

Grace Presbyterian Church

Ministry of the Church at the Time of Death

What Presbyterians Believe About Death and Resurrection

What We Believe About Death

Presbyterians, as all Christians, believe that death has been conquered by God through Jesus Christ. Death is a solemn and mysterious human experience, bringing painful separation from loved ones and friends. However, we remember the bold claim of the New Testament that in Christ, God is the Victor over death and the grave.

The central doctrine of the Christian faith is the resurrection. “Jesus Christ is risen today” is not only the Easter message, it is the message of every day in the year, and it is the foundation of the life of the church. We believe that, as followers of Christ, we will share in his victory. We, of course, grieve deeply when a loved one has died, but as Christians we also celebrate the resurrection and the life that comes through Christ.

When Death Occurs

It is important that the Minister be notified immediately when there has been a death, so that you may be in touch with the spiritual and practical support the Church can offer. The Minister is available to be with family members as they go through the experience of death, and to assist in decisions as requested, including going with you to the funeral home to aid and support you in the decisions which need to be made. The Minister can counsel you regarding the funeral service and arrangements for it.

The Worship Service

The service should take place in the Sanctuary of Grace Presbyterian Church, where worship is normally held. The minister, in consultation with the family, is in charge of this service. The funeral or memorial service is a witness to God’s love offered to all people, a love that strengthens and supports, even in times of grief and loss. It is a witness to God’s promises in Jesus Christ, affirmed in Christ’s resurrection from the dead, and to the sure and certain hope of our own resurrection.

These services are a time of praise of God.

- a. At a Funeral Service, caskets should be closed for worship so we can focus on God. If the family desires a public viewing, the best place for that is generally at the funeral home the day prior to the service.
- b. We encourage the use of the congregation's pall in covering the casket. The pall provides Christian symbolism and indicates we are all equal in the eyes of God. It eliminates the need for fancy caskets or flowers for the casket.
- c. Music should focus on the love and power of God. Our organist will play the music keeping in mind the family's wishes and in consultation with the minister and family.
- d. The Book of Common Worship and the Funeral Supplemental Guide, and the Directory of Worship, available in the office, suggest many hymns prayers and scripture passages suitable for the occasion.
- e. The use of bulletins, to encourage participation in worship, is recommended and will be provided by the church at no charge.
- f. We hope to personalize the worship and to reflect the life of the person who has died. The minister will provide a reading of scripture and a brief message. If the family wishes for someone to provide remembrances or a eulogy, that may be incorporated into the service or at the time of burial or interment.
- g. Because the focus of a worship service is God, we ask that flowers be kept to a minimum. Flowers may not be placed on the communion table or in a place that obstructs the view of the cross.

When There Are Children

When children are present in the family where a death occurs, two main concerns usually surface for adults: (1) What shall we tell the children? and (2) Should children be included in the family's sense of crisis and loss, the funeral, and subsequent related events?

As for what to tell children, they should be told as simply and as clearly as possible what has happened, the Christian meaning of death as a part of life in God's world, and something of what it will be like not to have that loved one in the family circle any more. Children are very intuitive and will know that something sad has happened. When adults are not honest and open with children about a death, the "not knowing" can often produce anxiety and fear. Let children be a part of the grieving process. As for including children in what happens, it is strongly suggested that children remain a close, vital part of the total experience. As Jesus told his disciples, "*Let the children come and do not forbid them,*"

About Money

A funeral at Grace Presbyterian Church is a worship service of the congregation in celebration of the resurrection and a gathering for mutual comfort and support. Consequently, there is no fee for the use of the Sanctuary or other facilities. At the discretion of the family, a monetary gift may be given to the minister. **A fee of \$150 is required for an organist.**

A contribution to the church's Memorial Fund is a fitting, enduring tribute to a friend or family member who has died. Often, people are urged to make such contributions instead of sending flowers. Memorial contributions made to the church are acknowledged individually and the family is provided with a list of those who have contributed. Memorial Gifts are placed in a special fund which is then used by the Session, with the family's approval, for special purchases of lasting value as needs arise. It is also possible to specify that Memorial Gifts be used for particular purposes (library books, Hymnals, organ repair, redecoration, etc.). You may consult with the Minister to determine an appropriate designation.

Preparing For Death

Death is often surrounded by shock, grief, and bewilderment. There are things each of us can do to make our own death somewhat easier for our loved ones, and to assure that our personal preferences are honored.

Completing the General Information, Estate Planning, and Service Planning sections of this document will assist your loved ones in their attention to taking care of your services and financial concerns.

During long, terminal illnesses, and after the death of a loved one, people need a support system. There may be strong feelings, such as anger or guilt, which may seem inappropriate, but which in reality are normal. Your church can help you. Feel free to discuss these feelings with your minister, or with trusted friends.

The grief process may take a long time. As Christians, we can help each other live our faith in this crucial area of human existence.

Remember that the Minister, officers, and members of Grace Presbyterian Church want to be with you and support you as you work through your grief, and as you put your life back together again. Turn to them for prayer and counseling, conversation and support, encouragement and assurance, and God will bless, comfort, and sustain you through your time of loss.

GUIDELINES FOR FUNERAL/MEMORIAL SERVICES

“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.”

(Book of Order, PCUSA, W-4.1003)

- At the time of death, a family member should notify the church at 501-225-3274. Notify the chosen funeral home.
- The funeral/memorial services are worship services which witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The following are the types of funeral/memorial services that are customary at Grace Presbyterian Church:
 1. Public or private burial or interment prior to a memorial service in the sanctuary.
 2. Funeral service in the sanctuary followed by burial in a local cemetery or interment of cremated remains.
 3. Graveside service only.
- Specific time and location of services are planned by the minister in consultation with the family and the funeral home.
- Opportunities to gather with friends can be held in the fellowship hall immediately before or following the worship service.
- The casket is always closed in the sanctuary. If a viewing is desired, it should take place at the funeral home.
- Audio visual media can be displayed at the reception in the fellowship hall but not in the sanctuary or chapel. Photographs may be displayed in fellowship hall.
- The casket may be covered with a white pall, or a flower spray, or the American flag. The church can provide the white pall for the casket. Flower spray or flag will be provided by the family.
- The family is responsible for flowers to be used during the worship service in the sanctuary or chapel.

- Ushers, an organist and printed bulletins are provided by the church for the funeral/memorial service of any church member. Special music (soloists, instrumentalists, etc.) is the responsibility of the family to arrange, in consultation with the minister and Music Director.

**PLANNING A SERVICE OF WITNESS TO THE
RESURRECTION**

The information in this booklet is a guide for your loved ones as they plan a service of worship and in celebration of your life. It is helpful for the church to have a copy of your wishes for your funeral or memorial service. Please copy the following pages to be kept on file at the church. Every effort will be made to honor your requests in consultation with your family (or those directed to handle your affairs) at the time of your death.

Information of: _____
(Full Name)

_____ I prefer a ___ private/___public burial or interment prior to a memorial service at the church.

_____ I prefer a funeral service at the church followed by burial or interment.

_____ I prefer a ___ private/ ___ public graveside service only.

_____ I prefer a service at the funeral home.

What is your preference for the disposition of your body at the time of your death?

- _____ traditional burial
- _____ cremation
- _____ donation to medical science

If you have willed your body or organs to medical science, where may necessary documents be located? _____

What funeral home/crematory would you prefer? _____

Have you already made arrangements at the funeral home? _____

Where is your family burial plot or niche located, if any? _____

If burial of body, which do you prefer:

_____ Mausoleum _____ Ground Burial

If cremation, what type of disposition?

_____ Burial or scattering of cremated remains _____ Niche

_____ Would your family want to have a reception after the service in our fellowship hall?

Our Congregational Care Committee will generally host a reception at the church following the service.

Other needs, please specify:

Memorial Gifts

The family may choose organizations where memorial gifts are to be sent. It is helpful for the church office to have this information as well.

Memorials should be designated to Grace Presbyterian Church:

Yes _____ No _____

Other organization(s) to be designated for memorial gifts:

Notification of memorial gifts should be sent to:

Name _____

Relationship _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

E-mail address _____

Estate Plan

Would you like to include Grace Presbyterian Church in your estate?

SERVICE SUGGESTIONS

At the time of death and, in particular, in the midst of grief, it is often very difficult for loved ones to know and select appropriate scripture readings, responsive readings, hymns and special music. The following are lists that may help you select hymns and readings that have special meaning to you or to your loved ones.

• **SUGGESTIONS FOR HYMNS:**

Hymns or other sacred music should be a part of the worship service. Below is a list of suggested hymns. Please indicate those you want to request be included in your memorial service. You may request others in the space provided.

If you would like assistance with your selection of hymns or special music, please contact the Music Director.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>A Mighty Fortress Is Our God</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty</i> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>God of the Ages, Whose Almighty Hand</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Lead On, O King Eternal</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Holy, Holy, Holy</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Amazing Grace</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Sing Praise to God, Who Reigns Above</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Be Thou My Vision</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Now Thank We All Our God</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Eternal Father, Strong to Save</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>O Worship the King</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>For All the Saints</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Our God, Our Help in Ages Past</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Lift High the Cross</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven</i> | |

Other: _____

SUGGESTIONS FOR BIBLE READINGS:

HEBREW SCRIPTURES

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| ___ Job 19:23-27 | ___ Isa. 65:17-25 |
| ___ Isa. 25:6-9 | ___ Lam. 3:19-26, 31b-32 |
| ___ Isa. 26:1-4, 19 | ___ Lam. 3:1-9, 19-23 |
| ___ Isa. 40:1-11 | ___ Ecclesiastes 3:1-15 |
| ___ Isa. 40:28-31 | |

PSALMS

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| ___ Ps. 23 | ___ Ps. 121 |
| ___ Ps. 46:1-5, 10-11 | ___ Ps. 130 |
| ___ Ps. 90:1-10, 12 | ___ Ps. 139:1-12 |
| ___ Ps. 103 | |

EPISTLES

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| ___ Rom. 8:14-23, 31-39 | ___ 2 Corinthians 4: 16-5:1 |
| ___ Rom. 14:7-9, 10b-12 | ___ 1 Thess. 4:13-18 |
| ___ 1 Cor. 15:20-26, 35-38,
42-44, 50, 53-58 | ___ 2 Tim. 2:8-13 |
| | ___ Rev. 21:1-4, 22-25, 22:3-5 |

GOSPELS

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| ___ Matt. 5:1-12a | ___ Luke 23:33, 39-43 |
| ___ Matt. 25:31-46 | ___ John 11:17-27 |
| ___ Mark 10:13-16 | ___ John 14:1-6, 25-27 |

Other scripture readings: _____

Other readings or poems which I would like the minister to consider:
