

PLANNING GUIDE



A Witness to the Resurrection and Thanksgiving for Life

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A Guide for Planning Your Funeral

A Version for use in Shandon Presbyterian Church

The stress on families when they experience a death is great. Not only are they dealing with their loss and sorrow, but they must also make many decisions immediately. You have an opportunity to make a great gift to your family by prayerfully considering your wishes for your funeral or memorial service, discussing these with your family, and presenting them and the church with a copy of your wishes and suggestions.

NOTE: Before you begin, we suggest you read the following excerpts from the *Directory for Worship* in the *Book of Order, PC(USA)*:

W-4.10001 Christians and Death

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.

W-4.10002 Planning Arrangements

Because it is difficult under emotional stress to plan wisely, the session should encourage members 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, or 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 session is responsible for establishing general policies concerning the observance of services on the occasion of death.

W-4.10003 Setting of the 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. 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. This service may be observed on any day. A request to observe such a service as a part of the Lord's Day service or to celebrate the Lord's Supper as a part of a service on the occasion of death requires the approval of the session.

W-4.10004 Form and Order

The service begins with scriptural sentences. 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 supplication
- (8) for faith and grace for all who are present;
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.

W-4.10005 Alternatives and Options

This service may be observed before or after the committal of the body. 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. 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.

W-4.10006 Service of 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.

An Outline of the Funeral: A Service of Witness to the Resurrection

[Placing of the Pall]
Sentences of Scripture
Psalm, Hymn, or Spiritual
Prayer
[Confession and Pardon]
Readings from Scripture
Sermon
Affirmation of Faith
[Hymn]
Prayers of Thanksgiving, Supplication, and Intercession

Lord's Prayer

Or

Psalm, Hymn, or Spiritual
Invitation to the Table
Great Thanksgiving
Lord's Prayer
Breaking of the Bread
Communion of the People

Commendation
Blessing
Procession (Psalm, Hymn, or Biblical Song)

Comment

When death occurs, the pastor and other officers of the congregation should be informed as soon as possible, in order that they might provide appropriate consolation and support to the family and friends, and assist them in making arrangements for the funeral.

Except for compelling reasons, the service for a believing Christian is normally held in the church, at a time when the congregation can be present. When the deceased was not known to be a believer or had no connection with a church, then it is appropriate to hold the service elsewhere and to omit or adapt portions of it as seems fitting. Ceremonies and rites of fraternal, civic, or military organizations, if any, should occur at some other time and place.

Family members, friends, or members of the congregation may be invited by the minister to share in the service.

This order is intended for use with the body or ashes of the deceased present, but it may be adapted for use as a memorial service. The committal may follow or precede this service, as preferred. When the body is present, the coffin should be closed before the service begins. It may be covered with a white funeral pall.

List of Suggested Readings for Funerals

Old Testament

- * 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, 26-29 Return to the Lord with all your heart
- Zech. 8:1-8 Children playing in the streets of the city
- * Isa. 65:17-25 I create new heavens and a new earth
- Lam. 3:1-9, 19-23 The Lord's steadfast love

Psalms (Read or sung)

- 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, 35-38, Death is swallowed in victory
- 42-44, 50, 53-58
- 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. 11:1-3, 13-16; 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 the great 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 14:1-6, 25-27 Let not your hearts be troubled

Hymns - from *Glory to God* (The Presbyterian Hymnal)

Living and Dying in Christ - Numbers 801-836 (includes:)

Abide with Me
Be Still, My Soul
If Thou but Trust in God to Guide Thee
Just a Closer Walk with Thee
Lift High the Cross
More Love to Thee, O Christ
My Faith Looks Up to Thee
My Shepherd Will Supply my Need (Psalm 23)
O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go
Swing Low, Sweet Chariot
There is a Place of Quiet Rest

General

Amazing Grace	649	
A Mighty Fortress Is Our God		275
Blest Be the Tie That Binds		306
Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing		475
Day Is Done		676
Eternal Father, Strong to Save		8
Fairest Lord Jesus		630
For All the Saints		326
Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken		81
God Be With You Till We Meet Again		542
God of Our Life		686
Great Is Thy Faithfulness		39
How Great Thou Art		625
I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art		624
I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord		310
In Christ There is No East or West	317, 318	
Lead On, O King Eternal		269
Love Divine		366
My Lord, What a Morning		352
My Shepherd Will Supply My Need		803
O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go		833
Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven		620
The Day Thou Gavest, Lord, Is Ended		677
Thine Is the Glory		238
What A Friend We Have In Jesus		465

This guide was prepared for Shandon Presbyterian Church, Columbia, SC (Edited from First Presbyterian Church of Tallahassee, with thanks.)

Suggestions for A Service of Witness to the Resurrection

To those who will make decisions for my Christian funeral:

I have given prayerful thought to the service of worship following my death. Here are my preferences. I realize that circumstances may apply which will make it impossible to fulfill every suggestion. I offer these preferences as a gift to those who will plan my funeral and those who will worship God at that service.

My full name and date of birth: _____

If our pastor is not available, I would like _____
to be asked to lead the service.

In addition to the pastor, I would like the following to be asked to assist the pastor:

I would like the following to serve as pallbearers:

I would like the following to participate in the service:

I would like the following to sing a solo or anthem:

I hope the following passages will be read:

I would like these hymns to be sung by the congregation:

I wish the service to be held at _____

I wish () do not wish () for my remains to be present at the service of worship.

I want the committal (burial) to take place at _____

I prefer that both the funeral and committal services take place at graveside
Yes () No ()

I prefer: () that my body be buried in the earth
 () that my body be given to medical research
 () that my body be cremated and that my ashes be:
 buried () placed in a vault () scattered ()

I have () have not () made arrangements for the placement of body/ashes as above
and documents are located

I would like memorial gifts to be made to:

Other preferences and information important to those who plan my funeral:

Signature _____

Date _____

*Please give copies of this document to the church office and to members of your
family*

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