

A WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION  
MEMORIAL AND FUNERAL SERVICES AT  
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

*The resurrection is a central doctrine of the Christian faith and shapes Christians' attitudes and responses to the event of death ... 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. [Book of Order, Directory for Worship.]*

Just as the church embraces us in our baptism and throughout our Christian life, so it stands ready to embrace us in our death and in our hope of resurrection to eternal life. The purpose of this writing is to assist members of First Presbyterian Church in the realistic consideration of this eventuality and the decisions that are required at the death of a loved one.

*Because it is difficult to plan wisely under emotional stress, the session should encourage members to discuss and plan in advance the arrangements which will be necessary at the time of death, including those decisions about the Christian options of burial, cremation, or donation for medical purposes. These plans should provide for arrangements which are simple, which bear witness to the resurrection hope, and in which the Christian community is central. [Book of Order, Directory for Worship]*

Advance planning for end-of-life issues helps relieve family members of some difficult decisions, and helps insure that the intentions of the deceased for an appropriate service of worship be maintained. The church provides a booklet, "Putting My House in Order," which is designed to assist individuals in planning for their own funerals and communicating their wishes with family and the church.

AT THE TIME OF DEATH ...

**Ministerial Staff**

Our ministers desire to be present to church members who need comfort and counsel as they face death, as well as to families experiencing grief and loss. Ministers provide spiritual care as well as help with the practical considerations required at such a time.

Upon the death of one of our members, a minister of the church should be notified as soon as possible. This is best accomplished by contacting the church office. Outside of office hours, contact a minister at home (all home numbers are listed in the church directory).

**Types of Services**

All worship services at First Presbyterian Church will be officiated by one of our ministers. Guest ministers may participate at the invitation of the senior minister. Music will be provided and coordinated by the Director of Music Ministries. In the event the Director of Music Ministries is not available, he/she will locate a suitable substitute.

### **1. Memorial Service**

In the Memorial Service, the body is not present. Interment of the remains in a Service of Committal either precedes the memorial service or will take place at a later time.

### **2. Funeral Service**

In the Funeral Service, the body is present either in a casket or an urn. The Funeral Service is ordinarily followed by a Service of Committal at the burial site.

- Pallbearers (or honorary pallbearers) may be present in a Memorial or Funeral Service. Ordinarily, the funeral home will coordinate this with the family.

### **3. Service of Committal**

The Service of Committal (often referred to as a graveside service) occurs at the interment site where the remains of the deceased are laid to rest.

### **Location 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. [Book of Order, Directory for Worship]*

Unless there are unusual conditions, the funeral should be in the church building. This is the place where faith is born and nurtured, where marriage vows are made, where children receive the sign of the covenant, where we break the bread and drink the cup. It is the place where week by week the congregation gathers for the word, for praise and prayer and dedication.

Both the Sanctuary and the Chapel are appropriate places for a Memorial or Funeral Service. In these places of our community's worship life, we have tangible reminders of the presence and care of God, and the support of a community of faith that surrounds us with comfort and love.

Before or after the service, depending upon the wishes of the family, the church will make available the Fellowship Hall or other suitable room(s) for visitation. The church will provide, at no cost to the family, simple food and drinks for the reception. Arrangements for a reception and visitation should be made at the time of the arrangements for the Memorial or Funeral Service.

### **Burial**

Appropriate options for Christians regarding the disposition of the body include burial, cremation, or donation for medical science. Arrangements for these options are made by an individual or family through the funeral director.

The Columbarium at First Presbyterian Church is available to church members who choose cremation. Information about costs, niche locations and availability may be obtained from the church office.

## THE SERVICE OF WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION

Memorial, Funeral, and Committal Services are acts of worship within the Christian community. The purpose of such services of worship is to glorify God, to affirm our belief in the resurrection to eternal life, and to comfort the bereaved. Gratitude and honor are appropriately expressed to God for the life and witness of the deceased; however, prolonged and undue attention upon the deceased is discouraged.

### **The Order of Worship**

*The service begins with scriptural sentences. It is appropriate for worshippers 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 and sending the people forth with a benediction.*  
[Book of Order, Directory of Worship]

#### **1. Scriptures**

The Scriptures provide comfort and assurances in times of grief, and are the foundation for the Memorial, Funeral, and Committal Services. The minister will guide the selection of appropriate scripture passages, and would welcome suggestions of those with particular meaning for the deceased or the family.

#### **2. Hymns**

Hymns should be chosen which affirm the goodness and grace of God, and which give comfort and support to those who grieve. The minister and the Director of Music Ministries will guide the selection of appropriate hymns.

#### **3. Other Music**

The Director of Music Ministries will provide suitable sacred music and is available for consultation with the family concerning any musical selections. The appropriateness of musical selections will be determined by the church music department and the minister. Instrumentalists or vocalists may also be employed, but must be approved and contracted by the Director of Music Ministries. The family is expected to cover the cost of hiring any musician other than the church's organist.

#### **4. Homily**

A brief homily, which includes scripture, remembrances of the deceased, words of comfort, and proclamation of the resurrection, will be delivered by the officiating minister of First Presbyterian Church. Eulogies are not ordinarily given, however, brief eulogies may be permissible upon the approval of the officiating minister.

#### **5. The Pall**

A pall is a large cloth that covers the casket during the funeral service. It represents the covering of the Christian by the righteousness of Christ, and alludes to the baptismal waters

of death and a new life in Jesus. Since righteousness is an unmerited gift from God and all people stand equal in the sight of God, the outer appearance of the casket in its cost or beauty is of no consequence to the Christian community. First Presbyterian Church has a pall which is available for use in funerals in the Sanctuary or Chapel. The pall may not be removed from the church property.

## **6. Flowers**

The family of the deceased may furnish one or two floral arrangements on the pulpit. Additional floral arrangements received by the family may be placed in the Fellowship Hall or other room used for receiving guests.

### **Other Fraternal, Civic, or Military Rites**

*The service shall be complete in itself, and any fraternal, civic, or military rites should be conducted separately. [Book of Order, Directory for Worship]*

The service of worship is an act of the Christian community in which the wider community is welcome. If other rites take place, these rites shall be conducted apart from the service and place of worship.

### **COSTS AND FEES FOR MEMORIAL AND FUNERAL SERVICES**

For members of the church, there are no charges or fees for use of the church facilities, for worship bulletins, or for the services of the minister and organist. Costs to the family related to the memorial or funeral service will be for the flowers the family provides, for additional musicians and vocalists the family may request, and for food services arranged by the family. The purchase of a Columbarium niche and related burial expenses are arranged through the church business office.