

*Alpharetta
Presbyterian Church
Funeral and Memorial
Service Guidelines*

"I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live."-John 11:25-26

I. Preparing for Death with a Resurrection Faith

The Church welcomes requests for a service of Christian Worship at the time of death. Offering "A Service of Witness to the Resurrection" for the family and loved ones of the deceased is an important ministry of the congregation as it seeks to provide comfort, hope, and faith for those who mourn.

The Church encourages its members to discuss and plan in advance their wishes regarding arrangements upon their death. Decisions having to do with burial or cremation, the location of interment, and the choice of a funeral home/director, and the location of their "last will and testament" are important matters that should be shared with family or Pastors. Doing so relieves survivors of a difficult burden. The Church also encourages its members to have a living will and to remember the Church in their will. Such a gift is a final act of faithful stewardship and Christian witness.

The Church and its Pastors encourage every member to utilize the sanctuary for Funeral/Memorial services and we welcome requests from non-members. There are no fees for the use of the church facility for such services.

*Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted. -Matthew 5:4*

II. Planning the Funeral/Memorial Service

A. Clergy

The death of a member should be reported as soon as possible to one of the pastors, who will notify the Session and Deacons of the Church.

The request for a Funeral/Memorial Service in the sanctuary should be made to one of the Pastors. The Pastor's willingness to conduct a service will depend upon his or her, and the Church's, availability. If not available, the Pastor will suggest other clergy who may be contacted to officiate. Other clergy and family members may be invited to participate in a service with the Pastor's approval.

The Pastors understand their ministry to include pastoral care during illness, at the time of death, and in the grief process which follows. The Pastors do not charge any fee for conducting these services.

B. Organist and Music

If the services of a church organist are desired, the family should communicate that to the officiating Pastor who will secure an organist for the service. The family may request hymns and other special music.

The Chancel Choir's "Resurrection Choir" may also be requested for the service. Due to schedule conflicts, the ability of the choir to sing will be the decision of the Director of Music. Other musicians and soloists may be invited to participate with the approval of the Director of Music or officiating Pastor.

C. Flowers and Decorations

Any flowers provided by family or friends in the sanctuary should be removed following the service. Families may leave two arrangements of flowers for the Sunday worship service. Photo displays and other memorabilia may be displayed in the Fellowship Hall or the narthex. (Several tripods are available for this purpose.)

Clergy will wear white stoles to celebrate the Resurrection. In liturgical practice, white symbolizes the victory of the saints of God.

***"Who are these robed in white? These are they who have washed their robes and made them white by the blood of the Lamb. God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."
-from Revelation 6:13-17***

D. The Service of Committal

Members and friends of the family should gather at the graveside or place of interment for a brief service conducted by the Pastor(s.) The committal may take place publicly or privately (at the convenience of the family.) It may be scheduled either before or after the Funeral/Memorial service.

"For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." -2 Corinthians 5:1

III. Visitation or Viewing

The Church Fellowship Hall or Sanctuary may be used by the family of the deceased for visitation or viewing on the evening prior to the service or immediately preceding the service. Such arrangements should be made with the Pastor(s) and depend on Church availability.

IV. Receptions and Meals

The Deacons of the church, as part of their ministry of sympathy and compassion, are pleased to prepare and host a reception following a Funeral/Memorial Service. These gatherings are held in the Fellowship Hall. If desired, the family should notify the officiating clergy as soon as possible to make arrangements regarding menu, room set-up, and expected attendance.

***"They said, 'the Lord has risen indeed' and they told them how he had been made known to them
in the breaking of the bread." -Luke 24:34-35***

V. Memorial Gifts and Memorial Book

The Church has a Memorial Fund which accumulates collective gifts made in memory of loved ones. Once the monies are deposited, the Church shall make acknowledgment of the gift to the donor and provide to the family a list of the names and addresses of those who have made gifts. The Session has authority over the use of the Memorial Fund.

The Church keeps a Memorial Book with the names and date of death of all Church members who have joined the Church triumphant and now live in glory. On "All Saints Day" (November 1st), those persons will be remembered in a special service of worship.

VI. Other

If the family requests it, the Church will be happy to make an audio recording of the service.

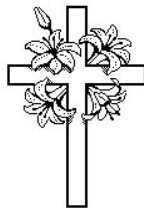
No photographs are permitted during the worship service. Any pall bearers or ushers should be secured by the family. When the casket is present in the sanctuary for the funeral service, it shall remain closed at all times in order that attention be directed to God. Reserved seating will be made available for the immediate family who will be escorted to the front pews by the Pastor(s) or ushers, and dismissed by the same afterward.

The Church will provide a worship bulletin for use in the Funeral/Memorial Service. If the celebration of the Lord's Supper is desired as part of the service, the Session must give prior approval.

Any military, fraternal, or civic rites should be conducted separately from the funeral/memorial service.

May God's peace be with you all!

"If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." -Romans 14:18



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