

Christian Funerals at Davidson College Presbyterian Church

If this is a time of bereavement for you, we extend our sympathy to you and share with you our mutual hope that "if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," (II Corinthians 5:1).

"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."

HELPFUL GUIDELINES

At the time of death, or if possible, in advance of an expected death, please notify one of the ministers or a member of the church staff so that we may offer to you pastoral care, guidance and the support of the church. Arrangements for the use of the church for services can be made through the church office (704.892.5641). We will contact the organist for you. Special music requests need to be communicated to the organist well in advance of the service. The church compensates its organist for the service of any church member. Non-members should compensate both the organist and the minister(s) directly.

The service shall be complete in itself, and any fraternal, civic, or military rites should be conducted separately.

The church officers are pleased to be responsible for greeting and ushering duties at the church. The church will arrange for an adequate number of ushers to be at the service.

It is fitting that flowers used in funeral or memorial services shall be limited to the amount normally used at regular Sunday worship, with the addition of a floral casket pall if desired.

The expressly Christian furnishing of the Sanctuary or Chapel shall not be removed, relocated or obscured during the service. These include the Communion Table and the Baptismal Font. Beyond placing flowers and the casket in the Sanctuary or Chapel prior to a funeral, it is not necessary for funeral home personnel to give any other direction until the casket leaves the Sanctuary.

Ordinarily, the minister(s) will meet with the family in the church parlor shortly before the service begins. After prayer, the family will be led through the side door to the pews reserved for the family in front of the church. At the conclusion of the service, the family is invited to greet friends in the narthex, parlor or fellowship hall, if they desire.

TYPES OF SERVICES

FUNERALS AND MEMORIAL SERVICES: The service may be held with the remains of the deceased present in a casket or urn as in the case of a funeral service, or it may be a memorial service, with no remains present. If the casket is present, it shall be closed at all times when it is in the sanctuary or Chapel. The church will provide a cloth pall, if desired. If used, the pall shall be placed on the casket upon entry into the narthex and removed before the casket exits the narthex. The committal may precede or follow the service in the church.

The service begins with scriptural sentences. It is appropriate for worshippers to sing hymns, 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 the faith may be made by the people. Aspects of the life of the one who has died may be recalled. Prayers shall be offered 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.

SERVICE OF COMMITTAL: *This simple service of farewell is ordinarily conducted in concert with the usual services at the church. It takes place at the graveside or in the case of cremation, at the place where the ashes shall be placed. A committal service may take place before or after services at the church. Or, upon occasions when brevity and simplicity are required, the*

committal service may stand alone. This 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 of the dead.

PLACE OF SERVICE

The service on the occasion of death ordinarily should be held in the usual place of worship, in order to join this service to the community's continuing life and witness to the resurrection.

At Davidson College Presbyterian Church, services may be held in either the Sanctuary, which seats 1,000 people or the Chapel, which seats 100 people. Both are available to our church members without cost.

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 the graveside.

(italicized sentences are from the Directory of Worship in the Book of Order, Presbyterian Church (USA)).