

# Planning Services to Honor Your Baby's Life



*He healeth  
the broken in heart,  
and bindeth up  
their wounds.*

*Ps. 147:3*

## I Don't Know how to Plan a Funeral

No one is prepared for the death of their baby. AgapéCare<sup>SM</sup> Cradle will work closely with you and your family to help you plan a meaningful service.

## Types of Services

If your baby's body is physically present at the service, it is called a **FUNERAL**.

If you wish to allow public viewing of your baby, embalming will be needed. Funerals can be held anywhere, but are usually held in a church or chapel.

You may want to schedule a special time together with your family and friends before the funeral. This time of reflection, remembrance and fellowship with others is called a **VISITATION**.

A **COMMITTAL SERVICE** at the graveside usually follows the funeral. Some parents decide to have only the service at the graveside.

You can also choose to have a service after cremation or burial has taken place, instead of a funeral. This type of service is called a **MEMORIAL SERVICE**.

## What if Nobody Knows my Baby?

You, your family and your friends can help others to know your baby, by bringing pictures of yourself, your baby's brothers and sisters, grandparents, etc.... Toys, stuffed animals, and items you may have purchased or made for your baby, such as a special quilt or blanket, can be placed in and around your baby's casket or urn, along with flowers, candles, etc...

Health care staff who were with you during the time when your baby died, are very conscientious to collect as many items as they can for you, especially if your baby never left the hospital. Hospital staff may take pictures, make hand and foot prints and moldings, save your baby's identification bracelet, a lock of hair, special gown, blanket, etc... for you. AgapéCare<sup>SM</sup> Cradle will use these remembrance items in your baby's service. We can help others to know your baby, by making some additional remembrance items for your baby's service. We will give these keepsakes to you to take home after the service is over, in honor of your baby's memory.

AgapéCare<sup>SM</sup> Cradle can help you let others know about your baby's life, death and pending services. We will partner with you to notify others through obituary information, by phone, e-mail, internet, private invitation, or other methods that you authorize.

## Ideas for a Memorable Service

- Write a letter to your baby. Ask a family member or friend to read the letter at the service.
- Ask your pastor or spiritual leader to outline what he or she will say at the service. Agree together about how long the message should last.
- Choose a song or songs that express your baby's uniqueness and special place in your heart. Print the song(s) and hand them out at the service.
- If you have other children, encourage them to bring toys, make a card, draw pictures or make a necklace or other handmade item for their baby brother or sister.
- Hold and rock your baby. Your funeral director can help you if you feel unsure about this.
- Have your baby's service audio taped or video taped.

## At the Cemetery

**You may close the casket** for the final time if you wish.

**A balloon release** at the end of the committal service can be a special and inspiring tribute to your baby's life.

**You may shovel the first dirt** into the grave. Others may wish to sprinkle a handful of dirt into the grave also.

**You may stay at the cemetery** until cemetery staff finish filling in the grave, or leave whenever you choose, following the committal service.

## After the Committal Service

Mothers, fathers, other family members and friends may return to the cemetery later in the evening for a time of healing remembrance together. A graveside candle lighting ceremony can be especially comforting. A family member or friend may read a poem, Bible scripture or other special reading, after which parents light a single candle. Each person at their side then lights their own candle in turn off the parent's candle, in honor of the child who died.

## Is Embalming Required?

- No. Embalming is not required except in certain special circumstances. (*example: embalming is required if you wish to transport your baby's body across state lines to a cemetery in another state*).
- Whether or not to authorize embalming is a choice.
- If your baby's body is not embalmed, cremation or burial should occur within twenty-four hours.
- When you are thinking about whether or not to authorize embalming, consider if other family members and friends may wish to see your baby.
- Some parents are comforted by allowing a time for public viewing

and feel this is important, while other parents do not.