

# SIXTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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## FUNERAL AND MEMORIAL SERVICE POLICY

### ON THE OCCASION OF DEATH

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 affirm with tears and joy the hope of the gospel. Christians do not bear bereavement in isolation but are sustained by the power of the Spirit and the community of faith. The church offers a ministry of love and hope to all who grieve.

Because it is difficult under emotional stress to plan wisely, members should discuss and plan in advance the arrangements which will be necessary at the time of death, including decisions about the Christian options of burial, cremation, or donation for medical purposes. These plans should provide for arrangements which are simple, which bear witness to resurrection hope, and in which the Christian community is central.

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. At Sixth Presbyterian Church, when a member of the church dies, the communication tree will be activated in order to inform the congregation.

Services for those who have had no connection with Sixth Presbyterian Church are done at the discretion of the pastor of the church, carefully considering the demands of the church calendar.

### WORSHIP SERVICES

A *funeral service* is a worship service in which the body or the ashes of the deceased are present. In order that attention in the service be directed to God, when a casket is present it shall be closed. Under certain circumstances the casket may be open before the service for a brief time of viewing.

A *memorial service* is a worship service in which neither the body nor the ashes are present. This service may be observed before or after the committal of the body.

A *committal service* is a brief service of farewell at the graveside or crematorium. Generally, this follows a funeral service immediately. It may happen before a memorial service.

A *graveside service* combines the funeral and committal into a single service at the place of interment.

In addition, there may be other services, such as a wake-keeping service, that come out of particular cultures or communities. The pastor will work with the family on such services.

Ordinarily the service on the occasion of death should be held in the usual place of worship in order to join this service to the community's continuing life and witness to the resurrection. When there are important reasons not to hold the service in the usual place of worship, it may be held in another suitable place such as a home, a funeral home, a crematorium, or at graveside.

The service shall be under the direction of the pastor of the church. If the family desires, in consultation with the pastor, others may be invited to participate as leaders in the service. When the pastor of the church is away, the on-call pastor may conduct the service or may seek another Presbyterian minister to conduct the service.

### FORM AND ORDER

The service begins with scriptural sentences. Scripture shall be read; a sermon or other exposition of the Word may be proclaimed; an affirmation of faith may be made by the people. Aspects of the life of the one who has died may be recalled. Prayers shall be offered giving thanks to God for life in Jesus Christ and the promise of the gospel, for the gift of the life of the one who has died, for the comfort of the Holy Spirit, for the community of faith; making intercessions for family members and loved ones who grieve, for those who minister to and support the bereaved, for all who suffer loss; lifting supplications for faith and grace for all who are present; concluding with the Lord's Prayer. The service ends by commending the one who has died to the

care of the eternal God and sending the people forth with a benediction.

The Lord's Supper may be administered during a service on the occasion of death, but as with all observances of the Lord's Supper, it must be approved by the session.

The service may include other actions and elements which do not detract from or diminish the Christian understanding of death and resurrection. The service shall be complete in itself, and any fraternal, civic, or military rites should be conducted separately.

### **MUSIC**

Music is important to worship services on the occasion of death. In all worship, the music should direct attention to God and express the faith of the church. Congregational hymns are appropriate for use in the service, but it is important to remember that many hymns which are familiar to Presbyterians may not be well known to people from other religious traditions. The church organist or his designee shall play for all services. When the deceased is not a member of Sixth Presbyterian Church, there will be an organist fee to be paid by the family of the deceased.

### **FLOWERS AND CANDLES**

Candles are on the communion table, and there are candelabra available for use in the chancel. Flowers add a great deal to the service. However, it is important to avoid having too many floral arrangements in the sanctuary. Two or three arrangements would be best. Other arrangements that are sent to the church may be displayed in the narthex.

### **OTHER OPTIONS**

If the family desires, there may be a time of visitation and fellowship in the sanctuary before the service. Under those circumstances, the casket may be open for viewing. It will be closed before the service begins.

Fowler Hall is available if families would like to have a gathering after the service or after the interment. Please call the church office to reserve Fowler Hall. The Fellowship Committee can help guide church families with such gatherings.