



# A Guide for Christian Memorial and Funeral Services

FIRST  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH OF HIGHLANDS

*CHRIST'S CHURCH WITH ITS DOORS OPEN WIDE*

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## *Introduction*

The very center of the Gospel focuses upon the victory over death by God in Jesus Christ. Just as the church embraces us in our baptism and throughout our Christian life, so it should embrace us in our death and in our hope of resurrection to eternal life. The purpose of this booklet is to assist members and friends of the First Presbyterian Church of Highlands in the realistic consideration of this eventuality and the decisions that are required at the death of a loved one.

The resurrection is a central doctrine of the Christian faith and shapes Christian's attitudes and responses to the event of death so that even 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.

Because it is difficult under emotional stress to plan wisely, the Session encourages family members to discuss and plan in advance the arrangements which will be necessary at the time of death, including those decisions about the Christian options of burial, cremation, or organ donation for medical purposes. These plans should provide for arrangements which are simple, which bear witness to the resurrection hope, and in which the Christian community is central.

By prior consideration and planning for an appropriate service of worship the family of the deceased can be relieved of some difficult decisions while honoring the intentions of the deceased.

## *Ministerial Staff*

Upon the death of a loved one, a minister of First Presbyterian Church should be notified as soon as possible. This is best accomplished by contacting the church office. Our ministers also

earnestly desire to know those who need comfort and counsel as they face death. By being involved early in situations of death or impending death, the minister can help immensely with the necessary funeral arrangements, as well as caring for the spiritual needs of those involved. Another minister may assist in the service at the invitation of the presiding minister.

## *Types of Services*

All services conducted by a minister of the First Presbyterian Church of Highlands are services of worship for the community of faith. While the form of services may differ, each is a Service of Witness to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- *Memorial Service*  
The Memorial Service is a service where the body is not present. Interment of the remains in a Service of Committal has either preceded the Memorial Service or will take place at a later time.
- *Funeral Service*  
The Funeral Service is a service where the body is present in either a casket or an urn. The Funeral Service is preceded by or concluded with a Service of Committal at the burial site.
- *Graveside Service*  
The Graveside Service is a Service that takes place at the burial site. The Service of Committal is a part of the Graveside Service.

## *Service Location*

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 faith community's continuing life and witness to the resurrection. The Service shall be under the direction of the pastor.

The Sanctuary is an appropriate place for a Memorial or Funeral Service. Here is where we worship every Sunday. Here is

where we baptize children, celebrate marriage, gather at the Lord's Table, remember the love and grace of God. Here we are surrounded by the symbols of our Christian faith. In this place we have tangible reminders of the "great cloud of witnesses" that surrounds us and of the community of faith that supports us with compassion and love.

### ***Visitation and Reception***

The Parlor and Coleman Hall both provide a warm and familiar place for visitation with family and friends. Members are encouraged to use this facility for visitation as a part of their arrangements following the Memorial or Funeral Service. On an occasion when the local funeral home facilities may not be of adequate size, the Sanctuary may be used for viewing the day prior to the service.

### ***The Service of Witness to the Resurrection***

Memorial, Funeral and Graveside Services are acts of worship among the Christian community. The purpose of such Services of Worship are to glorify God, to affirm our belief in the resurrection to life everlasting, and to comfort the bereaved. Although gratitude and honor are to be expressed to God for the life and witness of the deceased, the focus of worship is upon God; therefore, prolonged and undue attention upon the deceased is discouraged.

### ***The Order of Worship***

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. 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.

### ***Scriptures***

The scriptures are a rich source to which Christians and Jews alike have turned for comfort and assurance in times of grief. The presiding minister will guide the selection of appropriate scripture passages and would welcome suggestions of those with particular meaning to the family of the deceased.

### ***Hymns***

Hymns should be chosen which affirm the goodness and grace of God, and which give comfort and support to those who grieve. The presiding minister and organist/music coordinator will guide the selection of appropriate hymns.

### ***Service Music***

The First Presbyterian Church organist will provide suitable sacred music and is available for consultation with the family concerning the musical selections. The appropriateness of musical selection will be determined by the Worship and Music Ministry. Pre-recorded music shall not be used. The family is expected to pay the cost of any musicians other than the church organist/music coordinator.

### ***Cremation Urn***

In the case of cremation, the urn containing the ashes may be placed on a pedestal near the communion table.

### ***Flowers***

In keeping with the simplicity and understanding of the Christian faith to avoid ostentation, flowers in the sanctuary should be limited. This will encourage worshipers to focus their attention on the promises of Scripture and the grace of God. Additional flowers

may be placed in the Ravenel Room or in Coleman Hall.

### ***Other Fraternal, Civic, or Military Rites***

The Service shall be complete in itself, and any fraternal, civic, or military rites should be conducted separately.

The Service of Worship is an act of the Christian community in which the wider community is welcome. If other rites take place, these rites shall be conducted apart from the service and the sanctuary.

### ***Cost and Fees***

There are no charges or fees for the use of First Presbyterian Church of Highlands or for the services of the presiding minister, organist/music coordinator and sexton. The only costs to the family will be for the flowers they provide and for additional instrumentalists and soloists they may request.

*\* Information for this brochure is taken from the Directory of Worship in the Book of Order.*

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