



GUIDE FOR FUNERAL PLANNING

First Presbyterian Church

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A Guide For Funeral Planning

The Christian Funeral

As Christians, we believe that God in Christ has conquered death. Death brings separation and decisions that are painful, but our Christian faith and tradition enable us to witness to our faith as we make final arrangements for our loved ones. The church offers a ministry of love and hope to all who grieve. First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon, Ohio has adopted the following policies and suggestions regarding services on the occasion of death.

The Christian funeral is a service of worship in which God's people witness to their faith; gathering primarily to worship God and confess our faith in a living Savior. Though we mourn our loss and remember our loved one, our eyes are firmly fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of the faith.

Planning Arrangements

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

Counseling on the Occasion of Death

One of the most valuable services the Church provides at the time of death is that of pastoral counseling. The minister is able to discuss with compassion and objectivity those important decisions that the family needs to make. The minister will meet with the family to arrange the services.

Services on the Occasion of Death

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. This service may be observed on any day. A request to observe such a service on a Sunday or to celebrate the Lord's Supper as a part of a service on the occasion of death requires the approval of the session/pastor.

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 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. [*Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (USA): W-4.10004*]

The family may make suggestions for the service to the pastor. The service may be observed before or after the committal of the body. The service is complete in itself and any civic or military rites should be conducted separately. Services may be held at either the church or the funeral home.

Music

The musician will provide guidance to the family regarding selection of music for the service. Generally, the musician employed by the church will present the music selected, although arrangements may be made for an alternate musician.

Services with a Casket

The funeral should be in the normal place of worship, the church. During the service, the casket will be closed. If the family desires "viewing", it should ordinarily take place prior to the service. A Christian funeral is enhanced by its simplicity of worship since Christians believe that God looks within the heart and not on outward material things.

When there is a service at the church with the remains present, funeral home personnel will be on the church site. When a memorial service is held, the funeral home will inform the church whether or not they will be on site. The family will be charged for this service by the funeral director.

Services of Committal

Internment may precede or follow the service. Members and friends of the family of the one who has died should gather at the graveside or crematorium for a service of farewell, which is to be conducted with simplicity, dignity and brevity. The service includes readings from Scripture, prayers, words of committal and a blessing, reflecting the reality of death, entrusting the one who has died to the care of God, and bearing witness to faith in the resurrection from the dead.

Cremation/Donation

Cremation is a matter of personal preference. It is not inconsistent with the Christian faith. It is also a matter of personal desire to help humanity that the body or parts of it may be used in the service of others in medical schools and hospitals. Prearrangements must be made.

Memorial Gifts

Memorial gifts that will benefit the church are entirely fitting. The gifts may be made to benefit First Presbyterian Church and/or the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Fees for Services

Pastor -- \$100

Musician (if available) -- \$50

Building – no charge

Reception – depends on food quantity – typically a minimum \$50 donation, if we are hosting a reception for about 30. Type of food served will be discussed with the family by the coordinators. Church will provide contact information.