

## **THE CHRISTIAN FUNERAL/MEMORIAL SERVICE<sup>1</sup>**

*at Oakmont Presbyterian Church*

The Christian funeral/memorial is a worship service under the direction of the minister. The minister works in cooperation with the family to plan a service that is faithful to God and meaningful to the family and other mourners. The purpose of the service is to worship God and to comfort the mourners.

The note of victory should always pervade the Christian funeral service.

The traditional color for the service is white signifying joy.

The Christian funeral emphasizes both the reality of death and the hope for new life.

Rather than the Greek thought of the immortality of the soul, the Christian funeral affirms belief in the resurrection of the body. Therefore, the Christian funeral holds up the hope of life beyond the grave by the power of God.

Normally the word “funeral” indicates that the body is present in some form. A memorial service indicates that a body is not present. A “Celebration of Life” is a term commonly used to indicate 1) a joyful rather than a somber service, and 2) that it is connected with the person and not a generic service unrelated to the deceased.

Adapted from Perry Biddle’s Abingdon Funeral Manual

### **AT THE TIME OF DEATH**

When death occurs, the pastor and other officers of the congregation should be informed as soon as possible, in order that they might provide appropriate consolation and support to the family and friends and assist them in making arrangements for the funeral.

Except for compelling reasons, the service for a believing Christian is often held in the church, at a time when the congregation can be present. When the deceased was not known to be a believer or had no connection with a church, then it is appropriate to hold the service elsewhere. The ceremonies and rites of fraternal, civic, or military organizations, if any, should occur at some other time and place.

Family members, friends, or members of the congregation may be invited by the minister to share in the service.

This order that follows is intended for use with the body or ashes of the deceased present, but it may be adapted for use as a memorial service. The committal of the body/ashes may follow or precede this service, as preferred.

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<sup>1</sup>Worship/Funeral/Planning Funeral and Memorial Services at OPC v1

When the body is present, the coffin should be closed before the service begins so that worshippers may focus on their help in God. The casket is ordinarily covered with a white funeral pall.

from the PCUSA, Book of Common Worship

## **NORMAL OUTLINE FOR A CHRISTIAN FUNERAL OR MEMORIAL SERVICE**

*Prelude* – music that allows people to gather and pray

*Call to Worship* – normally a brief Scripture reading

*An Opening Hymn* is a sung affirmation of Christian faith

*Opening Prayer* is offered for the comfort of all who are bereaved

*When a Confession of Sin* is included, it acknowledges that we all fall short of God's plan for humankind

*An Assurance of Pardon* declares the mercy of God's forgiveness

*A brief family tribute* appropriate for Christian worship may be offered by one or two family members or friends

*A Prayer for Illumination* asks God's help in hearing God's Word

*Scripture Readings*, normally 1-2 from both the Old and the New testaments, are read

*A Sermon/Message* recalls elements of the deceased person's life, recalls our hope in the resurrection and offers encouragement for faithful living

*A Hymn* may be sung at this point

*A Prayer of Thanksgiving* is offered for the life of the one who has died. *A*

*Prayer of Commendation* entrusts to God's care the one who has died.

*The Lord's Prayer* is prayed. "Debts" is traditional for Presbyterians. "Trespases" may be used if more familiar to the family.

*An Affirmation of Christian Faith* may be said here

*A Christian hymn* affirms God's mercy, and our hope is sung at the conclusion of the service

*A Benediction/blessing* is offered to the people

When a celebration of the deceased military service cannot be celebrated the evening prior to the funeral, a brief service may be held at the end of worship or at the cemetery at the time of the committal.

*The Committal of the body to its final resting place* – normally follows the service immediately. Under special circumstances a separate time for a committal may be arranged with the minister and the funeral director.

*A funeral luncheon* or a *reception* may follow.

## POSSIBLE SCRIPTURE READINGS

\* - Indicates commonly chosen readings

### Old Testament

\*Job 19:23-27 I know that my redeemer lives  
Isaiah 25:6-9 God will swallow up death forever  
Isaiah 26:1-4, 19 God will keep them in peace  
Isaiah 40:1-11, 28-31 Comfort my people  
\*Isaiah 40:28-31 Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength  
\*Isaiah 43:1-3a, 18-19, 25 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you  
Isaiah 44:6-8 I am the first and the last  
Isaiah 55:1-3, 6-13 Ho, everyone who thirsts  
Isaiah 61:1-4, 10-11 The spirit of the Lord is upon me  
Isaiah 65:17-25 I create new heavens and a new earth  
Lamentations 3:19-26, 31b-32 The Lord's steadfast love  
Daniel 12:1-3 Many of those who sleep in the dust shall awake  
Joel 2:12-13, 23-24, 26-29 Return to the Lord with all your heart

### *At the loss of a child:*

Zechariah 8:1-8 Children playing in the streets of the city  
Isaiah 65:17-25 I create new heavens and a new earth

### *For those whose faith is unknown:*

Ecclesiastes 3:1-15 For everything there is a season  
Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-23 The Lord's steadfast love

### **Psalms**

Psalms 16:5-11 The Lord is my chosen portion  
\*Psalms 23 The Lord is my shepherd  
Psalms 27:1, 4-9a, 13-14 The Lord is my light and my salvation  
Psalms 39: 4-5, 12 Lord, let me know my end  
Psalms 42:1-6a As a deer longs for flowing streams  
Psalms 43 Give judgment for me, O God  
\*Psalms 46:1-5, 10-11 A very present help in trouble  
Psalms 90:1-10, 12 Teach us to number our days  
\*Psalms 91 The one who dwells in the shelter of the Most High  
\*Psalms 103:1-5 Bless the Lord, O my soul  
Psalms 106:1-5 O give thanks to the Lord  
Psalms 116:1-9, 15 The Lord has heard my voice  
Psalms 118 Open the gates of righteousness  
Psalms 121 I lift up my eyes to the hills  
Psalms 130 Out of the depths I cry to the Lord  
\*Psalms 139:1-12 Where shall I go from your spirit?  
Psalms 145 I will extol you, O God my King  
Psalms 146 Hallelujah! praise the Lord, O my soul

## Epistles

Romans 5:1-11 Hope does not disappoint

Romans 6:3-9 Baptized into Christ's death, raised to live with him

\*Romans 8:14-23, 31-39 Nothing can separate us from the love of God

Romans 14:7-9, 10b-12 Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's

1 Corinthians 15:3-8, 12-20a Christ raised from the dead

\*1 Corinthians 15:20-24a In Christ shall all be made alive

\*1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 35-38, 42-44, 50, 53-58 Death is swallowed in victory

1 Corinthians 15:35-44 The natural body and the spiritual body

\*1 Corinthians 15:50-57 We shall all be changed

\*2 Corinthians 4:16-5:1 Visible things are temporary, invisible things eternal

2 Corinthians 5:1-10 From God we have a house not made with hands

Ephesians 1:11-2:1, 4-10 Saved by grace through faith

Philippians. 3:7-11 Knowing him and the power of his resurrection

\*Philippians. 3:20-21 Our citizenship is in heaven

Colossians 3:1-17 Set your minds on the things that are above

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 The comfort of Christ's coming

\*2 Timothy 2:8-13 If we died with him, we shall also live with him

Hebrews 2:14-18 Christ was tested in every way

Hebrews 11:1-3, 13-16; 12:1-2 Faith, the pilgrimage, the cloud of witnesses

\*1 Peter 1:3-9 Without seeing Christ, you love him

1 Peter 3:18-22; 4:6 Christ's ministry to the spirits in prison

1 John 3:1-3 We are children of God

\*Revelation 7:2-3, 9-17 These are they who have come out of the great tribulation

Revelation 14:1-3, 6-7, 12-13 Rest for the saints

\*Revelation 21:1-4, 22-25; 22:3-5 A new heaven and a new earth

Revelation 22:1-5 The Lord God will be their light

### ***For those whose faith is unknown:***

Romans 2:12-16 The law written on the heart

Romans 14:7-9, 10c-12 None of us live to ourselves

## Gospels

Matthew 5:1-12a The Beatitudes

Matthew 11:25-30 Hidden from the wise, revealed to infants

Matthew 25:1-13 Wise and foolish bridesmaids

\*Matthew 25:31-40 The Last Judgment

Luke 7:11-17 Jesus raises the son of the widow of Nain

Luke 18:15-17 We enter the kingdom only as children

Luke 23:33, 39-43 Today you will be with me in Paradise

\*John 3:16-21 God so loved the world

John 5:24-29 Whoever hears and believes has eternal life

John 6:37-40 Anyone who comes to me I will never drive away

John 6:47-58 Whoever believes in me has eternal life

John 11:17-27 I am the resurrection and the life

John 11:38-44 Lazarus raised from the dead

\*John 14:1-6, 25-27 Let not your hearts be troubled

**At the loss of a child:**

Matthew 18:1-5, 10 The greatest in the kingdom of heaven  
Mark 10:13-16 Let the children come to me

**For those whose faith is unknown:**

\*Matthew 25:31-40 As you did it to one of the least of these

**MUSIC AT A CHRISTIAN FUNERAL**

Music should be selected for its appropriateness for a service of Christian worship. While there are many moods expressed in music at a Christian funeral, the dominant note is that of victory over death such as is found in Easter hymns.

Persons with musical gifts may be selected to sing or assist the Director of Music Ministry. Normally the hymns are chosen with the minister and the solos or other musical offerings with the Director of Music Ministry.

Music that is not appropriate for a Christian service of worship may be used at a reception following the service.

While not encouraged, music recorded on CDs – when appropriate for Christian service may be included. Such music should be approved by the pastor at the time the service is planned. Normally, solos are only accompanied by the Director for Music Ministry.

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.

The following hymns are offered as suggestions for the Christian funeral service.

*A Mighty Fortress*  
*Abide with Me*  
*All People That on Earth Do Dwell*  
*Amazing Grace*  
*Be Thou My Vision*  
*Breathe on Me, Breath of God*  
*Faith of Our Fathers*  
*For All the Saints*  
*Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken*  
*God of Our Life*  
*Great is Thy Faithfulness*  
*Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*  
*How Great Thou Art*  
*Holy, Holy, Holy*  
*Hymn of Promise/In the Bulb...*  
*I Know That My Redeemer Lives*  
*I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord*  
*If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee*

*Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise*  
*In the Garden*  
*It is Well With My Soul/When Peace*  
*Like a River*  
*Jesus Christ Is Risen Today*  
*Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee*  
*Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*  
*O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go*  
*Of the Father's Love Begotten*  
*On Eagles' Wings*  
*Our God, Our Help in Ages Past*  
*Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven*  
*The Church's One Foundation*  
*The King of Love My Shepherd Is*  
*The Lord's My Shepherd*  
*The Old Rugged Cross*  
*The Strife Is O'er*

## **GATHERING BEFORE A SERVICE AND DEPARTING FOLLOWING THE SERVICE**

Normally, families gather before the service in the Marie Berg Chapel at the back of the sanctuary. Immediately before the service begins, the family is escorted by the ushers into the sanctuary and is seated beginning in the second pew in the middle section. Additional pews as needed should be requested at the time of planning the service with the pastor.

Normally the family is escorted from the sanctuary following the benediction. When a casket is present, the family departs after the casket is removed. (When a reception or luncheon follows the service, the family is encouraged to reassemble in the Dining Room.)

### **OTHER ELEMENTS/CONCERNS**

**Picture Board** – a display of pictures of the deceased person may be displayed at the reception following the service. Otherwise, such a display is best arranged with the funeral director for the time of visitation.

**Family Tributes** may be included in the service. Because family tributes 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 or reception and may be placed adjacent to but not on the Lord's (Communion) Table. Such items must always be approved in advance of the service by the pastor who will be leading the worship service. Picture collages are appropriate for a reception or in the vestibules.

**Cremation** – is an acceptable disposition of one's body following death. The cremains may be present in the funeral service and are normally placed on a stand adjacent to the Lord's (Communion) Table but not on the Lord's Table.

**The Lord's Table** – or communion table is the place from which the Lord's Supper is shared with the people of faith. So as to not confuse or diminish its importance as a symbol, no flowers or other appointments are placed on the Lord's Table. Given our sanctuary limitations the communion table is removed from the sanctuary when a casket is present.

**Bulletins** – list the order for the worship service. Bulletins are provided for most funerals/memorial services held in the sanctuary of the church. A family tribute may be printed in the bulletin. An appropriate picture of the deceased person may be included on the bulletin cover.

**Ushers** greet those who attend the service. Ushers may be chosen by the family or provided by the church.

**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 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. Questions about floral arrangements may be directed to the Pastor.

**A funeral luncheon** (or a **reception** with light refreshments) is available to members and families of members. The request for a funeral lunch can be shared with the pastor and arrangements can be made with one of the church's funeral luncheon coordinators.

**Scheduling a Funeral/Memorial Service** – Normally a funeral service is held several days following a death. A memorial service can be held at the time most convenient for the family and the church. It is appropriate to check for the pastor's and musician's availability before finalizing a funeral or memorial service.

**Writing an Obituary** –at the time of death can be emotionally challenging. You may help your family by listing family information such as parents' names, siblings' names, birthplace along with other information important to you: your church, your social organizations, accomplishments and awards. Often someone in the family is recognized as a good writer and may assemble the information to share with the funeral director.

Oakmont Presbyterian Church is a **non-smoking building**.

### **SUGGESTED HONORARIA**

Because leadership of funerals is a part of the pastors' compensation no additional reimbursement for pastors is required. When desired by the family, the minister is given an honorarium either by the family or through the Funeral Director.

Because funeral work is not included in the compensation for the Director of Music Ministry, families are requested to pay the music director

\$125 – for funerals with no soloists, instrumentalists, or a choir.

\$175 – for funerals requiring a rehearsal with soloists or instrumentalists

(Honoraria for soloists are arranged with the soloists.)

Because funeral preparation and clean-up are not included in the custodian's compensation, families are requested to pay the custodian

\$125 – when the sanctuary is used

\$100 –for either the Dining Room or Friendship Hall is used

Those who are interested in making a donation toward the costs of the funeral luncheon may speak with the Luncheon Coordinator.



## DECLARATION REGARDING FINAL ARRANGEMENTS

The following form is provided for individuals to communicate their interests for final arrangements at the time of their death. *If desired, the church will keep a copy to share with family members or other persons making funeral (or memorial) arrangements.*

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **City/State:** \_\_\_\_\_

*In the information that follows I am sharing my desires with my family to assist them in making appropriate decisions at the time of my death.*

1. **NOTIFICATION.** I desire that the following Clergy be contacted immediately in order to offer assistance and comfort to my survivors:

**Clergy:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **City/State:** \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. FUNERAL DIRECTOR

**Funeral Director:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **City/State:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ I have made prearrangements with this funeral director.

3. **TREATMENT OF BODY.** I desire that my body be  
\_\_\_ Prepared for burial, but without a public visitation  
\_\_\_ Prepared for a public visitation  
\_\_\_ Prepared for a public visitation to be followed by cremation  
\_\_\_ Cremated in the simplest manner possible

It is my preference that my remains be interred at

**Cemetery Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **City/State:** \_\_\_\_\_

In the event that the above requested burial is not possible, an alternate burial site shall be chosen by \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of child* and his/her family or the **executor**). A suggested possible alternative, if necessary, is

**Alt. Cemetery:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **City/State:** \_\_\_\_\_

4. **SERVICES.** I desire the following service(s) be held:

a. A \_\_\_ funeral (or \_\_\_ memorial) service is to be held at

**Place:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **City/State:** \_\_\_\_\_

at a convenient time for anyone desiring to attend. The body \_\_\_ shall (\_\_\_ shall not) be present.

If possible, the service is to be conducted by

**Clergy:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **City/State:** \_\_\_\_\_

b. As an alternative, or in addition, and at the option of my family, a memorial service may be held at

**Place :** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **City/State:** \_\_\_\_\_

The body \_\_\_ shall (\_\_\_ shall not) be present.

5. **MUSIC.** I would like musical selections chosen from the following to be either played or sung at my service:

a. \_\_\_\_\_ c. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_ d. \_\_\_\_\_

6. **SCRIPTURE READINGS.** I desire that a friend, relative, or clergy, at the option of my family and clergy, read the following at my service:

a. \_\_\_\_\_ c. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_ d. \_\_\_\_\_

**7. POEMS/OTHER READINGS.**

I would like that the following poems/other readings be included in the service at the discretion of the pastor:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ c. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ d. \_\_\_\_\_

**8. MEMORIALS.** I request that donations be made to the organization listed:

**Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **City/State:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **City/State:** \_\_\_\_\_

7. **CONTAINER.** I desire that my family or other appropriate person(s) making my final arrangements select a container for my remains as described in Section 3, above that is consistent with my tastes.

8. **OTHER WISHES.** List any other wishes here and, if needed, on the back of this page.

9. **NOTICE.** I would like an obituary notice to be published in the following newspapers and organizations. *I have attached my biographical information.*

Newspaper: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**City and State:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

Newspaper: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**City and State:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**City and State:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**City and State:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Children/Family members to be notified of my death include:**

Name (relation): \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City and State: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (relation): \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City and State: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (relation): \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City and State: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (relation): \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City and State: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## DECLARATION

I have given careful thought and consideration to these instructions. I understand this declaration is not legally binding, and that the ultimate decision will be made by my family and other appropriate person(s) based upon circumstances at the time of my death. I hope my desires will be fulfilled to the greatest extent possible.

I have discussed these instructions with my family and all appropriate persons.

Dated this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

It is suggested that copies of this information be given to your family and your pastor.