

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(Romans 8:38-39)

We Belong to God



A guide for funerals and memorial services

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.” (John 11:25-26). As Christians, we believe this promise to be true, and we proclaim this good news even at the time of death.

In the Presbyterian tradition, funerals and memorial services are described as Services of Witness to the Resurrection. After the death of a loved one, we gather to worship to remember the power of God, trusting God’s love and grace and seeking peace through Jesus Christ, who grieves alongside us.

This guide can be used to help you make plans in advance for your own funeral or memorial. Writing down your wishes and sharing them with family or friends is a gift to those who will one day plan a service to celebrate your life. Doing this relieves their burden of guessing what you intended and frees them from making challenging decisions in a time of sorrow.

This guide is also designed for families who are currently planning a funeral or memorial service for a loved one. The suggestions are meant as a starting point to help you through this time.

One of the privileges as a pastor is to journey with families in times of pain and loss. I hope this information will help provide answers to many of your questions. Please know that you are not in this alone. Our church family is here to support you however we can.

May God hold you and your family in love.

Peace,

Rev. Dr. David M. Bender
Faith Presbyterian Church

Suggested Order of Worship

Prelude

Call to Worship and Prayer

Words of Remembrance

(Brief words from family members or friends)

Hymn

Readings from Scripture

Thanksgiving Message

Hymn, if desired

Affirmation of Faith

Commendation

Blessing and Benediction

Recessional

During this time, the pastor leads the family out.

*This is simply a starting point for worship planning.
The pastor will guide you through selecting different elements and making decisions about any omissions
or additions you wish to make.*

Scripture Readings

The following are offered as suggestions of passages that proclaim the hope of the resurrection and love of God through Jesus Christ. The family is also welcome to select other favorite Scripture, or the pastor will select appropriate readings.

Job 19:23-27	<i>I know that my redeemer lives</i>
Isaiah 40:1-11	<i>Comfort my people</i>
Isaiah 40:28-31	<i>Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength</i>
Isaiah 65:17-25	<i>I create new heavens and a new earth</i>
Ecclesiastes 3:1-15	<i>For everything there is a season</i>
Psalms 23	<i>The Lord is my shepherd</i>
Psalms 46:1-5, 10-11	<i>The Lord is a very present help in trouble</i>
Psalms 121	<i>I lift up my eyes to the hills</i>
Psalms 130	<i>Out of the depths I cry to the Lord</i>
Psalms 139:1-12	<i>Where shall I go from your spirit?</i>
Matthew 5:1-12a	<i>The Beatitudes</i>
Matthew 18:1-5, 10	<i>The greatest in the kingdom of heaven</i>
Matthew 25:31-46	<i>As you did it to one of the least of these</i>
Mark 10:13-16	<i>Let the children come to me</i>
Luke 23:33, 39-43	<i>Today you will be with me in paradise</i>
John 3:16-21	<i>God so loved the world</i>
John 11:17-27	<i>I am the resurrection and the life</i>
John 14:1-6, 25-27	<i>Let not your hearts be troubled</i>
Romans 8:14-23, 31-39	<i>Nothing can separate us from the love of God</i>
Romans 14:7-9, 10b-12	<i>Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's</i>
1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 42-44, 50, 53-58	<i>Death is swallowed in victory</i>
2 Corinthians 4:16-5:1	<i>Visible things are temporary, invisible things eternal</i>
Philippians 3:20-21	<i>Our citizenship is in heaven</i>
Colossians 3:1-17	<i>Set your minds on things that are above</i>
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	<i>The comfort of Christ's coming</i>
Hebrews 11:1-3, 12:1-2	<i>Faith and the cloud of witnesses</i>
Revelation 21:1-2, 22:3-5	<i>A new heaven and a new earth</i>

Hymns

The following hymns are particularly appropriate for funeral or memorial services. Families are welcome to select other hymns or spiritual songs to be included, or to choose not to include congregational singing.

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
Abide with Me
Amazing Grace
Be Still, My Soul
Be Thou My Vision
Blessed Assurance
Come Thou Almighty King
Crown Him with Many Crowns
Fairest Lord Jesus
For All the Saints
For the Beauty of the Earth
Great is Thy Faithfulness
Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah
He Leadeth Me
Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!
How Firm a Foundation
How Great Thou Art
I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art
Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise
Jesus Christ is Risen Today
Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee
Lead On, O King Eternal
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
My Faith Looks Up to Thee
Near to the Heart of God
Now Thank We All Our God
O God, Our Help in Ages Past
O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go
Precious Lord, Take My Hand
The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll not Want (Psalm 23)
The Strife is O'er
When Peace Like a River

Special Music

All music should bring glory and honor to God. Additional music, including solos or instrumental pieces, can be appropriate. The pastor will guide you in discerning and making decisions on music.

The pastor will also facilitate communication between the family and the church pianist regarding any requests for instrumental music before, during, or after the service. The pianist may also be available for accompaniment, if needed, and will determine necessary rehearsal.

Any musicians not affiliated with our church must be approved in advance. Pre-recorded music requires copyright licensing.

Affirmations of Faith

The following are from the confessional statements of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and proclaim some of what the church has believed throughout the ages. Families are also welcome to select another statement from our confessions or similar appropriate words, including those found in Scripture (such as Psalm 23).

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen

From A Brief Statement of Faith

In life and in death we belong to God. Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel, whom alone we worship and serve. . . With believers in every time and place, we rejoice that nothing in life or in death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, Amen

Arrangements

The pastor will work with the family for all aspects related to the worship service. The pastor will also help coordinate conversations with the funeral director and any additional church members and groups providing support to the family.

Timing

In most cases, a funeral service takes place within a few days of death, but a memorial service at a later date is also appropriate. The pastor will advise the family of the availability of the church and will arrange a time to meet with the family to plan the service.

Military Honors

All Military Honors and rites need to be arranged through the funeral home or crematory in advance.

Committal Service

The worship service may precede or follow a brief committal service or may occur at another date and time.

Reception

The Fellowship Team is available to assist with coordinating, preparing, and serving refreshments after the service if desired.

Flowers

Flowers for the service or reception are welcome. They should be delivered to the church two hours before the service or as arranged with the church contact. All flowers should be removed after the service unless other arrangements have been made.

Memorial Gifts

The church appreciates memorial gifts that the family or friends wish to make. For specific gifts, the pastor can advise the family or provide suggestions.

Arrangements (continued)

Honoraria

Providing space and services for families is a ministry of compassion on behalf of our congregation. The church facilities are made available whenever possible to host a funeral or memorial service. A list of suggested honoraria for those who make the service possible, including Pastor, musicians and AV technicians, will be provided to the family during the planning phase.

Columbarium

Our church has a columbarium intended for members and their immediate families, as well as those with strong ties to the church. A copy of the application is available in the church office. Space is limited and should be purchased in advance.

Coping with Grief

The support of you and your family does not end with a funeral or memorial service. The pastor and the Congregational Care Team are available to continue meeting with you and your family as you mourn your loss.

Planning Guide

Full Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Date of Death: _____

Scripture Readings (at least 2)

Hymns (usually 2 or 3)

Special Music (optional – sacred solos or instrumental)

Affirmation of Faith (if desired)

Family Members or Friends to Speak (optional)

Other Wishes (Note: The arrangement for military honors must be made through a funeral home or crematory).

Pall Bearers _____

Memorial Donations _____

Advanced Planning Information

Please complete and provide copies to close family or friends.

Name: _____

I would like to have the following relative(s)/friend(s) oversee the arrangements for my service:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

I have made the following arrangements in advance: (If marked, please include additional information about where to find documents).

☐ Living Will (file with your physician, too)

☐ Last Will and Testament

☐ Funeral Home _____

☐ Donation of body for medical purposes

☐ Organ Donation

☐ Burial Arrangements

☐ Cremation

☐ Cemetery

☐ Columbarium

☐ Memorial gifts

☐ Particular stories of your life and faith you would like to have shared at this service