

From the Directory for Worship, Book of Order, PC(USA)

W-4.10000 **Services on the Occasion of Death**

W-4.10001 Christians and 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. (W-6.3006)

W-4.10002 Planning Arrangements

Because it is difficult under emotional stress to plan wisely, the session should encourage members to 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. The session is responsible for establishing general policies concerning the observance of services on the occasion of death. (W-1.4004)

W-4.10003 Setting of the Service

The service on the occasion of death ordinarily 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. The service shall be under the direction of the pastor. Others may be invited to participate as leaders in the service at the discretion of the pastor. This service may be observed on any day. A request to observe such a service as a part of the Lord's Day service or to celebrate the Lord's Supper as a part of a service on the occasion of death requires the approval of the session.

W-4.10004 Form and Order

The service begins with scriptural sentences. It is appropriate for worshipers to sing hymns, psalms, spirituals, or spiritual songs which affirm God's power over death, a belief in the resurrection to life everlasting, and the assurance of the communion of the saints. 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

- (1) for life in Jesus Christ and the promise of the gospel,
- (2) for the gift of the life of the one who has died,
- (3) for the comfort of the Holy Spirit,
- (4) for the community of faith; making intercessions
- (5) for family members and loved ones who grieve,
- (6) for those who minister to and support the bereaved,
- (7) for all who suffer loss; lifting supplications
- (8) 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.

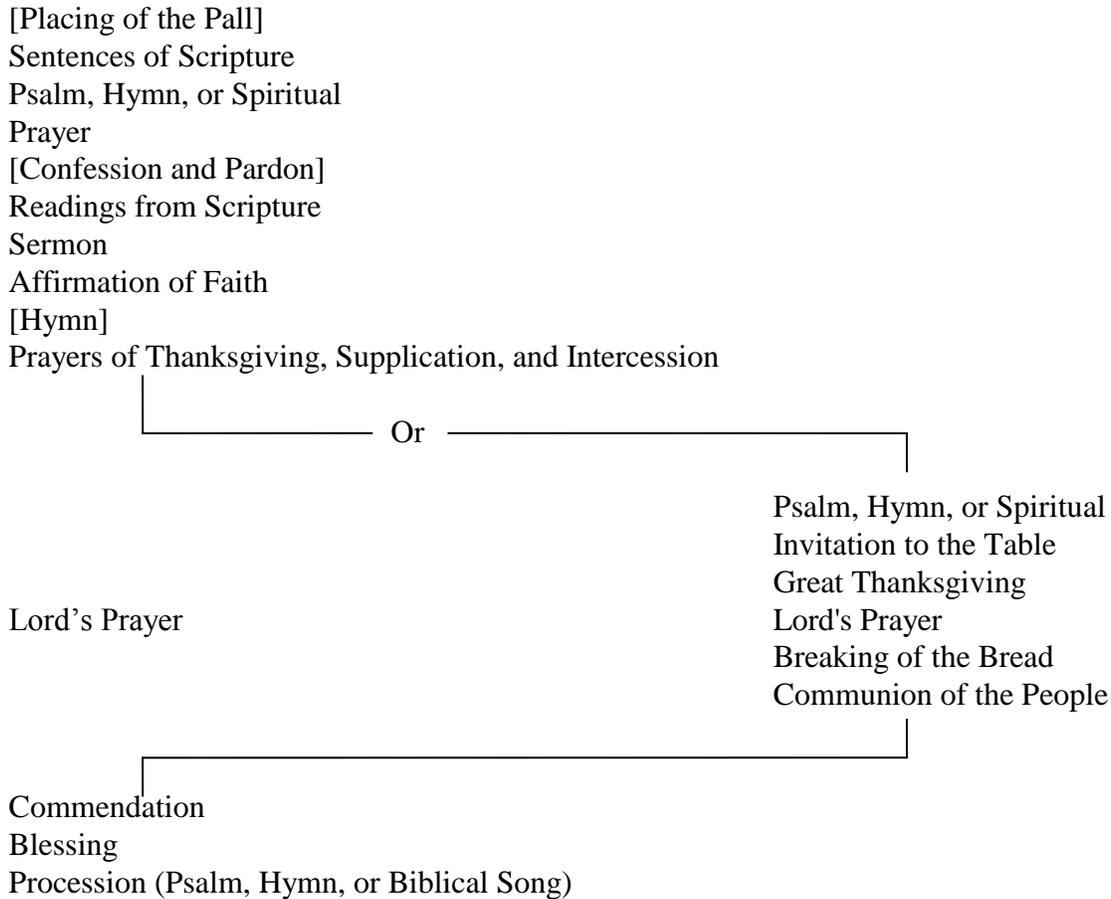
W-4.10005 Alternatives and Options

This service may be observed before or after the committal of the body. In order that attention in the service be directed to God, when a casket is present it ordinarily is closed. It may be covered with a funeral pall. The service may include other actions common to the community of faith and its cultures when these actions 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. 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.

W-4.10006 Service of Committal

Members and friends of the family of the one who has died should gather at the graveside or crematorium for a service of farewell, which is to be conducted with simplicity, dignity, and brevity. The service includes readings from Scripture, prayers, words of committal, and a blessing, reflecting the reality of death, entrusting the one who has died to the care of God, and bearing witness to faith in the resurrection from the dead.

An Outline of the Funeral: A Service of Witness to the Resurrection



Comment

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 normally 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 and to omit or adapt portions of it as seems fitting. 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 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 may follow or precede this service, as preferred.

When the body is present, the coffin should be closed before the service begins. It may be covered with a white funeral pall.

List of Suggested Readings for Funerals

Old Testament

* Job 19:23-27	I know that my redeemer lives
Isa. 25:6-9	God will swallow up death forever
Isa. 26:1-4, 19	God will keep them in peace
* Isa. 40:1-11, 28-31	Comfort my people
* Isa. 40:28-31	Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength
Isa. 43:1-3a, 18-19, 25	When you pass through the waters, I will be with you
Isa. 44:6-8	I am the first and the last
Isa. 55:1-3, 6-13	Ho, everyone who thirsts
Isa. 61:1-4, 10-11	The spirit of the Lord is upon me
* Isa. 65:17-25	I create new heavens and a new earth
Lam. 3:19-26, 31b-32	The Lord's steadfast love
Dan. 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
Zech. 8:1-8	Children playing in the streets of the city
* Isa. 65:17-25	I create new heavens and a new earth
Lam. 3:1-9, 19-23	The Lord's steadfast love

Psalms

The following psalms are appropriate for singing or reading in the service.

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

Epistles

	Rom. 5:1-11	Hope does not disappoint
	Rom. 6:3-9	Baptized into Christ's death, raised to live with him
*	Rom. 8:14-23, 31-39	Nothing can separate us from the love of God
*	Rom. 14:7-9, 10b-12	Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's
	1 Cor. 15:3-8, 12-20a	Christ raised from the dead
	1 Cor. 15:20-24a	In Christ shall all be made alive
*	1 Cor. 15:20-26, 35-38, 42-44, 50, 53-58	Death is swallowed in victory
	1 Cor. 15:35-44	The natural body and the spiritual body
	1 Cor. 15:50-57	We shall all be changed
*	2 Cor. 4:16-5:1	Visible things are temporary, invisible things eternal
	2 Cor. 5:1-10	From God we have a house not made with hands
	Eph. 1:11-2:1, 4-10	Saved by grace through faith
	Phil. 3:7-11	Knowing him and the power of his resurrection
	Phil. 3:20-21	Our citizenship is in heaven
	Col. 3:1-17	Set your minds on the things that are above
*	1 Thess. 4:13-18	The comfort of Christ's coming
	2 Tim. 2:8-13	If we died with him, we shall also live with him
	Heb. 2:14-18	Christ was tested in every way
	Heb. 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
	Rev. 7:2-3, 9-17	These are they who have come out of the great tribulation
	Rev. 14:1-3, 6-7, 12-13	Rest for the saints
*	Rev. 21:1-4, 22-25; 22:3-5	A new heaven and a new earth
	Rev. 22:1-5	The Lord God will be their light

Gospels

	Matt. 5:1-12a	The Beatitudes
	Matt. 11:25-30	Hidden from the wise, revealed to infants
	Matt. 25:1-13	Wise and foolish bridesmaids
	Matt. 25:31-46	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

Hymns from *Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal*

All Creatures of our God and King	15
For all the Saints	326
God Weeps with Us Who Weep and Mourn	787
Guide, Me, O Thou Great Jehovah	65
Hear, O Lord, My Plea for Justice (Psalm 71)	211
I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry	488
In Deepest Night	785
Lord, Dismiss Us With Your Blessing	546
Precious Lord, Take My Hand	834
Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me	438
Shall We Gather at the River	375
There is a Place of Quiet Rest	824
We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight	817
A Mighty Fortress Is Our God	275
Abide with Me	836
Blest Be the Tie That Binds	306
Goodness is Stronger than Evil	750
I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light	377
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling	366
My Faith Looks Up to Thee	829
The King of Love My Shepherd Is (Psalm 23)	802
The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want (Psalm 23)	801

Suggestions for A Service of Witness to the Resurrection

To those who will make decisions for my Christian funeral:

I have given prayerful thought to the service worship following my death. The following are my preferences. I realize that circumstances may apply which will make it impossible to fulfill every suggestion. I offer these preferences as a gift to those who will worship God at my funeral.

My full name and date of birth: _____

My will and other important documents are located:

If the pastor of my church is not available, I would like _____ to be asked to lead the service.

In addition to the pastor, I would like the following to be asked to assist the pastor: _____

I would like the following to serve as pall bearers: _____

I would like the following to serve as readers: _____

I hope the following scripture passages will be read: _____

I would like the following to sing a solo or anthem _____

I would like the following hymns or psalms in the *Presbyterian Hymnal* to be sung by the congregation:

I wish the service the service to be held at: _____

I desire a *memorial service* at which my remains are not present Yes No

I desire a *funeral service* at which my remains are present: Yes No

I desire the committal (burial or entombment) to take place at _____

I prefer that *both* the funeral and the committal services take place at the graveside Yes No

I prefer that my body be buried in the earth that my body be cremated

that my body be given to medical research, and I have made those arrangements.

(over)

I wish “ashes” to be _____ buried _____ placed in a memorial vault

I would prefer that memorial gifts be made to:

_____ First Presbyterian Church Memorial Fund

Others: _____

Other preferences and information important to those who plan my funeral:

Signature: _____

Please give a copy of this document to the church office and to members of your family.