



Memorial Service and Funeral Planning Guide

Third Presbyterian Church

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Dear Friends,

“In life and in death, we belong to God...” These words, which begin the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s Brief Statement of Faith, express our understanding that the end of this life is not the end of life itself.

Christians live in light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is a central doctrine of our faith and shapes our attitudes and responses to the event of death. We claim the promise of resurrection, the promise of glad reunion with God and with those whom we love.

Still, we know that “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” (Book of Order, W-4.10001).

This resource is intended to aid loved ones in decision making at the time of death, or to assist in planning for the eventuality of one’s own death. We make such plans knowing that the plans themselves bear witness to our faith.

In the face of human finitude and death, I invite you to hear once again the Apostle Paul’s assurance that *“neither death, nor life ... nor anything else in all creation, will ever be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Romans 8:39).

Grace and Peace,
The Pastoral Staff of Third Presbyterian Church

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What to Do When a Death Occurs

The death of a spouse, family member, or close friend can be accompanied by emotions that seem overwhelming. Yet, loved ones are often called upon to make very practical, urgent decisions. It is important that loved ones receive help and support at this time.

Actions upon Death

- If death occurs at home, contact the appropriate authorities, such as 911 or the attending home hospice organization;
- Call the funeral director;
- Call the church office (585.271.6513);
- Call close friends or family who can provide personal support.

Role of Pastor and Church Staff

The **pastor** will assist in planning the type of service you desire and will be the contact between the church and funeral home. The **organist** will assist with music selections.

The **church office** will assist with a printed bulletin for the service, and can provide information about the Third Church columbarium.

Role of Funeral Directors

Consult with your funeral home about the services that it provides. Some services offered by funeral homes include:

- Securing necessary permits and death certificates
- Transporting, care, and custody of the body
- Assisting in arranging for burial or cremation
- Assisting in arranging for cemetery space, gravesite preparations, etc.
- Providing information on caskets, urns, vaults and other merchandise
- Coordinating service details with the minister
- Placement of obituaries and death notices in the newspaper
- Arranging transportation for family members prior to, during, and after the service
- Contacting those who will serve as casket bearers
- Notifying fraternal organizations
- Coordinating military honors

Decisions Concerning the Body

In our tradition, Christians may consider a number of options for the physical body of the deceased. Decisions about handling the body should be shared with the pastor and the funeral director. Choices include:

- **Burial**—the funeral director will provide choices for casket and plot;
- **Cremation**—the remains are placed in an urn and may be scattered or interred. Third Presbyterian Church has a columbarium available for the interment of ashes. Inquiries about the purchase of a columbarium niche may be directed to the church office;
- **Donation**—prior to death, arrangements may be made to donate the body to medical use or research.

Viewing the Body

The decision to have a viewing or to arrange calling hours at the funeral home is largely a matter of personal choice. Private viewing can sometimes be an important factor in longer term healing.

The church service focuses on worshipping God, consoling the living, and remembering the life of the deceased person. If the body is present at the church for the service, the casket remains closed during the service.

Including our Children

It is healthy to include children in the family's sorrow, including a viewing. The family may wish to encourage, but not require, children's participation at a viewing, funeral, or memorial service.

Reactions to death will vary with the age of the child. There will be questions that should be answered honestly and factually. To some questions, "I don't know" is the best we can do. Answers stating what we believe will give children confidence in the future and in a God who can be trusted.

Planning for the Service

Choosing the Type of Service

The pastor will be present with loved ones at the time of loss and will help arrange the service. This worship service is a “witness to the resurrection” and a celebration of the life of the deceased. The congregation gathers to proclaim their faith, their hope in the resurrection, to support the bereaved, and to remember the promise that nothing in life or in death will separate us from God’s love in Christ Jesus.

There are several forms of services:

- **Funeral**—Funeral service is the appropriate term when the casket or urn with the deceased’s remains is present. If the casket is present, it remains closed during the worship service. This service is usually conducted within days of the death.
- **Memorial**—Memorial service is the appropriate term when the service takes place without the presence of casket or urn. This service may take place days, weeks, or in some cases months after the death. The longer timeline may allow more opportunity for friends and family to receive notice and make arrangements to attend the service.
- **Committal**—A committal service is a short service at the graveside or columbarium, intended to minister to the needs of loved ones. It consists of brief scripture readings and prayers. Committals may be scheduled before or after a memorial service, or after the conclusion of a funeral.

Choosing the Location for the Service

Funerals and memorial services are usually held in the chapel or sanctuary of Third Presbyterian Church. This grounds the service in the context of the worshipping community to which the deceased has belonged. It recognizes the role that the community has had in supporting and nurturing the deceased in the life of faith, providing consolation in sorrow and sharing joy at good news. Arrangements may also be made to hold the service at the funeral home, cemetery chapel, or other appropriate location.

Suggested Order of Service

The Service of Witness to the Resurrection has some basic components including the reading of scripture, prayers, remembrances, homily, and musical elements. The use of hymns, eulogies, and solos may vary. Not everyone will wish to include all of these elements.

The content of the funeral or memorial service is the responsibility of the officiating pastor and is guided by the Directory for Worship in the Presbyterian *Book of Order* and the *Book of Common Worship*. A basic outline for this service follows:

- Prelude;
- Opening Sentences;
- Prayer of Invocation;
- Psalm, Hymn, or Spiritual;
- Readings from Scripture;
- Solo;
- Reflections—Eulogies by family members or friends (suggested limit of 1 or 2); ● Readings from Scripture;
- Homily;
- Hymn;
- Affirmation of Faith;
- Prayer of Thanksgiving;
- The Lord's Prayer;
- Hymn;
- Commendation; ● Benediction; ● Postlude.

Reception after the Service

The Board of Deacons of Third Presbyterian Church is available to provide a memorial reception following the service, if requested. Deacons will provide cookies, coffee, tea, and punch, and can assist with service of other food items provided by friends or family.

If you desire a memorial reception, please let the pastor know so that the Deacons may make the proper arrangements. Although there is no charge for a memorial reception, donations to the reception fund are welcome as they help the Board of Deacons maintain this ministry of care.

Suggested Readings from Scripture The Psalms

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|-----------------------|--|
| • Psalm 16:5–11 | The Lord is my chosen portion |
| • Psalm 23 | The Lord is my shepherd |
| • Psalm 39:4–5, 12 | Lord, let me know my end |
| • Psalm 42:1–6a | As a deer longs for flowing streams |
| • Psalm 46:1–5, 10–11 | God is our refuge and strength |
| • Psalm 90:1–10, 12 | Lord, you have been our dwelling place |
| • Psalm 91 | You who live in the shelter of the Most High |
| • Psalm 103 | Bless the Lord, O my soul |
| • Psalm 106:1–5 | O give thanks to the Lord |
| • Psalm 116:1–9 | The Lord has heard my voice |
| • Psalm 121 | I lift up my eyes to the hills |
| • Psalm 130 | Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord |
| • Psalm 139:1–12 | O Lord, you have searched me and known me |
| • Psalm 145 | I will extol you, my God and King |
| • Psalm 146 | Praise the Lord, O my soul |

Old Testament

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| • Job 19:23–27 | I know that my redeemer lives |
| • Ecclesiastes 3:1–15 | For everything there is a season |
| • Isaiah 25:6–9 | God will swallow up death forever |
| • Isaiah 40:1–11 | Comfort my people |
| • Isaiah 40:28–31 | Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength |
| • Isaiah 43:1–3a, 18–19, 25 | When you pass through the waters I will be with you |
| • Isaiah 55:6–13 | Seek the Lord while he may be found |
| • Isaiah 61:1–4 | The Spirit of the Lord is upon me |
| • Isaiah 65:17–25 | For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth |
| • Lamentations 3:19–26 | The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases |
| • Daniel 12:1–3 | Many of those who sleep in the dust shall awake |

New Testament

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| • Matthew 5:1–12a | The Beatitudes |
| • Luke 23:33, 39–43 | Remember me when you come into heaven |
| • John 3:16–21 | For God so loved the world |

- John 6:37–40 Anyone who comes to me I will never drive away
- John 6:47–58 I am the bread of life
- John 11:17–26 I am the resurrection and the life
- John 14:1–6, 25–27 In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places
- Romans 8:31–39 [Nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God
- Romans 14:7–9, 10c–12 Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s
- 1 Corinthians 15:35–44 What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable
- 1 Corinthians 15:50–57 Where, O death, is your victory?
- Philippians 4:4–9 Rejoice in the Lord always
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 God will bring with him those who have died
- Hebrews 11:1–3, 13–16 Faith is the assurance of things hoped for
- Hebrews 12:1–2 Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses
- 1 Peter 1:3–9 He has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection
- 1 John 3:1–3 See what love the Father has given us
- Revelation 14:1, 6–7, 12–13 Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord
- Revelation 21:1–4 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth

Suggested Hymns

(Page numbers are from the Presbyterian Hymnal *Glory to God*)

- 8 Eternal Father, Strong to Save
- 12 Immortal, Invisible God Only Wise
- 14 For the Beauty of the Earth
- 39 Great Is Thy Faithfulness
- 65 Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah
- 269 Lead on O King Eternal
- 275 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
- 326 For All the Saints
- 436 God of Compassion, in Mercy Befriend Us
- 450 Be Thou My Vision
- 620 Praise My Soul, the King of Heaven
- 624 I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art
- 625 How Great Thou Art
- 643 Now Thank We All Our God
- 649 Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound
- 686 God of Our Life
- 687 Our God, Our Help in Ages Past
- 802 The King of Love My Shepherd Is
- 803 My Shepherd Will Supply My Need
- 806 I'll Praise My Maker
- 817 We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight
- 821 My Life Flows On
- 829 My Faith Looks Up to Thee
- 833 O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go
- 834 Precious Lord, Take My Hand
- 836 Abide With Me
- 840 When Peace like a River (It is Well with My Soul)

Preparing for One's Own Death

Spiritual Planning and Resources

Knowing our own mortality, Christians believe that death should be faced long before its anticipated occurrence. Because many decisions can be made well in advance, Third Church encourages its members to pre-plan the arrangements that will be necessary at the time of death. Planning for the end of life can be a generous act of care for your loved ones and will ease the burden of decision-making they face upon your death.

This resource is only a beginning. It aims to help you start the planning process in preparation for your own death. Because we all have different preferences, these plans and decisions should not be private. Rather, they should be discussed and shared with your loved ones—both to gain suggestions and to ensure that your wishes are known.

The Third Church pastors are willing and available to help you in this process.

We recommend that you complete the enclosed “Preference and Requests” worksheet and return it to Third Presbyterian Church where it will be placed in your family file.

Decisions That Can Be Made In Advance

- **Notification**—Make a list of friends and loved ones that you want to be notified at or near the time of your death.
- **Disposition of the Body**—Choose burial, cremation, or arrange to donate your body to medical science.
- **Funeral Home Arrangements**—Choose a funeral home and director, who will help you select mortuary services, embalming or cremation, casket or urn, cemetery plot or columbarium niche, viewings or calling hours.
- **Service Arrangements**—Choose between funeral or memorial service, and when the committal will take place. Select the location for the service. Select scriptures, hymns, and other music that you would like to be included in the service.
- **Personal Information**—Make note of the information that will need to be included in death notices and obituaries: full name, date of birth, name of survivors, designation of memorial gifts, any honors or associations that you would like included.

Preferences and Requests Worksheet

FAMILY INFORMATION

DATE _____

Full Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Date and Place of Birth _____

Spouse, Partner, other Primary Personal Contact

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Deceased or Prior Spouses (if applicable)

Name _____

Address _____

Date and Place of:

Marriage _____

Divorce _____

Death _____

Children and/or Significant Persons

Name _____ Relationship _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Name _____ Relationship _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Name _____ Relationship _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Name _____ Relationship _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Name _____ Relationship _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Knowledgeable and Trusted Individuals

PHYSICIAN _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

ATTORNEY _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY

Person named to Act _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

HEALTH CARE PROXY/LIVING WILL

Person named to Act _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

EXECUTOR OF WILL

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

FUNERAL HOME _____

Funeral Home Director _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

MILITARY SERVICE_____
_____**OTHERS TO NOTIFY** (include contact information)_____

_____**NOTES**_____

Third Presbyterian Church

Funeral/Memorial Service Planning

DATE _____

NAME _____

Primary contact person _____

Relationship _____ Phone _____

Funeral Home _____

☐ Burial, Cemetery, Plot _____

☐ Cremation, Interment location _____

☐ Donation of Body, organization _____

SERVICE

- ☐ Funeral (closed casket or urn)
- ☐ Memorial
- ☐ Reception following the service, if desired

USHERS

- ☐ Provided by Family
- ☐ Provided by Funeral Home

LOCATION

- ☐ Third Church Sanctuary
- ☐ Third Church Chapel
- ☐ Other Location _____

MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS made to:

- ☐ Third Presbyterian Church

□ Other _____

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE SERVICE

Hymns

Scripture

Additional Music (organ, instumental, vocal)

Speakers

Other Notes
