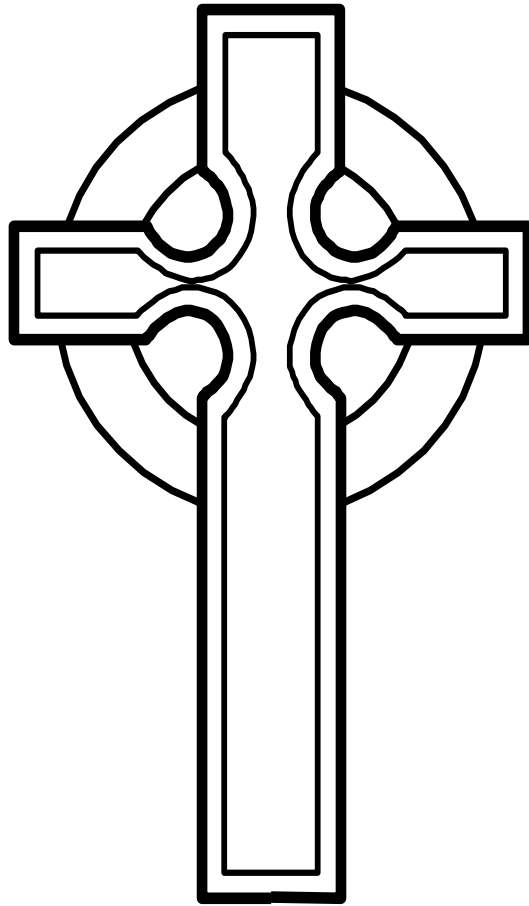


Planning And Resources Near Life's End



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PLANNING AT THE END OF LIFE

We all know we are mortal. Christians believe, however, that death can and should be pondered, discussed and in some ways even faced before its anticipated occurrence. We can do this because we believe ourselves to be in the presence of God both in this life and in the life that is to come. Therefore, we can plan for this event with not only sadness, but also with thoughtful anticipation.

A number of the decisions important at the time of death can be made well in advance. The session of Westminster Presbyterian Church encourages its members to discuss and plan the arrangements that will be necessary at the time of death. To do so will relieve surviving family members and friends of the need to do so at the time when their grief is most intense. This booklet identifies a number of necessary decisions and provides helpful information for planning.

Of course, preferences are not the same for everyone. Therefore, it is important that these decisions not be private. Rather, they should be discussed with family and other loved ones – both to gain suggestions, and to be sure your wishes are known! Your pastors are quite willing to be called upon to help you with any part of this process if you would like. Further, if you wish, some of your decisions can be kept in a confidential file at the church and made available to friends and family "when the time comes".

A. DECISIONS THAT CAN BE MADE IN ADVANCE

Notification of family and friends

Make a list of the family and friends you want to be notified at the approach of or at the time of your death. Such a list is a very real gift to those who will be handling arrangements. In Section B, a form is provided for you to record this information. If death occurs in a hospital, a nursing home, or some other medical facility, many of the required notifications will be taken care of by institutional personnel. If death occurs at home, or some other non-medical facility, emergency personnel and/or a physician should be the first persons contacted, as quickly as possible. After that initial call, family or friends can work from your list of persons to be notified.

Choose a funeral director or cremation provider

While Pennsylvania law does not require the use of a funeral director, most individuals – whether choosing full body burial, cremation, or full body donation to science – will end up using either a funeral director or a cremation provider. Ask for suggestions from friends and family, or your pastor. Choosing such services ahead of time, and even making initial arrangements with them means they can carry out your wishes with a minimum of stress for your survivors. It is also possible for you to pre-pay for these services. Contrary to popular opinion, you can choose the services you wish and do not wish for a director to perform. Among the items that generally need to be taken care of, and can be provided by a funeral director or cremation society, are:

Death notices - contain minimal information, such as the name of the deceased; age and date of death; names of survivors; date, time, and place of interment and memorial service; designation of memorial gifts.

Obituary - contains more biographical information than a death notice.

Memorial Gifts – recommendations for gifts in lieu of flowers; a favorite charity, the church, etc. Gifts made to Westminster Presbyterian Church are normally assigned to the memorial fund.

Disposition of the Body – a variety of considerations and questions

What about an autopsy? Our faith generally supports autopsies if they lead toward medical advancement or resolution of family questions.

What about donation of the body for medical purposes? If cremation is already being planned, this is a way to be a steward of one's body. Agencies and telephone numbers for donation of organs or the entire body are provided in Section B.

What about embalming? – Embalming is not necessary in the case of cremation or immediate burial. In Pennsylvania, and most states, embalming is required if a body is held for more than 24 hours.

What about viewing the body? Often, though not always, viewing of the body by friends and family members can be helpful in accepting the fact of death. This can be arranged at the funeral home or at the time of death. It will not be done during a funeral service – caskets will be closed prior to the beginning of a service.

What about burial? Arrangements for the purchase of a lot in a cemetery can be handled through the director or directly with a cemetery. For full-body burial, a casket selection must be made, and may be done as part of pre-planning, as can the purchase of a lot.

What about cremation? Nothing in the Christian faith opposes the choice of cremation. If the choice is made for cremation, an inexpensive container is required for transport and at the crematory, as opposed to a standard casket. Upon cremation, the ashes are then placed in a container, which is then placed in a niche of a columbarium/mausoleum of a local cemetery or buried in a family plot. Some spaces are available in our own memorial garden at Westminster. Ashes may also be spread on private property in the state of Pennsylvania.

What about Westminster's Memorial Garden? The Memorial Garden, located just to the east side of the sanctuary, is intended for members of Westminster Presbyterian Church, their partner and their children. Information can be obtained from the church office at 610.399.3377. For a modest fee, cremains can be buried there, and a nameplate affixed to a plaque.

Plan your memorial or funeral service

Again, at the time of death, many people wonder, and even worry about what you would want included in your funeral or memorial service. Sit down with family members and your pastor to talk through and record your preferences. A confidential file of your plans can be maintained at the church, if you wish. You are strongly encouraged not to direct that no service be held. Though such a decision is sometimes meant to "spare" the family and friends, in fact just the reverse usually occurs. The family and friends are deprived of an opportunity for closure, giving thanks, and reaffirming their faith in the face of death.

Planning a service can be an opportunity for you to deepen your own Christian faith and set an example for other family and friends. Through conversation and your own private prayer and meditation, you can identify passages of scripture and music that hold special significance for you. Then, not only will you have taken the time to identify these resources, but your family and friends will know they are being faithful to you and your wishes. Remember as well that Scripture passages or music meaningful to other family members may be important to include.

Helpful books may be found in the church library to help you in this process. One of the pastors is also glad to meet with you or begin a series of conversations with you and any others whom you want to include. The church musicians are also available to help you in becoming aware of the variety of appropriate musical resources.

A good beginning is to fill out as much of the data and preferences in Section B as you can. Then, you will know more about where the conversation should proceed.

B. PERTINENT DATA AND PREFERENCES

Note: Retain the original of this document; consider giving one copy to pastor to officiate, and one to the person chosen to make arrangements at time of death.

Information for death certificate

date of birth _____
place of birth _____
citizenship _____
full name-spouse _____
full name-father _____
full name-mother _____
social security number _____
veteran discharge papers with serial number _____

**Note: Request at least 10 copies of the death certificate.
(Funeral director or Cremation Society will provide).**

Friend or relative you wish to oversee arrangements at time of death.

Name _____ Phone _____

Arrangement preferences: (check appropriate statement and fill in)

() Funeral Director (if preplanned or prepaid contract, give location of document)

() Cremation with cremains buried or scattered at

() Burial in (modest) casket at cemetery (location of deed to plot)

() Donation of body to medical school (Humanity Gift Registry, 215-922-4440) or certain organs (Delaware Valley Transplant Program, 610-543-6391)

() Information for obituary (insert additional page)

() Other arrangements as follows:

Your Name _____ Date _____

C. FUNERAL/MEMORIAL 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.” (*From Directory For Worship; Presbyterian Church USA*). Westminster’s pastors will also lead services at funeral homes or graveside if desired.

Timing

In most cases a service takes place within a few days of the death. The main service may precede or follow a brief committal service at the burial site. Typically, the committal service is attended by members and close friends of the family.

Location

Westminster Presbyterian Church is fortunate in having both a Chapel, which will seat up to 60, and the Sanctuary, which will seat 500.

Type of Service

The service may be either a memorial service without the presence of a casket or urn, or a funeral service where the casket or urn is present. If a casket is present, it will be closed and may be covered with a white pall in order that the attention of those attending may be directed toward God.

Costs

Westminster Presbyterian Church intends that costs for a funeral or memorial service on its premises be only what are necessary and minimal. There are organist/soloists fees (if music is a part of the service), and a funeral coordinator fee. Exact details are available from our funeral coordinator or the officiating pastor. An honorarium for pastors may be offered at the discretion of the family.

Day and Time of Services

Due to the high level of use of Westminster’s facility, **mid-week weekdays** are the easiest to accommodate funeral or memorial services in terms of both building and staff. **Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays** are preferred days for a service, because they allow the most time for either the recovery from or preparation of the building for weekend services, including cleaning, and set-up of space. **Mondays and Fridays** are the next two most workable days. **Saturdays** are the most difficult as the building is not staffed on Saturdays, and the building must be turned around for worship on Sunday morning. In addition, so no one is available in the office to receive calls from those who have forgotten the time of the service, are having difficulty locating the church, or have other needs about which to communicate. **Sunday** services are possible, but only

within a limited timeframe due to the need to turn around the building from morning worship, and prepare again for late afternoon and/or evening functions. **Saturday and Sunday services will not be able to be accompanied by a reception.**

The time of a service on many days can be flexible, but if it is a funeral service requiring interment before or after, the time will need to be coordinated within the limitations of a cemetery's interment schedule. The majority of services at Westminster take place between 10:00am and 2:00pm, except on Sundays, when they can be held between 2:00pm and 4:00pm.

Requesting Minister(s)

Westminster's ministers are privileged to guide family and friends through the development and leading of a service of worship celebrating a life and witnessing to the resurrection. We will try to accommodate requests for specific ministers whenever possible, recognizing that a particular minister may or may not be available at the time the family selects for the service.

Flowers

Flowers can add color and beauty to the service, and remind worshippers of the goodness of God's creation. If desired, flower arrangements may be provided by the family for either the church or chapel.

A white pall, with an embroidered cross on it, is available to cover a casket instead of using flowers, if the family prefers.

Content of Service

The service is planned by the pastor in consultation with the family. The purpose is to provide comfort and strength to mourners, to give thanks to God for the life of the deceased, and, above all, to bear witness to the hope of Christian faith.

It is appropriate for hymns and other sacred music to be part of the service. Music should serve to direct the attention of those attending to the presence and power of God, and enable worshippers to voice their confidence in God's sovereign love. A list of suggested hymns is appended.

Scripture should be read and prayers offered. A homily may be preached and words of appreciation may be spoken by the pastor, family members, friends or colleagues.

Suggested Outline for a Funeral or Memorial Service

(Not everyone will wish to include all of the elements listed here, and some may desire additional elements in the service. This is simply a suggested outline.)

Organ Prelude

Opening Sentences

Hymn

Invocation

Scripture Readings (often Old Testament/Psalms)

Tribute by friends, family, or colleagues

Solo – vocal, instrumental – or an additional hymn

Scripture Readings (Often New Testament)

Homily

Unison Reading (e.g. Psalm 23; Ecclesiastes 3)

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn

Benediction

Organ Postlude

On weekdays, following the service the family may receive friends in Spellman Hall. Simple refreshments can be provided through the church at a nominal cost, subject to availability of the space and volunteers.

A bulletin/order of worship is usually printed up by the church office at no charge.

Some Suggestions for Scripture

Old Testament

Job 19: 23-27	I know that my redeemer lives
Isaiah 40: 1-11, 25-31	Comfort my people; mount up with wings like eagles
Isaiah 40: 28-31	Those who wait on God shall renew strength
Isaiah 65: 17-25	I create a new heaven and a new earth
Ecclesiastes 3: 1-15	For everything there is a season

Psalms

Psalms 23	The Lord is my shepherd
Psalms 46:1-5, 10-11	A very present help in trouble
Psalms 90:1-10, 12	Teach us to number our days
Psalms 103	Bless the Lord, O my soul
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	Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?

Epistles

Romans 8: 14-23, 31-39	Nothing can separate us from God's love
Romans 14: 7-9, 10b-12	Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's
I Corinthians 15: 20-26; 35-38, 42-44, 50, 53-58	Death is swallowed in victory
II Corinthians 4: 16-5:1	Visible things transitory, invisible things permanent
Philippians 4: 4-9	Rejoice in all things; peace of God which passes
I Thessalonians 4: 13-18	The comfort of Christ's coming
Revelation 21: 1-4, 22-25	A new heaven and a new earth

Gospels

Luke 23: 33, 39-43	Today you will be with me in Paradise
John 11: 17-27	I am the resurrection and the life
John 14: 1-6, 25-27	Let not your hearts be troubled
Matthew 11: 28-30	Come unto me all ye that labor
Matthew 18: 1-5, 10	The greatest in the kingdom of heaven
Mark 10: 13-16	Let the children come to me

Suggestions for Music

Hymns (Page numbers are from the Glory to God Presbyterian Hymnal.)

- 275 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
- 836 Abide With Me
- 649 Amazing Grace
- 450 Be Thou My Vision
- 839 Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine
- 8 Eternal Father, Strong to Save
- 630 Fairest Lord Jesus
- 326 For all the Saints
- 14 For the Beauty of the Earth
- 81 Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken
- 436 God of Compassion
- 686 God of Our Life
- 39 Great Is Thy Faithfulness
- 65 Guide Me O, Thou Great Jehovah
- 69 Here I Am Lord
- 1 Holy, Holy, Holy
- 625 How Great Thou Art
- 624 I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art
- 12 Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise
- 32 I Sing The Mighty Power of God
- 269 Lead On, O King Eternal
- 824 Near To The Heart Of God
- 643 Now Thank We All Our God
- 30 O God, in a Mysterious Way
- 833 O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go
- 687 Our God, Our Help in Ages Past
- 620 Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven
- 834 Precious Lord, Take My Hand
- 802 The King of Love My Shepherd Is
- 801 The Lord's My Shepherd
- 236 The Strife Is O'er, the Battle Done
- 215 What Wondrous Love Is This

The Glory to God Presbyterian Hymnal also has metrical settings to many psalms. Several of these are appropriate for use in a funeral or memorial service.

Personal Requests For Service

Note: Retain the original of this document, consider giving one copy to pastor to officiate and one to person chosen to make arrangements at time of death.

- I wish to have a funeral service
- I wish to have a memorial service

I wish the service be held in the

- Chapel
- Sanctuary
- Other _____

Preferred Minister of Westminster to officiate at service

In lieu of flowers contributions should be sent to _____

SUGGESTIONS FOR SERVICE

(Your selections of hymns, scripture readings, music, and any other pertinent notes about the service.)

Your Name _____ Date _____

An Affirmation of Faith

Death often seems to prove that life is not worth living, that our best efforts and deepest affections go for nothing.

We do not yet see the end of death.

But Christ has been raised from the dead, transformed and yet the same person.

In his resurrection is the promise of ours.

We are convinced the life God wills for each of us is stronger than the death that destroys us.

The glory of that life exceeds our imagination but we know we shall be with Christ.

So we treat death as a broken power

Its ultimate defeat is certain.

In the face of death we grieve.

Yet in hope we celebrate life.

No life ends so tragically that its meaning and value are destroyed.

Nothing, not even death, can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

(From A Declaration of Faith)