

**First Presbyterian Church
Greenwood, South Carolina
Guidelines for Funerals and Memorial Services**

Purpose

The resurrection is a central doctrine of the Christian faith and shapes Christians' attitudes and responses to the event of death. Death brings loss, sorrow, and grief to all. In the face of death, Christians do not bear bereavement in isolation but are sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit and the community of faith. The Church offers a ministry of love and hope to all who grieve. As this is the basis of a Christian funeral/memorial service defined by the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., the Session of First Presbyterian Church has set forth the following policy for funeral/memorial services that occur at the church.

Pastor

One of the ministers of First Presbyterian will officiate at each funeral/memorial service and/or committal. Additional ministers, family members, friends, and members of the congregation may be invited by the minister to assist in the service.

Service at Church

Church members are encouraged to use the church for funeral/memorial services. Just as we are baptized by God in church and have been nourished by God through the church, so it is wholly appropriate that thanksgiving to God for our lives should be offered in church. The service may be observed before or after the committal of the body.

A Time of Worship

In the Presbyterian tradition, a funeral/memorial service is considered a service of worship and will be approached with the dignity and joyful celebration accorded worship. A typical order of worship will include the following: prelude and postlude of sacred music, hymns and songs of praise and faith, scripture lessons from the Old and New Testaments, a message that expresses thanksgiving to God for the life of the deceased and reminds all of Christ's resurrection and promise of eternal life, prayers of intercession and thanksgiving, and a benediction. In consultation with the Pastor, other elements, such as remarks from family members and friends, may be included in the service. The officiating Pastor shall make the final determination on the elements of worship.

Music

At First Presbyterian Church, we understand that music is a very meaningful part of a funeral/memorial service. The Director of Music Ministries will organize music for the service, making sure that an organist or pianist are provided and will communicate with soloists or other musicians. Because the funeral/memorial service is a service of worship, all music must be live offerings of sacred music. No recorded music is permitted. Traditional Christian songs, hymns, contemporary Christian songs, psalms, funeral, and spiritual songs are all appropriate for the service. The Director of Music Ministries must approve musical selections for the funeral/memorial service.

Casket/Cremaains

The casket/cremaains of the deceased may be present for the service and shall arrive at the church at least 45 minutes prior to the announced starting time. In order that worship may focus on God and upon the gift of resurrection, rather than upon the earthly remains of the deceased, the casket will be closed during the service. A white pall, provided by the church, may be used upon request, symbolizing our equality before God and the joy of our inclusion in Christ's victory over death. Due to the risks of stains or damage, nothing may be placed on the pall.

Cremation

Cremation is an appropriate alternative for Christians. Orders of worship for the committal remain the same in cases of cremation.

Pictures and Photography

As the focus of Christian worship is God, it is not appropriate to display pictures of the deceased in the sanctuary during the service. Photo displays of the deceased are encouraged and more appropriately placed in the reception area. Photography is not permitted in the sanctuary during the service. A video recording will be made of the service by a member of the church staff.

Bulletin

The church office staff will ordinarily produce the bulletin (or printed order of worship) for funerals. Special requests, such as the inclusion of a photograph, should be made as early as possible.

Flowers

The use of flowers and other forms of decoration are not required and should be limited in order that they do not distract from the purpose of worship. One simple flower arrangement adequately symbolizes God's gift of new life. Other arrangements may be placed in the reception area.

Visitation

The family may prefer visitation to take place at the church rather than the funeral home. In such cases, a reception area adjacent to the sanctuary is available.

Civil and Military Ceremonies

When requested by the family as they work with the Pastor(s) to plan the service, an American flag may be used as pall. However, civil and military ceremonies may take place only outside the sanctuary. These ceremonies may take place under the covered entry, in the side yard, or at the cemetery.

Committal Service

The Pastor is available to lead a brief committal service at the site (locally) where the casket/cremains are to be interred. This service typically includes scripture, prayers, words of committal, and a benediction.

Fees

The church staff and ministers believe funeral/memorial service planning and participation are part of their call as church workers; thus, members of the church are not charged for their services. If a family would like to express its gratitude to the ministers and church staff, a gift to the church in their honor would be appropriate.

Final Plans

Members of First Presbyterian are strongly encouraged to preplan their funeral/memorial service. They may do so by picking up a "Planning Guide" folder in the church office or by downloading the Planning Guide forms. Once completed and returned, the forms will be kept in the church's confidential files where they will be available for revision. At the time of death, the information will be shared with family members and the Pastor who is planning the service.

The congregation, officers, and staff offer this policy as a faithful way to proceed at the time of death. In the name of our Risen Savior, we stand with those who grieve the loss of their loved one and who celebrate the resurrection of Christ Jesus Our Lord. By the great grace of God, may this policy guide us in honoring and respecting our loved one's passing from this world to the next.