

FUNERALS POLICY

Purpose

Funerals serve as part of the grieving process and help us come to grips with the death of a loved one by acknowledging the passing in a formal ceremony. This is a way for friends and family to support one another during such a difficult and emotional time. When they see how much their loved one meant to other people, it's comforting and helps them say goodbye.

Presbyterians recognize Christ as the Holy Spirit as divine, and as Christians, we believe that the central doctrine of the Christian faith is the resurrection. That God in Christ has conquered death which brings separation and decisions that are painful, but our Christian faith and tradition enable us to witness our faith as we make final arrangements for our loved ones and the church offers a ministry of love and hope to all who grieve. This policy is intended to alleviate some of the stress and assist with the decisions as one navigates through this process.

Notifying the Church and Scheduling

Pre-planning and maintaining communications with the pastor are important when someone is facing death or has just passed. Pre-planning not only assures that the deceased's funeral wishes are followed but it relieves the burden on the grieving decision-makers. While it is helpful, pre-planning may or may not involve making final arrangements through a funeral home. It is critical to write down important information about the deceased, what their wishes are regarding any funeral/memorial service, cremation, or burial, and information they may want to have shared with others, to make it easier for family members to plan and carry out the wishes of the deceased.

- **Prior to imminent death or loss** - The pastor should be notified as soon as possible to help the individual and loved ones get through a difficult time and discuss with compassion and objectivity; the important decisions that will need to be made.
- **Following the death of a loved one** - While the funeral home will most likely notify the church, it is recommended that a family member or representative notify the pastor who will minister to their needs and (if it has not already been done) assist in the planning of the service.

Services

The church sanctuary is available to members, parishioners, and their families and all are welcome to use the church for funeral or memorial services. The pastor is also available to conduct the service at the funeral home or other appropriate location. If requested by the family, other clergy members are also welcome to join the pastor in conducting the service.

Services may be traditional or personalized to reflect the personality, culture, and background of the deceased. The pastor will work with the family to decide the date, time, location, and type of funeral service.

- **Local Funeral or Memorial Service** - These services are conducted locally. A funeral service is held in the church or funeral home and is immediately followed by the remains being taken to a local cemetery where either a public or private committal service is conducted. A memorial service is usually conducted in the church and a committal service may be held immediately after, or at a different time.
- **Non-Local Services**—Regretfully, due to time restrictions for the pastor, he may not always be able to conduct services out of the county. When an out-of-county interment is required in conjunction with a local service, the funeral home may arrange for an on-site clergyman to conduct an appropriate committal service. In such cases, the words of committal can also be included in the local service--to provide a sense of "completeness" for those not attending the interment.

The funeral service will be held at a mutually agreeable time for the pastor and the family. However, should the pastor not be available, the church can provide the names of alternate clergy, authorized to conduct funeral and memorial services on behalf of, and in, the church. If the service is to be held in the funeral home and the pastor is not available, the funeral home may also have names of additional clergy who are available.

After-Service Gathering

As part of its ministry, the Deacons are pleased to host funeral receptions at the church. These may be provided by the church, or the family may wish to have the food catered. For members of the church, snacks and beverages are provided at no cost, but a donation is always appreciated. Non-members are charged the full amount of the food provided plus a \$50 clean-up charge. If the family chooses a catered meal, they (coordinated with a member of the reception committee) may do so at their own cost and pay the church a \$50 clean-up charge.

When the pastor becomes aware of the funeral agenda, and if a reception will be held at the church, he will communicate with the Deacons who will, in turn, contact the family to arrange the details.

Fees and Honoraria

The sanctuary and Pastor's services are provided at no charge to FPCW members. However, donations for the Pastor's services are gratefully appreciated.

Non-members of FPCW are asked to donate to the Pastor which generally begins at \$250, and if music is desired, arrangements are to be made individually with the Music Director.