

Preparing for a Funeral

This document contains guidance for planning a Funeral Service. It is highly dependant upon our guidance in the Presbyterian Book of Order. At the end is a questionnaire for offering guidance in the planning of your funeral.

What do we believe about death?

In the Presbyterian Church we teach that 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.

Planning a Service

Because it is difficult under emotional stress to plan wisely, we encourage people to discuss and plan in advance the arrangements which will be necessary at the time of death, including decisions about the Christian options of burial, cremation, the distribution one's estate and donation for medical purposes. These plans should provide for arrangements which are simple, which bear witness to resurrection hope, and in which the Christian community is central. The service is under the direction of the pastor. Others may be invited to participate as leaders in the service at the discretion of the pastor.

A Funeral or Memorial Service

A funeral service is normally thought of as one where the body is present in the sanctuary. As a practical matter this means it will take place within a very few days of death. A memorial service is one that takes place after burial or cremation. A memorial service can be held several weeks or even months after death, allowing much more time for planning. In recent years memorial services are more common than funerals. Part of the reason for this is the complexity involved in bringing people together across great distances on short notice.

Where Should the Service be held?

We believe that the service on the occasion of death ordinarily should be held in the usual place of worship. When there are important reasons not to hold the service in the usual place of worship, it may be held in another suitable place such as a home, a funeral home, a crematorium, or at graveside.

What are the Details within a Service?

In order that attention in the service be directed to God, when a casket is present it ordinarily is closed. It may be covered with a funeral pall. The service may include other actions common to the community of faith and its cultures when these actions do not detract from or diminish the Christian understanding of death and resurrection. The service shall be complete in itself, and any fraternal, civic, or military rites should be conducted separately.

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.

As you discuss the service with the pastor, you may want to suggest music and readings for the service. You may know members of the family, friends or colleagues who might be willing to participate in the service.

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.

What is a Committal?

Members and friends of the family of the one who has died should gather at the graveside or crematorium for a service of farewell, which is to be conducted with simplicity, dignity, and brevity. The service includes readings from Scripture, prayers, words of committal, and a blessing, reflecting the reality of death, entrusting the one who has died to the care of God, and bearing witness to faith in the resurrection from the dead.

What are the Church Expenses?

It is customary to give the minister an "honorarium," for his/her leadership. The amount of such honorariums is usually at least \$250. Janitorial fees for the church are \$150. A usage fee for the sanctuary is also normally requested from those who are not members of the church.

What are the Funeral Costs?

These costs mentioned above are for the church service. Not included are the funeral director's charges: these include, preparing the body for burial or cremation, the casket, use of the funeral parlor for a wake, etc. Also, not included are the costs of a burial plot in the cemetery. The cost of these services can easily fall within a range of \$5,000 to \$10,000.

A Pre-planning Funeral Form

You can help make the planning your funeral easier by filling responding to the following questions and giving this to a pastor.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

I, _____, request the following at the time of my death.

For the service witnessing to the resurrection (funeral)

___ I do not wish to have a funeral or memorial service.

___ I would like a funeral or memorial service as detailed below.

1. I would like the following Scripture read. (Choose up to four passages.)

2. I would like the following hymns sung. (List up to three hymns. You only need to provide titles.)

3. I ___ would ___ would not like to have the Lord's Supper celebrated at this service.

4. Do you have any stories of your life or faith that you would like to have shared at this service? (Use a separate sheet if necessary.)

5. Is there anything that you would like people to know as they worship at this service? (Use a separate sheet if necessary.)

Does your family know of your last wishes?

If not, you may wish to address the following.

Please note that this is not a legal document, but a record to convey your final wishes. One copy should be given to family or friend and one copy to the church.

1. Name(s) of preferred individuals(s) to assist in arrangements (relative, friend, pastor, attorney):

Name: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____

Name: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____

2. Pastor to be called:

Name: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____

3. Mortician to be called:

Name: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____

Please check the following if it is your desire

4. Treatment of my body

That my body be sent to such medical, social, or scientific center as will accept it (It is my responsibility to choose the institution or up to those who make my final arrangements.)

That my body be made available for autopsy

That my body be cremated with embalming without embalming

5. Funeral home, Funeral, Memorial Service

That there will be a viewing will not be a viewing

That a public private funeral be held
at church or funeral home

That I have discussed/instructed my family/friends as to the kind of casket and other arrangements and cost (limit)

That a memorial service (i.e. body not being present) be held at

That neither a funeral nor memorial service be held

6. Final disposition

That my ashes be preserved or disposed of in the following manner and place: _____

That my body be buried in the following location

It is my wish to donate whatever organs/parts of organs that are useful to the living

7. Contributions/Flowers

Flowers are desired

I would like contributions donated to the church

I would request donations for the following organization

I understand that these are my instructions to my family and friends. I recognize my own responsibility for advance consultation with the minister or mortician of my choice.

Signed: _____

Witness (preferably next of kin): _____

Preparing an Obituary

Information for An Obituary

Full legal name: _____

Nick name: _____

Place of Birth: _____

Father's Name: _____

Mother's maiden name: _____

Marital status: _____

Name of spouse: _____

Children: (name and city) Living (circle response)

_____ Yes No

Number of grandchildren _____ great-grandchildren _____

Brothers and Sisters (name and city)

Living (circle response)

_____	Yes	No

Work Information

Church and Civic Involvement

Hobbies and Past-times:

Some Christian Scripture for consideration

Old Testament

Job 19:1, 23-27

Isaiah 25:6a, 7-9

Lamentations 3:17-26

Daniel 12:1-3

Psalms 16:5-11

Psalms 23

Psalms 27:1,4-9a, 13-14
Psalms 39:4-5, 12
Psalms 42:1-6a
Psalms 43
Psalms 46:1-5, 10-11
Psalms 90:1-10, 12
Psalms 91
Psalms 103
Psalms 121
Psalms 130
Psalms 139:1-12
Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31
Ecclesiastes 3:1-11
Isaiah 35:1-6, 10
Isaiah 41:8-10, 13
Isaiah 57:15-19
Isaiah 61.1-3
Isaiah 65:17-21
Ezekiel 34:11-16
Ezekiel 37:12-14
Micah 6:6-8
Zephaniah 3:16-20

Gospel

Matthew 5:1-12a
Matthew 11:25-30
Matthew 25:1-13
Mathew 25:31-46
Mark 15:33-39, 16:1-6
Luke 7:11-17
Luke 12:35-40
Luke 23:33, 39-43
Luke 23: 44-46, 50, 52-53; 24:1-6a
Luke 24:13-35
John 5:24-29
John 6:37-40
John 6:51-58
John 11: 17-27
John 11:32-45
Matthew 6:19-23
Luke 1:67-74
John 3:13-17
John 10:11-18
John 10:27-30

New Testament

Acts 10:34-43

Romans 5:5-11

Romans 5:17-21

Romans 6:3-9

Romans 8:14-23

Romans 8:31b-35, 37-39

Romans 14:7-9, 10b-12

I Corinthians 15:20-23, 24b-28

I Corinthians 15:51-57

2 Corinthians 4:14 -5:1

2 Corinthians 5:1, 6-10

Philippians 3:20-21

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

2 Timothy 2:8-13

1 John 3:1-2

1 John 3:14-16

Revelation 14:13

Revelation 20:11 - 21:1

Revelation 21:1-5a, 6b-7

Ephesians 3:14-21

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 17- 18

1 Peter 1:3-9

Revelation 22:1-7