

Protestant Funeral Traditions

Protestants are Christians who share the belief in God, doctrines of the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus, the death and resurrection of Jesus for salvation, and eternal life. A 'protest' against practices of the Catholic Church in 1517 by German monk Martin Luther ignited the Reformation and gave rise to Protestantism. Protestants do not believe in the authority of the Pope and hold the Bible, versus church doctrine, as the supreme and binding foundation for all Christians.

Anglican, Baptist, Congregational, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian and Reformed are leading Protestant denominations today.

Visitation

Protestants commonly have a visitation period prior to the funeral service. This allows personal time for friends and loved ones to pay their respects. During this time the casket may be open or closed.

Picture boards sharing highlights of the deceased's life may be on display at the visitation site. These may also be seen at the site of the funeral service and the reception.

Funeral Service

The funeral service is usually held in a church or funeral home under the direction of a pastor or minister. This rite centers on the transition to everlasting life and commonly consists of prayers, eulogies and remembrances, the reading of Biblical passages and music selections. Flowers are acceptable and may be displayed.

At the conclusion of the service, pallbearers transport the casket to the gravesite for burial. Scattering or placement of cremains may take place at a later date.

Burial

Guests may join family members at the gravesite for committal and graveside services vary. Cremation is an accepted practice within Protestant communities and many increasingly prefer this option. Cremains may be buried, rest in a mausoleum or be scattered.

Reception

Families often host a reception or gathering following the funeral service or burial to share time with supportive friends.