

# **Gates Presbyterian Church**

## **Christian Funeral/Memorial Service Policy and Guidelines**

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

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.

### **Scheduling a Funeral at Gates Presbyterian Church**

- The family or the funeral home should contact the pastor (or the church office) as soon as possible. If you have not contacted the church prior to contacting the funeral home, please ask the funeral director to call the church immediately. Funerals and memorial services at the church can only be scheduled via coordination with the pastor. It is especially important that the pastor and funeral director coordinate arrangements.
- The pastor will contact the family to offer pastoral care and guidance and to begin the process of planning the funeral or memorial service.
- The pastor will work with the family and funeral home to ensure that your loved one's funeral or memorial is conducted with the utmost dignity and respect.

### **Pastor**

Arrangements are to be made with the pastor of Gates Presbyterian Church. Requests for the participation of a guest pastor to assist in the service must be made to the officiating pastor. If deemed appropriate, the GPC pastor will extend an invitation to the requested guest.

### **Service at Church**

GPC church members are encouraged to use the church for funeral or memorial services. Just as we are baptized by God in church and have been nourished by God through the church, so it is appropriate that thanksgiving to God for our lives should be offered in church.

### **A Time of Worship**

In the Presbyterian tradition a funeral or memorial service is considered a service of worship and will be conducted 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**

For funeral or memorial services to be held in the sanctuary, music should be selected with discrimination and offered as praise to God. Normally the church organist/pianist shall play for funeral or memorial services held in the church. Payment to him/her is the responsibility of the family. All music selections are to be approved by the pastor officiating at the service. While not encouraged, video or audio files, when appropriate for Christian service, may be included. Requests should be made during planning of the service and approval of the pastor is required.

If the service is to be held at another venue (not a church sanctuary), the family should arrange with the funeral director for any music to be played before and/or after the service.

### **Technology**

- **Sound:** There is a microphone at the pulpit and two additional free-standing microphones are available if needed.
- **Video:** Livestreaming of the service is possible. Arrangements for this must be made with the Live Stream Video Director during planning of the service.
- **Slides:** If the family desires for a photo slide show to be displayed prior to the start of the funeral or memorial service, arrangements must be made during the planning of the service. The family will need to provide the video file to the Live Stream Video Director or designee at least one day prior to the service. Photo slide shows will not be displayed during the service.

### **Casket or Cremains**

- **Casket:** The casket of the deceased may be present for the service and shall arrive at the church at least 45 minutes prior to the designated service 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 service. If the family requests that viewing be accommodated, the casket may be open prior to the start of the funeral service. Due to insurance limitations, the casket may not remain in the church overnight.
- **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. The cremains may be present in the funeral service and are normally placed on a table next to the pulpit.

### **Photograph or Portrait**

A picture of the person or other items capturing the character of the person who is honored at the service may be present in worship. These items 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. The display of picture boards in the sanctuary is not appropriate.

### **Participation of loved ones in the Funeral or Memorial Service**

- **Sharing of memories/ Eulogy:** The sharing of personal memories and thoughts may be included in the service. Because family members sharing memories of their loved one are often quite emotional, it is recommended that spoken tributes during the service be limited to one or two persons sharing brief thoughts and memories. Remarks should be appropriate for inclusion in the Christian worship service.
- **Poetry or other readings:** These are appropriate as they capture characteristics of the person being remembered in the service. These should be appropriate for Christian worship and are normally shared with the pastor for inclusion during the meditation.

### **Bulletins**

Bulletins list the order for the worship service. Bulletins are provided by the church for most funerals or memorial services held in the sanctuary of the church. Since the church's copier is not capable of making color copies, the family is responsible for arranging for those bulletins which include color copies or photographs.

### **Guest books**

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

### **Flowers**

Flowers which are appropriate for funeral or memorial services may be arranged with local florists. The family should arrange with the funeral director 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**

A reception with light refreshments may be available to members and families of members upon their request. This availability is subject to compliance with guidelines resulting from community health concerns. Such refreshments are provided by the deacons of the church. If the family wishes to bring additional food, arrangements must be made with the Deacon representative.

Use of the Fellowship Hall or Room #1 is available at no charge when the deceased was a member of Gates Presbyterian Church. If the deceased was not a GPC member, use of either of these rooms is subject to a charge in accordance with the GPC Building Use policy.

### **Committal Service**

Arrangements may be made with the pastor 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.

## Memorial Gifts

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

## Fees

When the deceased was a member of GPC:

Organist/Pianist	\$200.00
Custodian	\$35.00
Pastor	Honorarium*
Live Stream Video Director	\$100.00
Reception	No charge for use of Fellowship Hall or Room 1

*\* Our GPC ordained pastors believe that funerals are a part of their call to ministry. They believe it is both a great responsibility and a great privilege to care for families in their time of loss and grief by ministering through their words and work the life and love of Jesus Christ. It is recognized that preparation for a funeral or memorial service is in addition to the time and talent required to serve the day- to-day needs of our church family. As such, the offering of an honorarium to the pastor is welcome. Often families are uncertain about an appropriate amount, the following ranges are suggested as general guidelines for those wishing to provide an honorarium. These ranges should not be interpreted as a fee-for-service arrangement:*

- *Officiating Pastor \$250-\$300*
- *Additional Pastor(s) \$100-\$150. 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):

Organist/Pianist	\$200.00
Custodian	\$35.00
Pastor	\$300.00
Live Stream Video Director	\$100.00
Reception	Refer to Building Use Fee Schedule

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

*Adopted by Session: March 2013*

*Fees amended by Trustees: February 2020*

*Adopted by Session: June 2020*

*Amended by Session: October 2021*

