

A Presbyterian funeral or a Service of Witness to the Resurrection is first and foremost a worship service. Although the worship service should comfort those who mourn, we come primarily to recall our profound gladness and joy in Christ, our living Lord, emphasizing life lived in trust and service to God. Within the Christian faith, we offer God both praise and thanksgiving for the hope of eternal life we know in Jesus Christ and for the life of the deceased.

A WORD FROM THE SESSION

On behalf of the entire church family, the Session offers sympathy and assistance during a time of bereavement. Regardless of the circumstances, we are never completely prepared for the loss of a loved one. Yet, we are not left alone to face death apart from other Christians. Our church family wishes to provide comfort and help. The bereaved should be aware that they and their loved ones will be in our thoughts and prayers.

ARRANGEMENTS

When death has occurred or is imminent, the pastors or church office should be notified promptly. The church office will notify the congregation via e-mail.

One of the pastors of the family's choosing will want to meet with the family and possibly the funeral director during the process of making arrangements to ensure harmonious coordination of events and details.

Interment, cremation, or donation of the body for medical purposes are all legitimate Christian methods of disposition of the body. The Memorial Garden is an area provided on the premises of First Presbyterian Church for the deposit of cremains; please see the Memorial Garden brochure for details.

THE SERVICE

Where and Who Is in Charge

"The service on the occasion of death ordinarily should be held in the usual place of worship [the Sanctuary] in order to join this service to the [worshiping] community's continuing life and witness to the resurrection. The service shall be under the direction of the pastor." (W-4.10003)

Others may be invited to assist in the service at the discretion of the pastor through consultation with the family.

When

The worship service may take place before or after burial and committal of the body or ashes and on any day of the week. However, due to the Preschool and other church activities (in particular, on Sunday mornings) not all times are possible.

Before the Service

"In order that attention in the service be directed to God, when a casket is present it ordinarily is closed." (W-4.10005)

If the casket is present, it will be closed either at the funeral home prior to transportation to the church or prior to the service in the funeral home; this is in order to focus the service on God. At the time of the closing, the pastor will ordinarily gather the family together around the casket for a prayer and final goodbye. If at the church, the casket should be placed in the center of the Sanctuary in front of the chancel and ordinarily perpendicular. Also, a few flower arrangements, ordinarily two on either side and one in the middle, may be placed in the Sanctuary.

The family may receive guests in Fellowship Hall prior to the worship service, though usually this happens afterward. Ordinarily, the family gathers in the Chapel prior to the service. Shortly before the service begins, guests, if any, will be asked to proceed to the Sanctuary in order for the family to have some moments of privacy. At the designated time, when worshipers are gathered, the family will be escorted by the pastor to the Sanctuary. The entrance of the pastor signals the congregation to stand while the family enters the Sanctuary. The family is seated at the front in a reserved section of pews.

During the Service

The service should be a reflection of the love and hope offered by the promise of resurrection to those who grieve. In the Reformed tradition, the funeral service is always a witness to the resurrection. The service will be conducted with dignity and simplicity.

"The service begins with scriptural sentences. It is appropriate for worshipers to sing hymns, psalms, spirituals, or spiritual songs which affirm God's power over death, a belief in the resurrection to life everlasting, and the assurance of the communion of the saints. Scripture shall be read; a sermon or other exposition of the Word may be proclaimed; an affirmation of faith may be made by the people. Aspects of the life of the one who has died may be recalled. Prayers shall be offered, giving thanks to God (1) for life in Jesus Christ and the promise of the gospel, (2) for the gift of the life of the one who has died, (3) for the comfort of the Holy Spirit, (4) for the community of faith; making intercessions (5) for family members and loved ones who grieve, (6) for those who minister to and support the bereaved, (7) for all who suffer loss; lifting supplications (8) for faith and grace for all who are present; concluding with the Lord's Prayer. The service ends by commending the one who has died to the care of the eternal God and sending the people forth with a benediction." (W-4.10004)

When a casket is present, the recessional ordinarily consists of the pastor preceding the casket, followed by the pallbearers, the family, and the remainder of the congregation.

After the Service

"Members and friends of the family of the one who has died [may] gather at the graveside or crematorium for a service of farewell, which is to be conducted with simplicity, dignity, and brevity." (W-4.10006)

At the death of a church member or the death of an immediate member of the family, the church, as part of its ministry to the bereaved, provides a reception of beverages and dessert in Fellowship Hall either prior to or immediately after the service. This ministry is available upon request by the family to the pastor.

"Any fraternal, civic, or military rites should be conducted separately." (W-4.10005)

FEES

The service and facilities of First Presbyterian Church are available to members without charge. Furthermore, the pastor(s) consider participation a regular part of the ministry provided by them and the church. However, music is not provided without charge and the cost must be borne by the family. The costs are as follows: Organist/pianist - \$200, plus \$50 if there is a soloist or choir to accompany; soloist - \$150; and the choir director - \$175. Checks should be made payable to the individuals and given to the pastor on the day of the service. A guest organist must be preapproved by the organist of the church. If there are guest musicians or soloists, the pastor must approve and their expense also is to be borne by the family.

MEMORIALS AND WILLS

Gifts to the church's Memorial Fund are always appropriate and may be in lieu of or in addition to flowers. These gifts demonstrate affection for the church, support for Christ's work, and the importance of both in the life of the deceased.

Making a will is one of the most important acts of a lifetime. Christians should realize that, if they do not have a will, they may miss forever the opportunity to perpetuate their Christian influence and carry forward their Christian work in the final disposition of their resources. If you leave no will, the laws of the state determine who shall receive your money and property. In effect, the state may replace your wishes with a formula that does not consider very important factors. Only through a legal will can you provide for those you love, the church, and special causes that are important to you. Please remember First Presbyterian Church in your will and designate the bequest to the Endowment Fund. A member of the Endowment Committee will be happy to speak with you; please call the church office for a name and number of a committee member. Your bequest will be a fitting witness that furthers the ministry and mission of Christ's Church.

PERSONAL PREFERENCE FORM

In addition to these guidelines, there is a form available from the church office to indicate personal preferences relating to final rites. It may be revised or amended continually through the years. You are encouraged to furnish a copy to the church while retaining the original in a secure place known to your family. Such thoughtful preparation can ease the trauma of death for family and friends.

We hope that these guidelines will be helpful. Their purpose is to provide a sense of order and direction during a time of loss, sorrow and grief.

Approved by Session: 7-29-09.

**All quotes are from the Directory of Worship in the Book of Order,
The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part II.**

GUIDELINES for a Service of WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION



"The resurrection is a central doctrine of the Christian faith and shapes Christians' attitudes and responses to the event of death. Death brings loss, sorrow, and grief to all. In the face of death, Christians affirm with tears and joy the hope of the gospel. Christians do not bear bereavement in isolation but are sustained by the power of the Spirit and the community of faith. The Church offers a ministry of love and hope to all who grieve."
(W-4.10001)

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