

Westminster Presbyterian Church

The Christian Funeral/Memorial Service and Service of Committal

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 Westminster Presbyterian Church has set forth the following policy on funeral/memorial services and services of committal which occur at the church.

Pastor

It is expected that primary arrangements will be made with the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church who will officiate at the service. 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. If the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church is unavailable, a guest pastor may lead the service with the approval of the Session.

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 a 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, and 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/memorial service 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 will play for church funeral/memorial services. (Please see fee schedule on pages 3-4.) All music will be approved by the pastor officiating at the service. While not encouraged, recorded music may be included when appropriate for Christian service. Such music should be approved by the pastor at the time the service is planned.

When the funeral/memorial service does not happen in the 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/memorial service is limited to the pulpit and lectern microphone. If the family desires a photo slide show to be displayed prior to the service of worship, arrangements must be made with the pastor 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 but can be shown in the fellowship hall during the reception. If the family plans to live stream or share the service via Zoom, arrangements must be made with the pastor, and the family or their designee is responsible for providing and operating the necessary technology. The use of this technology should in no way interfere with the service.

Casket/Cremins

The casket/cremins of the deceased may be present for the 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 service. The cremins may be present in the funeral/memorial service and are normally placed on the table next to the pulpit.

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 service of committal may take place on a different date from the service in the church.

Picture Board

Pictures of the deceased person may be displayed at the reception following the service. Such a display is best arranged with the funeral director for the time of calling hours.

Sharing of Memories/Eulogy

Sharing of memories and a eulogy may be included in the service. Because family members may be quite emotional when sharing memories of their loved one, it is normal to limit the spoken tributes during the funeral/memorial service to one or two persons sharing brief comments. Additional tributes can be offered at a reception following the service. Remarks chosen should be appropriate for Christian worship.

Poetry or other readings

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.

Picture of the person or other items capturing the character of the person

A picture of the honored person or other items 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

Bulletins list the order of worship for the service. Bulletins are provided for most funeral/memorial services held in the sanctuary of the church.

Guest books

Guest books may be secured from the funeral director and placed in the narthex and/or at the reception.

Flowers

Flowers are appropriate for funeral/memorial services and can be arranged with local florists. The family plans 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

If the family wishes to have a light lunch, options are shared and discussed. The family is billed by the church for any food ordered/purchased for the lunch. The family is not charged for food that is donated or for coffee/tea, punch, or nuts and mints.

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, and a benediction. The pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church, in conjunction with the family of the deceased, will set the date and time of a committal service. The service will be presided over by the pastor, with assistance by others as the family wishes. 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. If the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church is unavailable, a guest pastor may lead the service with the approval of the Session.

Memorials

Gifts given in memory of a loved one are appropriate and welcomed. Unless memorial donations are going to the church, the family is responsible for bringing memorial envelopes. If the family would like memorial tributes to be given to Westminster, envelopes are available for both the Westminster Memorial Gifts Fund and the Westminster Endowment Fund.

Fees

When the deceased was a member of Westminster:

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

**The ordained pastor of Westminster believes that funeral/memorial services are a part of the pastoral call to ministry. The pastor counts it both a great responsibility and a great privilege to be with families in their moment of need, offering through words, work, and witness the life and love of Jesus Christ.*

Some families wish to honor the pastor 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 Westminster (including friends and family of members):

- a. Organist: \$200
- b. Pastor: \$300

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

Scheduling a Funeral/Memorial Service or Service of Committal at Westminster

1. Please contact the pastor (or the church office) as soon as possible. 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.
2. The pastor will visit with the family to offer pastoral care and guidance and to begin the process of planning the funeral/memorial service.
3. The pastor will work with the family and funeral home to ensure your loved one's funeral/memorial is handled with the utmost dignity and respect.
4. Westminster 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/memorial 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 ones passing from this world to the next.

Adopted by the Session of Westminster Presbyterian Church on April 18, 2023