

# **The Christian Funeral or Memorial Service**

## *At Gates Presbyterian Church*

### **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 defined by the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., the Session of Gates Presbyterian Church has set forth the following policy on funeral/memorial services which occur at the church.

### **Pastor**

It is expected that primary arrangements will be made with one of Gates Presbyterian's pastors. Typically one pastor will officiate at the service, though there are times when it will be appropriate for both pastors to participate. Requests for the participation of a —guest pastor to assist in the service must be made to the officiating pastor; who, if it is appropriate, will extend an invitation.

### **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.

### **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: prelude and postlude of sacred music; hymns and songs of praise and faith; scripture lessons from the Old and New Testaments; a message – which 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; 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**

Music for the funeral should be chosen with discrimination and offered as praise to God. Music that is not appropriate for a Christian service of worship may be used at a reception following the service.

Normally the church organist shall play for church funerals. All music will be approved by the pastor officiating at the service. While not encouraged, music recorded on cassette tapes or compact discs – when appropriate for Christian service may be included. Such music should be approved by the pastor at the time the service is planned.

When the funeral does not happen in a Church sanctuary, the family arranges with the funeral director for any music to be played before and/or after the service.

## **Technology**

Technology during a funeral or memorial service is limited to the pulpit microphone and two free standing microphones. If the family desires for a photo slide show to be displayed prior to the service of worship, arrangements must be made with the pastors for a member of the family to be responsible for set up 45 minutes prior to the service. Photo slide shows will not be displayed during the service.

## **Casket/Cremaains**

Should the family request that there be a time of visitation and fellowship (calling hours) take place at GPC prior to the planned funeral or memorial service arrangements will need to be made in advance with the funeral director and the GPC Deacons. Under these circumstances, the casket may be open during this time of visitation. The casket or cremains of the deceased may be present for a funeral service, and shall arrive at the church at least 45 minutes prior to the announced start 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 funeral service. The casket or urn may be covered with a pall, a symbol of being clothed with Christ in Baptism. The cremains may be present in the funeral service and are normally placed on the table next to the pulpit. A Memorial Service may be held to memorialize a deceased person but the casket would not be present during the Memorial Service. The cremains may be present during a Memorial Service.

## **Cremation**

Cremation is an appropriate alternative for Christians. Orders of worship and committal remain the same in cases of cremation, with the exception that the committal may take place on a different date from the service in the church.

## **Picture Board**

A display of pictures of the deceased person may be displayed at the reception following the service. GPC does not have easels for use. Such a display is best arranged with the funeral director for the time of calling hours.

## **Sharing of Memories/ Eulogy**

May be included in the service. Because family members sharing memories of the person they loved are often quite emotional it is normal to limit the spoken tributes during the funeral service to one or two persons sharing comments briefly. Additional tributes can be offered at a reception following the service. Remarks should be chosen for what is appropriate for Christian worship.

## **Poetry or other readings**

Are appropriate as they capture characteristics of the person remembered at the service. They should be appropriate for Christian worship and are normally shared with the pastor for inclusion during the meditation.

## **A Picture of the person or other items capturing the character of the person**

Who is honored at the funeral - may be present in worship and will be placed on a small table next to the pulpit. Such items must always be approved in advance of the service by the pastor who will be leading the worship service.

## **Bulletins**

List the order for the worship service. Bulletins are provided for most funerals/memorial services held in the sanctuary of the church. Our copier is not capable of making color copies, so if the family desires for color or photographs to be included in the bulletin, the family is responsible for the printing and cost.

## **Guest books**

May be secured from the funeral director and placed in one or both vestibules and/or at the reception.

## **Flowers**

Are appropriate for funeral/memorial services and can be arranged with local florists. The family makes arrangements with the funeral for the disposition of any flowers brought to the sanctuary from the funeral home. Flowers that remain two days following the service are disposed of by the church.

**Reception** with light refreshments is available to members and families of members at no charge and provided by the deacons of the church. If the family wishes to bring additional food, arrangements must be made with the Deacons representative.

## **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; a benediction.

## **Memorials**

Gifts given in memory of a loved one are appropriate and welcomed. Guidelines for directing such gifts to the church are outline in Gates Presbyterian Church Memorials & Special Gifts Policy.

## **Fees**

When the deceased was a member of GPC:

- a. Organist: \$200.00
- b. Custodian: \$35
- c. Pastor: Honorarium\*

*\*The ordained pastors of GPC believe that funerals are a part of their pastoral call to ministry. They count it both a great responsibility and a great privilege to be with families in their moment of need, offering through their words, work, and witness the life and love of Jesus Christ.*

*They also acknowledge that some families wish to honor pastors with an honorarium. As many families are uncertain about an appropriate amount and often contact the church office to ask what is customary, the following ranges are suggested as general guidelines for those wishing to provide an honorarium.*

*The ranges should not be interpreted as a fee-for-service arrangement:*

- *Officiating Pastor \$150-300*
- *Additional Pastor(s) \$75–100. Depending on the extent to which the additional pastor(s) is/are involved in the planning, preparation and leading of the service.*

When the deceased was a non-member of GPC (including friends and family of members):

- a. Organist: \$200.00
- b. Custodian: \$35
- c. Pastor: \$250

Fees for other musicians should be in accordance with their normal pay scale. If additional rehearsal time for the organist is require to accompany a soloist, and addition \$25 per rehearsal is required for members and non-members.

### **Scheduling a Funeral at GPC**

1. Please contact one of the pastors (or the church office) as soon as possible. It is appropriate, when the family prefers a particular pastor, to share this preference. It will be honored whenever possible.
2. The pastor will visit with the family to offer pastoral care and guidance and to begin the process of planning the funeral service.
3. The pastor will work with the family and funeral home to ensure your loved one's funeral is handled with the utmost dignity and respect.
4. GPC works with a variety of funeral homes. It is very important that the pastor and funeral directors work as a team. If you have not contacted the church when you contact the funeral home, please ask the funeral director to call the church immediately. Please do not schedule a funeral without contacting the church and speaking with the pastor.

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 ones 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 passing from this world to the next.

Adopted by the Session of Gates Presbyterian Church on 10/21/2019