding visitation, services and final disposition.

The funeral is directed by the local church leader, called a ward bishop, and usually takes place in the church's chapel or at the funeral home but not in the temple. The order of the service might be:

1. Prelude
2. Invocation
3. Eulogy/obituary
4. Musical selection
5. Speaker
6. Benediction
7. Postlude

Following the service, family and close friends may attend a graveside service. After these services, most families choose to host a gathering for everyone to

offer condolences to the family.

Except for some local customs, Mormons do not have any restrictions on embalming or the type of casket selection. But while cremation is accepted, an earth burial is preferred.

It also is important to check with the family to determine if they would like to have flowers at the funeral or graveside services.

It is important to note that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints discourages drinking tea and coffee and the use of tobacco, so it would be inappropriate to offer these to them. It is also inappropriate for funeral home personnel to use these in the presence of the family. Make sure, however, to have plenty of water available.

The director should talk to the family about how to dress the body. If the deceased has been through a Temple, then the deceased should be dressed entirely in white with a green apron. If the deceased has not been through the Temple, there are no restrictions on clothing.

If requested, it is appropriate for pallbearers to place their boutonnières on the casket as they pass for the last time at the conclusion of the graveside.

If a director has specific questions about services or burial, it is recommended that he or she talk to the ward bishop or family members to ensure a proper burial.