



## When a Loved One Has Died Information about Memorial Services at First Presbyterian Church

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.  
Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. - 1 John 4: 7

*When someone we love has died, we are often full of grief and confusion. This document is intended to provide clear information about the church's policies that may be helpful at such a time. May God be with you in your time of loss.*

*This guide will answer your questions.*

- **What services can the church provide?**
- **What facilities are available at the church?**
- **What happens at the planning meeting with the pastor?**
- **What is considered when planning the service?**
- **What about the reception?**
- **How should we coordinate interment and the service?**
- **What about memorial gifts?**

It will also help you think on the few questions you may be asked. Don't worry. We are here to walk with you through this process.



*First Presbyterian Church*

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THE REV. DR. SANDRA R. TICE, PASTOR

**What the church can provide.** The church will provide at no cost to members pastoral, office, and custodial services and facilities for a memorial service and a reception. We will prepare printed orders of service for guests. In addition, the Board of Deacons will pay the cost for our accompanist for the service, and will arrange a reception in Fireside Lounge or Fellowship Hall. You will be responsible for the cost of additional musicians, flowers, or a caterer (should you wish them.)

**What facilities are available at the church?** Our sanctuary with its pipe organ seats 550 people. If you expect fewer than 125 people, the chapel provides a more intimate service. The expected size of the service will dictate the place for the reception: either Fireside Lounge or Fellowship Hall, although it is possible to have a small outside reception on the North Court.

**Planning the Service-** Prior to the service, those responsible for the service will meet with the pastor to plan the order of service.

***We regret that we cannot schedule memorial services for Fridays or Sundays.***

We often choose cover art for the order of service at this time, while thinking of things this person loved- images from nature, crosses, images that suggest music have all been used. We stay away from using photographs of the deceased, so as to focus on the hope of Christ and resurrection and not the loss of the person we miss.



**Please do not post the service date or time on social media until you have confirmation from the Pastor and office staff.**

AN IMAGE COMING TO MIND IS...

Some families choose to print their own remembrance card or folder, with a photograph and perhaps a poem, a brief biography or short word of blessing. These can easily be distributed at the door or at a reception, and can serve as a keepsake for those present.

A FAVORITE SCRIPTURE OR POEM IS...

The pastor will ask if those attending the service will sing a hymn(s) and what they should be. You may also wish to suggest scriptures that are favorites or seem particularly appropriate. Short, favorite poems can also be read. If you are not sure what music or scripture to use, you need not worry. The pastor can easily suggest several options. Remember, the design of the service is the responsibility of the pastor, who is charged that this be a celebration of the Resurrection and the goodness of God.

SOME FAVORITE HYMNS ARE...

**Music-** Nearly all of us love some kind of music that is not sacred music, and technology makes music more available and portable than ever before. The music used in a worship service, however, should point our attention to God. If there is a particular hymn or piece of music that you would like to request, you may do so, but the final say on instrumental music lies with the organist/accompanist. Secular and recorded music may be used at the reception.



## MUSIC GOOD FOR THE RECEPTION

**Remembering the deceased-** the purpose of a memorial service is to give thanks to God for the gift of life, and to comfort those who mourn with the reminder of God's unfailing love. It is appropriate, as we give thanks, to remember the things that made this individual a particularly precious gift from God. Ordinarily a memorial service will include some remembrances. You can help by reflecting on what qualities you admired in your loved one, and ways in which their life reflected the grace of God. It is helpful to have information such as important dates or places that help tell their story. The pastor will be glad to provide a copy of these remarks to the family following the service.



## IMPORTANT LIFE MILESTONES...

**Other speakers-** Sometimes it is suggested that family members or close friends participate in the service and make remarks. We generally discourage this for two reasons. From a practical point of view, it is often extremely difficult to keep composure when one rises and looks out on all the loving and grief-stricken faces that have gathered. Even experienced and gifted public speakers find this a particularly difficult task. It also can result in a duplication of comments. From a spiritual point of view, we encourage the chief mourners to come to the service not to lead, but to receive the comfort God wants to offer them through scripture, word, music, and the gathered community of the faithful. We encourage you to let the church care for you at this time. If you wish to write some remarks, the pastor would be glad to read them for you. If you feel a family member must speak, they should plan on 3-4 minutes (about a page and a half) and should provide the pastor a copy of their remarks prior to the service to prevent duplication.

**Pass the mike.** A practice which is sometimes requested is to "open up the service" for those who may want to make spontaneous personal comments. These kinds of remembrances are probably best left for a time at the reception rather than at the service, as intense emotions and variety of perspectives have been known to surface, and it often results in an awkward or uncomfortably long service.

**Civil or fraternal services.** Presbyterian pastors are under the mandate of the *Book of Order, Directory for Worship* which instructs that civil or fraternal service should be "at another time in another place." If, for instance, a family wants a lodge to conduct part of the service, the lodge might conduct the committal at the graveside and the pastor the service at the church.

**The casket.** Ordinarily, a casket is not present in Presbyterian services, in order to keep the focus on God and on hope rather than on death and loss. In those rare cases where a casket is present, the *Directory for Worship* requires it be closed<sup>1</sup>.

**Interment first?** We suggest that the interment precede the memorial service. That short service may be private or open to guests. It generally lasts about 10 minutes. Then folks head to the church for the memorial service, which is about a half hour in length, then have a reception. In this way, the family ends up surrounded with friends in a happy, comfortable setting rather than standing alone at the graveside.

**Place and time of the committal.** The pastor will accompany the family to the place of committal at locations within a reasonable distance. If interment is at a distance, the pastor may help make arrangements for someone in the area to conduct the service. The committal does not necessarily need to be on the day of the memorial service.

I can never escape from your Spirit!  
I can never get away from your presence!  
If I go up to heaven, you are there;  
if I go down to the grave, you are there.  
If I ride the wings of the morning,  
if I dwell by the farthest oceans,  
even there your hand will guide me,  
and your strength will support me. -Psalm 139: 7-10

**Graveside services.** What about having the service at the graveside? Some humbly feel that this is the simplest alternative, but there are some things to consider. Often those attending are older, and walking on uneven turf or standing on a hillside may be difficult or impossible. Generally there is not seating for everyone, so some will have to stand. Further, weather can make it very uncomfortable. When these complications are considered it seems wise to make the interment simple, and gather for celebration in a sanctuary.

**The Reception.** For the reception, Deacons provide suitable beverages and light refreshments. They will set up and serve. In many cases, prior to a death, the home has not been cleaned, is filled with medical equipment, etc. Further, those responsible for the service may be from out of town. Often a reception at the church is easier for everybody. The reception is the appropriate place for photos, slide shows, or displays of remembrances (people have brought quilts, or uniforms, for example), and we would be happy to provide easels for a collage or poster, tables for displays or a screen and projector for a computer slide show. Let the memorial service coordinator know if this is something you'd like to do.

**Memorial gifts.** Some designate that "in lieu of flowers," funds may be given to the church. Suggested used for memorial funds are the Memorial Music Fund, the Memorial Worship Fund, or the Campus Maintenance Fund. Receipt of funds is acknowledged to the donors by the church office. After it appears that all funds have been received, the church office will contact the family with the names of those who have sent contributions (but not the amount of individual gifts).

**The day of the service-** The family will gather in the library (or, if the group is large, the Fireside Lounge) 30 minutes prior to the service, to meet and pray with the pastor who will escort them into the sanctuary. The pastor will also escort them out and to the reception at the end of worship.

"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." - Matthew 28: 20

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<sup>1</sup> *Book of Common Worship*, © 1993 Westminster/John Knox Press, p. 911.