

SPIRITUAL PLANNING AND RESOURCES FOR FUNERALS AND MEMORIAL SERVICES

We all know that we are mortal. Christians believe, however, that death can and should be faced long before its anticipated occurrence. Because we believe ourselves to be in the presence of God both in this life and in the life that is to come, we can plan for this event with a mixture of sadness and anticipation.

A number of the decisions that must be made at the time of death can and should be made well in advance. The Pastors of First & Central Presbyterian Church encourage members to discuss and plan the arrangements that will be necessary at the time of death. To do so will relieve surviving family members and friends of the need to do so at the time when their grief is most intense. This section identifies a number of necessary decisions and provides helpful information for planning.

Of course, preferences are not the same for everyone. Therefore, it is important that these decisions not be private. Rather, they should be discussed with family and other loved ones -- both to gain suggestions and to be sure that your wishes are known! Your pastors are quite willing and eager to be helpful to you in this process. Further, if you wish, some of your decisions can be kept in a confidential file at the church and made available to friends and family.

Decisions That Can Be Made In Advance

Notification of family and friends.

Make a list of the family and friends you want to be notified at the approach of or the time of your death. Such a list is a very real gift to those who will be handling arrangements. In section B, following this section, a form is provided for you to record this information. If death occurs in a hospital, a nursing home, or some other medical facility, many of the required notifications will be taken care of by institutional personnel. If the death occurs at home, or some other non-medical facility, emergency personnel and/or a physician should be contacted as soon as possible.

Choose a funeral director.

Ask for suggestions from friends and family, or your pastor. Again, if you have already made initial arrangements with a funeral director, they can carry out your wishes with a minimum of stress for your survivors. It is also possible for you to pre-pay for these services. Contrary to popular opinion, you can choose the services you wish and do not wish for the funeral director to perform. Among the items that do need to be taken care of, and can be provided by a funeral director, are:

Death notices - contain minimal information, such as the name of the deceased; age and date of death; names of survivors; date, time, and place of interment and memorial service; designation of memorial gifts.

Obituary - contains more biographical information than a death notice; no fee is usually charged for running a short obituary.

Memorial Gifts - recommendations for gifts in lieu of flowers; a favorite charity, the church, etc.

Disposition of the Body

- Embalming is not necessary in the case of cremation or immediate burial. In most states, embalming is required if a body is held for more than 24 hours.
- Often, though not always, viewing of the body by friends and family members is helpful in accepting the fact of death. This can be arranged at the funeral home or at the time of death. It should not be done during the memorial service.
- Arrangements can be made through the funeral director. Purchase of a lot can be handled through the director or directly with a cemetery. Coffin selection must be made, and may be done as part of pre-planning.
- If the choice is made for cremation, a coffin is not necessary. The body can be transported to the crematory in a simple container. The ashes are then placed in an urn, which is then deposited in a niche of a columbarium/mausoleum of a local cemetery or buried in a family plot.

Plan your memorial service.

Again, at the time of death, many people wonder, and even worry, about what you would want included in your memorial service. Sit down with family members and your pastor to talk through and record your preferences. A confidential file of your plans can be maintained at the church, if you wish. Please don't direct that no service be held. Though such a decision is made to "spare" family and friends, in fact just the reverse usually occurs. Your family and friends are deprived of an opportunity for closure, giving thanks, and reaffirming their faith in the face of death.

In fact, the planning of your memorial service can be an opportunity for you to deepen your own Christian faith and set an example for others. Through conversation and your own private prayer and meditation, you can identify passages of scripture, music, and hymnody that hold special significance for you. Then, not only will you have taken the time to identify these resources, but your family and friends will know that they are being faithful to you and your wishes.

Your pastors are glad to meet with you or begin a series of conversations with you and any others whom you want to include. The Minister of Music is also available to help you in becoming aware of the variety of appropriate musical resources.

PERTINENT DATA AND PREFERENCES

Note: Retain the original of this document; consider giving one copy to the pastor to officiate, and one to a person chosen to make arrangements at time of death.

Information for death certificate

date of birth _____

place of birth _____

citizenship _____

full name-partner or spouse _____

full name-father _____

full name-mother _____

social security number _____

veteran discharge papers with serial number _____

Note: Request at least 10 copies of the death certificate (funeral director will provide).

Friend or relative you wish to oversee arrangements at time of death.

Name _____ Phone _____

Arrangement preferences:

Funeral Director (if preplanned or prepaid contract, give location of document)

Cremation with remains buried or scattered at _____

Burial in (modest) casket at cemetery (location of deed to plot)

Donation of body to medical school _____

Information for obituary (insert additional page)

Other arrangements as follows:

Scripture Readings: _____

Hymn Requests: _____

Other Readings: _____

Family to Participate: _____

Your Name _____ Date _____

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

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. The service shall be under the direction of the pastor. Others may be invited to participate as leaders in the service at the discretion of the pastor. *From Directory For Worship; Presbyterian Church (USA)*

Timing

In most cases a service takes place within a few days of the death. The main service may precede or follow a brief committal service at the burial site. Typically, the committal service is attended by members and close friends of the family.

Location

First & Central Presbyterian Church is fortunate in having both a Chapel, which will seat 30, and the Sanctuary, which will seat 425.

Type of Service

The service may be either a memorial service without the presence of a casket or urn, or a funeral service where the casket or urn is present. If a casket is present, it will be closed and covered with a white pall in order that the attention of those attending may be directed toward God.

Costs

First & Central Presbyterian Church intends that costs for a funeral or memorial service on its premises be only what are necessary and minimal and may include charges for custodial services during non-regular hours, the soloists and instrumentalists' fees, and a reception if desired. Exact details are available from the church office or the officiating pastor. An honorarium for pastors and organist may be offered at the discretion of the family.

Flowers

Flowers add color and beauty to the service, and remind worshippers of the goodness of God's creation. Ordinarily, two modest flower arrangements are provided by the family for either the church or chapel, and will be the only flowers in the sanctuary or chapel. All other arrangements will be displayed elsewhere as appropriate.

Displays of Remembrance

Photographs and memorabilia are not appropriate for display in the sanctuary or chapel and will be gladly accommodated in the DuVal Room or Memorial Hall should a reception be held.

Content of Service

The service is planned by the pastor in consultation with the family. The purpose is to provide comfort and strength to mourners, to give thanks to God for the life of the deceased, and, above all, to bear witness to the hope of Christian faith.

It is appropriate for hymns and other sacred music to be part of the service. Music should serve to direct the attention of those attending to the presence and power of God, and enable worshippers to voice their confidence in God's sovereign love. A list of suggested hymns from *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (1990) follows.

Scripture should be read and prayers offered. A homily may be preached and words of appreciation may be spoken by the pastor, family members, friends or colleagues. All speakers will be pre-arranged and spontaneous memorials will not be asked of the congregation.

Suggested Outline for a Funeral or Memorial Service

Organ Prelude

Opening Sentences

Hymn

Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Pardon

Hebrew Scripture Readings/Psalms

Solo or Organ Voluntary

Tribute by friends, family, or colleagues

New Testament Readings

Homily

Prayers of Thanksgiving

The Lord's Prayer (spoken or sung by soloist)

Closing Hymn

Benediction

Organ Postlude

Not everyone will wish to include all of the elements listed here. The use of hymns, for instance, will depend somewhat on the number of people expected for the service. Following the service the family may receive friends in the Parlor, DuVal Room, or Memorial Hall. Simple refreshments can be provided through the church.

Suggestions for Scripture

Hebrew Scriptures

Job 19:23-27	I know that my redeemer lives
Isa. 25:6-9	God will swallow up death forever
Isa. 26:1-4, 19	God will keep them in peace
Isa. 40:1-11, 28-31	Comfort my people
Isa. 40:28-31	Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength
Isa. 43:1-3a, 18-19, 25	When you pass through the waters, I will be with you
Isa. 44:6-8	I am the first and the last
Isa. 55:1-3, 6-13	Ho, everyone who thirsts

Isa. 61:1-4, 10-11	The spirit of the Lord is upon me
Isa. 65:17-25	I create new heavens and a new earth
Lam. 3:19-26, 31b-32	The Lord's steadfast love
Dan. 12:1-3	Many of those who sleep in the dust shall awake
Joel 2:12-13, 23-24-29	Return to the Lord with all your heart

Psalms

Ps. 16:5-11	The Lord is my chosen portion
Ps. 23	The Lord is my shepherd
Ps. 27:1, 4-9a, 13-14	The Lord is my light and my salvation
Ps. 39: 4-5, 12	Lord, let me know my end
Ps. 42:1-6a	As a deer longs for flowing streams
Ps. 43	Give judgment for me, O God
Ps. 46:1-5, 10-11	A very present help in trouble
Ps. 90:1-10, 12	Teach us to number our days
Ps. 91	The one who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
Ps. 103	Bless the Lord, O my soul
Ps. 106:1-5	O give thanks to the Lord
Ps. 116:1-9, 15	The Lord has heard my voice
Ps. 118	Open the gates of righteousness
Ps. 121	I lift up my eyes to the hills
Ps. 130	Out of the depths I cry to the Lord
Ps. 139:1-12	Where shall I go from your spirit?
Ps. 145	I will extol you, O God my King
Ps. 146	Hallelujah! praise the Lord, O my soul

Epistles

Rom. 5:1-11	Hope does not disappoint
Rom. 6:3-9	Baptized into Christ's death, raised to live with him
Rom. 8:14-23, 31-39	Nothing can separate us from the love of God
Rom. 14:7-9, 10b-12	Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's
1 Cor. 15:3-8, 12-20a	Christ raised from the dead
1 Cor. 15:20-24a	In Christ shall all be made alive
1 Cor. 15:20-26, 35-58,	Death is swallowed in victory
1 Cor. 15:35-44	The natural body and the spiritual body
1 Cor. 15:50-57	We shall all be changed
2 Cor. 4:16-5:1	Visible things are temporary, invisible things eternal
2 Cor. 5:1-10	From God we have a house not made with hands
Eph. 1:11-2:1, 4-10	Saved by grace through faith
Phil. 3:7-11	Knowing him and the power of his resurrection
Phil. 3:20-21	Our citizenship is in heaven
Col. 3:1-17	Set your minds on the things that are above
1 Thess. 4:13-18	The comfort of Christ's coming
2 Tim. 2:8-13	If we died with him, we shall also live with him
Heb. 2:14-18	Christ was tested in every way
Heb. 11:1-16; 12:1-2	Faith, the pilgrimage, the cloud of witnesses

1 Peter 1:3-9	Without seeing Christ, you love him
1 Peter 3:18-22; 4:6	Christ's ministry to the spirits in prison
1 John 3:1-3	We are children of God
Rev. 7:2-3, 9-17	These are they who have come out of tribulation
Rev. 14:1-3, 6-7, 12-13	Rest for the saints
Rev. 21:1-4, 22-25; 22:3-5	A new heaven and a new earth
Rev. 22:1-5	The Lord God will be their light

Gospels

Matt. 5:1-12a	The Beatitudes
Matt. 11:25-30	Hidden from the wise, revealed to infants
Matt. 25:1-13	Wise and foolish bridesmaids
Matt. 25:31-46	The Last Judgment
Luke 7:11-17	Jesus raises the son of the widow of Nain
Luke 18:15-17	We enter the kingdom only as children
Luke 23:33, 39-43	Today you will be with me in Paradise
John 3:16-21	God so loved the world
John 5:24-29	Whoever hears and believes has eternal life
John 6:37-40	Anyone who comes to me I will never drive away
John 6:47-58	Whoever believes in me has eternal life
John 11:17-27	I am the resurrection and the life
John 11:38-44	Lazarus raised from the dead
John 14:1-6, 25-27	Let not your hearts be troubled

Hymns (*Page numbers are from the 1990 edition of The Presbyterian Hymnal.*)

260	A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
543	Abide With Me
339	Be Thou My Vision
526	For all the Saints
473	For the Beauty of the Earth
261	God of Compassion
275	God of Our Life
460	Holy God, We Praise Your Name
138	Holy, Holy, Holy
457	I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art
263	Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise
447	Lead On, O King Eternal
529	Lord of the Living
555	Now Thank We all Our God
270	O God, in a Mysterious Way
384	O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go
210	Our God, Our Help in Ages Past
478	Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven
171	The King of Love My Shepherd Is
175	The Lord's My Shepherd
119	The Strife Is O'er, the Battle Done