



## Services on the Occasion of Death

### *A Planning Guide*

#### First Presbyterian Church

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The resurrection is a central doctrine of the Christian faith and shapes Christians' attitudes and responses to the event of death. Death brings sorrow and grief to all; but in the face of death, Christians, with tears of joy, affirm our hope as proclaimed in the gospel. The occasion of death affords to the community of faith both the opportunity and the challenge of supporting one another in a time of loss so that no one must bear bereavement in isolation. The church strives to offer a ministry of love and hope to those who grieve.

Under the emotional stress occasioned by the death of a family member or loved one, however, those who are charged with wisely planning funeral or memorial arrangements face a considerable challenge. Accordingly, the session encourages members of the church to consider and even plan in advance the arrangements that will be necessary at the time of death. There are a number of appropriate and dignified alternatives as to the type and sequence of services. A family may want to consider a funeral service at the church or funeral home followed by interment or a memorial service following interment or cremation. Such plans should provide for services and occasions for gathering that are simple, bear witness to resurrection hope, and in which the community of faith is central.

Members of the pastoral staff are available to discuss such plans; and the church maintains a repository for written statements of members' wishes respecting their arrangements. As to such plans, either in advance or upon the occasion of death, the following points should be kept in mind:

## Pastor

- ◆ When either a funeral or memorial service is to be held in the sanctuary of the church, it shall be under the direction of the pastor. Others may be invited to participate in the service at the discretion of the pastor. Family members or others who are responsible for funeral arrangements are urged to confer with the pastor prior to scheduling any service. Members of the pastoral staff are also available to conduct services at funeral homes and/or at the graveside.
- ◆ This guide is intended as an aid for members of First Presbyterian Church in planning funeral and memorial services. Portions of the above are adapted from the provisions of the *Book of Order*, "Directory for Worship," W-4.10000, "*Services on the Occasion of Death.*"

## Worship Details

- ◆ When a casket is present, it will remain closed while in the church. The casket may be covered with a pall provided by the church, or by flowers provided by the family. **The pall cannot be taken from the church premises.**
- ◆ Flowers in the sanctuary are to be limited to two arrangements in the chancel. If other flowers are delivered to the church, they will be used in the narthex or fellowship hall.
- ◆ While the content of the service obviously may include recollection of the life of the one who has died, it should be remembered that the focus is upon the Christian understanding of death, the grace of God, the promises of Scripture, and our hope in the resurrection. Any fraternal, civic or military rites should be conducted separately from the service at the church.

## Church Building

- ◆ If desired, the church building will be made available for visitation with the family, so long as the church schedule can be reasonably modified to accommodate such use.
- ◆ There is no charge for the use of the church building; however, certain costs attend to the preparation of the sanctuary and to conducting the service. It is appropriate for the family of the deceased to assume responsibility for the cost of flowers, as well as honoraria for the organist and other musicians.

## **Honoraria and Fees—Organist and Other Musicians**

- ◆ The suggested fees for funerals are:
- ◆ Organist—\$150
- ◆ Other musicians—\$100  
    If rehearsal required—\$25 for 1-hour rehearsal for each musician

## **Funeral Checklist**

When the pastor meets with the family to discuss the service, the following items should be agreed upon.

1. Order of Worship
2. List of hymns and other music requests
3. Organist's fee of \$150 to be collected, if possible (check made payable to FPC)
4. Will a nursery be required for the service?  
    (24-hour notice is desired to arrange personnel)
5. Do they wish to have a bereavement lunch/dinner?
6. Do they wish to use the pall?