



Funeral Policy

Of

Unity Presbyterian Church

Approved November 23, 2020

A Witness to the Resurrection: Memorial and Funeral Services at Unity Presbyterian Church

“In the face of death, we affirm with tears and joy the good news of the gospel and the hope of the resurrection. We do not grieve in isolation but are sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit and the community of faith.” (Book of Order, Directory for Worship)

The purpose of this writing is to assist members of Unity Presbyterian Church in the realistic consideration of this eventuality and the decisions that are required at the death of a loved one. Funeral or memorial services at Unity Presbyterian Church are available for church members and immediate family members of church members. “Immediate family members” means spouses, parents, children, spouses of children, grandchildren, and spouses of grandchildren. As the church embraces us in our baptism and throughout our Christian life, so it stands ready to embrace us in our death and provide words of comfort and hope to the bereaved. The Christian funeral is understood to be the completion of God's work of grace begun in baptism.

Because it is difficult under emotional stress to plan wisely, members are encouraged to discuss and plan the arrangements which will be necessary at the time of death. These include decisions about the Christian options of burial, cremation, or donation for medical purposes. Plans should provide for arrangements which are simple, which bear witness to the grace of God and our resurrection hope in Christ, and in which the Christian community is central. By prior consideration and planning, the family of the deceased can be relieved of some difficult decisions, and the intentions of the deceased for an appropriate service of worship can be honored. A form entitled "At Death, Burial, and Service Instructions" is available from the church to assist in your planning and to communicate those plans to family members and the church.

AT THE TIME OF DEATH...

MINISTERIAL STAFF

Upon the death of one of our members, a minister of the church should be notified as soon as possible. This is best accomplished by contacting the church office. Our ministers also earnestly desire to know of 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 with necessary decisions regarding funeral homes, disposition of the body, and service arrangements, as well as caring for the spiritual needs of those involved.

THE SERVICE OF WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION

Memorial, Funeral and Committal Services are acts of worship among the Christian community.

The purposes of such services of worship are to glorify God, to affirm our belief in the resurrection to life everlasting, and to comfort the bereaved. Gratitude and honor are appropriately expressed to God for the life and witness of the deceased. In addition, the reality of God's grace within the life of the deceased should be appropriately Memorial, Funeral and Committal Services are acts of worship among the Christian community. The purposes of such services of worship are to glorify God, to affirm our belief in the resurrection to life everlasting, and to comfort the bereaved. Gratitude and honor are appropriately expressed to God for the life and witness of the deceased. In addition, the reality of God's grace within the life of the deceased should be appropriately reflected.

TYPES OF SERVICES

All services conducted by ministers of the church 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. Three types of services are offered: memorial, funeral, and committal.

- 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 later.

- Funeral Service

The Funeral Service is a service where the body is present either in a casket or an urn. Usually the Funeral Service is concluded with a Service of Committal at the burial site.

- Service of Committal

The Service of Committal (often referred to as a graveside service) occurs at the interment site where the remains of the deceased are laid to rest. It is usually quite brief. Should no other service (Memorial or Funeral) be held, the Service of Committal may take a longer form.

LOCATION OF SERVICE

“The service of witness to the resurrection is most appropriately held in the congregation's usual place of worship, demonstrating continuity with the community's faith, life, and hope.”
(Book of Order, Directory for Worship)

The church sanctuary and/or historic sanctuary of Unity Presbyterian Church are appropriate places for a Memorial or Funeral Service. Significant moments of life are celebrated here: baptisms, marriage, Communion, intercession, worship, and call to service.

Here we see the symbols of our Christian faith. In this place we have tangible reminders of God's presence and care, and the support of a community of faith that surrounds us with comfort and love.

Before or after the service, the church can make available space for visitation if the family so chooses. Requests for the use of a visitation space should be made at the time of the arrangements for the Memorial or Funeral Service.

BURIAL

Appropriate options for Christians regarding the disposition of a body include burial, cremation, or donation for medical science. Arrangements for these options are made by an individual or the family through a funeral director. The Columbarium at Unity Presbyterian Church is available to church members (and their immediate family) who choose cremation. Information about costs, niche locations and other issues may be obtained from the church office.

THE ORDER OF WORSHIP

“The service begins with sentences of Scripture, bearing witness to the resurrection and the living hope we have in Christ. Worshipers may sing hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs that affirm our faith in the resurrection, everlasting life, and the communion of the saints. Scripture is read and the Word is proclaimed, expressing our trust in the risen Lord; an affirmation of faith may follow. Prayer is offered.” (Book of Order, Directory for Worship)

- Scriptures

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

- Hymns and Music

Hymns should be chosen which affirm the goodness and grace of God, and which give comfort and support to those who grieve. The minister and the director of music will guide the selection of appropriate hymns. The director of music will provide suitable sacred music and is available for consultation with the family concerning these musical selections. The appropriateness of musical selections will be determined by the music director. Instrumentalists or vocalists may also be employed but must be approved and contracted by the church's music director. The family is expected to cover the cost of any musicians other than the church organist.

- Flowers

In keeping with the simplicity of the Christian faith and to avoid ostentation, flowers are limited to one arrangement in the sanctuary. Typically, the family of the deceased will furnish the arrangement

of flowers for the service. After the service, the family may take the flowers or donate them for the church's use. Should other flowers be sent to the church, they will be placed in a location outside of the sanctuary.

OTHER FRATERNAL CIVIC OR MILITARY RITES

“Fraternal, civic, or military rites are to be conducted separately.” (Book of Order, Directory for Worship)

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 place of worship.

COSTS AND FEES FOR MEMORIAL AND FUNERAL SERVICES

For members of the church, there are no charges or fees for use of the church's facilities, for worship bulletins or for the services of the minister and church organist. However, some families may choose to give an honorarium to the pastors and director of music for their services. Costs to the family related to the memorial or funeral service will be for the flowers the family provides, for additional musicians and vocalists the family may request, and for food services arranged by the family. The purchase of a Columbarium niche and related burial expenses are arranged through the church business office.