A photograph of a small green plant growing out of a crack in a large, mossy rock. The plant has several bright green leaves and a thin, reddish-brown stem. The rock is grey and brown with patches of green moss. The background is dark and out of focus.

When Death Occurs

First Presbyterian Church
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cover image: "Flower in the Crannied Wall"
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When Death Occurs

Death is not a subject we often feel comfortable with or experienced in addressing, and yet because it is one of life's inevitabilities it deserves to be informed by the best of our Christian faith and our sacred traditions as Presbyterians. On the occasion of death your pastors will meet with you to plan a service that both glorifies God and celebrates the life and memory of the deceased, being sensitive to the needs of the family at this difficult time.

In the Presbyterian Church a funeral or memorial service is a service of worship and a witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ and of those who have trusted him.

As Presbyterians, we affirm that the very center of the gospel focuses upon the victory over death by God in Jesus Christ. As his followers, we are convinced that we share in that victory over the grave. We affirm that at death the believer lives in the presence of God who is an eternal home. Nothing, not even death, can separate us from the love of God in Christ. So, death is not the end, rather it is the beginning of a fuller existence that will be completed in the resurrection of the body. This hope is never based upon our worthiness, but only upon the graciousness of God.

We hope you will read this pamphlet as you reflect with your family on your own death and the death of those you love. Contact your pastors if you have questions or concerns. As you think through these matters in faith and express your preferences, our Pastoral Care team will keep arrangements in files at the church which you are free to revise as desired in the years ahead. And do know what a comfort and help these planned arrangements will be for your family members and your pastors when death occurs.

Together in Christ,



Daniel W. Massie
 Interim Pastor

What Do I Do Now?

When the death of a church member or the death within a church member's family occurs, please call the church office as soon as you are able (336-373-0445). One of our pastors is always available through our "Pastor on Call" phone (336-908-8615).

Please talk with a First Presbyterian Church pastor before choosing a day and time for a service or finalizing an obituary.

- Contact the funeral home that will be assisting you
- Talk with family members about travel plans to attend the service
- Think about some possible days/times you would like to have a service
- Choose what type of service you will have (*see pages 4 & 5*)
- Reflect upon scriptures and hymns that you know lift up the Christian character of your loved one to share with the minister. *Galatians 5:23 states, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."*



Where and When Funeral/Memorial Services are Held at First Presbyterian Church

Our Presbyterian *Book of Order* says, "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" (W-4.10003).

Traditionally, funeral/memorial services are held:

- Monday-Thursday
between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.
- Friday morning
between 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

If you are requesting a funeral/memorial service or on-site committal during the weekend:

- Friday (12:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.)
- Or Saturdays (9 a.m.-1 p.m.)

Weekend services include fees to cover support staff (*see page 10*).

Due to staff commitments, it is not possible to hold a funeral/memorial service at First Presbyterian Church on Sunday afternoons following worship.



A Presbyterian Understanding of the Funeral/Memorial Service

“The Witness to the Resurrection”

As Presbyterians, we remember that the very center of the gospel focuses upon the victory over death by God in Jesus Christ. As his followers, we are convinced that we share in that victory over the grave. We affirm that at death the believer lives in the presence of God who is an eternal home. Nothing, not even death, can separate us from the love of God in Christ. So death is not the end, rather it is the beginning of a fuller existence that will be completed in the resurrection of the body. This hope is never based upon our worthiness, but only upon the graciousness of God.

Therefore, a funeral/memorial service is a worship service to God. We gather here to mourn, to confess our faith in a living savior, to honor our grief, and to recall our profound gladness and solemn joy in Christ our living Lord.

Types of services

The Funeral/Memorial Service

In the Presbyterian tradition, when a casket is present, the service is called a funeral. When the casket is not present, we refer to the service as a memorial service. An urn may be present at a memorial service. Either service is customarily held in the sanctuary or chapel. These are sacred spaces where we are baptized, are married, see the baptism of our children, and where the congregation worships as a faith community. We recognize the end of our earthly life in the house of Lord.

It is fitting that when our baptism is complete in death, we return to the Lord who is our eternal home. Therefore, *when a casket or urn is present, a white pall provided by the church covers the casket or urn.* It is a reminder to us that in death all are equal in the eyes of the Lord. Although the pall is commonly used, flowers may be substituted and placed on the casket.

We do not allow open caskets, portraits, or memorabilia in our sanctuary or chapel (*see page 7*). The worship service in and of itself is complete and focus remains on the Christian understanding of death and resurrection.

Any fraternal, civic or military rites should be conducted separately.

Families may wish to hold a committal service at a cemetery or the church columbarium prior to or following the funeral/memorial service. This will be decided while meeting with the officiating pastor.



Types of services

The Graveside Service

At the graveside, we commend our loved one to their final resting place in a local cemetery. A casket or urn may be present. This service is very brief. When planning for this service, one should keep in mind the possibility of inclement weather and the mobility of attendees to walk through the cemetery.

Some prefer a graveside service for family and friends without a funeral/memorial service at the church. If that is the family's preference, the pastor will suggest added elements from the Service of Witness to the Resurrection to be included in the service at the graveside.

The First Presbyterian Church Columbarium Committal Service

Some members have chosen to have their ashes inurned in our First Presbyterian Church Memorial or Garden Columbarium. The Columbarium is a wall with a provision for niches where urns can be placed (two urns can fit into one niche).

Members must purchase urns through the funeral home that is assisting the family.

There are specifications for the sizes of urns for the Memorial and Garden Columbarium. *(See page 11).* A family will need to contact the office manager to purchase a niche *(See page 11 for details).*

At the committal, we commend our loved one's ashes to their final resting place in the columbarium. This service is very brief.

Some prefer a committal service for family and friends without a funeral/memorial service at the church. If that is the family's preference, the pastor will suggest added elements from the Service of Witness to the Resurrection to be included in the service at the committal service.

The Scattering of Ashes

Some people choose to keep the ashes of their loved ones. Our pastors have liturgies that families can use if they spread their loved one's ashes elsewhere.

There is also a Memorial Garden located within the Memorial Columbarium walls that is provided for people who prefer to scatter their ashes at the church. There is a limestone memorial tablet located in the garden where a loved one's name, birth and death dates may be recorded. *(See page 11 for fees).*



The Order of Worship for Witness to the Resurrection

Our Presbyterian Book of Order says,

- 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.
- 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-4.10004)

The officiating pastor will preach a sermon that witnesses to the resurrection and celebrates the deceased as a baptized believer whose baptism is complete. Within this sermon, the pastor can share appropriate Christian attributes, personal attributes, and stories of the deceased's life.

What if a Family Member or Friend of the Family Would Like to Speak at the Service?

The Session of First Presbyterian Church discourages family and friends from attempting to speak at a funeral or memorial service. We have found that family and friends who choose to speak often are nervous, become overwhelmed, or are unable to keep the remarks focused on the deceased person being remembered.

However, we do recognize that it has become a trend in American society for families to want to include personal remarks by a Lay Speaker (a family member or close friend). We consider these remarks "A Celebration of Life" or "Family Remarks." If a family has strong feelings about having a lay speaker, guidelines for the speakers appear below. These remarks will take place in the early part of the order of worship before the scripture readings and pastoral reflection.

If a family would prefer for the pastor to share personal reflections, during the meeting with the family, the pastor will ask the family to share stories about the deceased. Family members may also send their written stories and reflections about their loved one directly to the officiating pastor via email or other means.

Guidelines for “A Celebration of Life” or “Family Remarks” Lay Speaker

- **A maximum of two speakers** chosen by the family may celebrate the life of a loved one.
- Each speaker will limit their talk to 5-8 minutes.
- A manuscript is required and shall be shared with the officiating pastor at least one day prior to the service.
- The pastor has the right to edit the manuscript for appropriate content.
- Each speaker shall practice their presentation and time it accordingly to meet the minutes allowed.
- The speaker will speak from the lectern.
- If the lay speaker is not emotionally able to speak, the officiating pastor, when requested, will read their remarks.
- If the lay speaker goes over their allotted time, or whose remarks are not in accordance with the guidelines, the officiating pastor has the authority to ask the lay speaker to conclude his/her remarks and sit down.


The content of “A Celebration of Life” may include the following:

- Remarks about the Christian character of the deceased and how those traits were lived out in the faith community and the world. Fruits of a believer’s Christian Character include these words from Paul’s letter to the church in Galatia: Paul says the Fruit of the Spirit is: “Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Generosity, Goodness, Gentleness, Faithfulness, and Self-Control” (Galatians 5:22-23).
- Reflections upon the personal attributes of the deceased in relationship with the family as a parent, son, daughter, etc. *These may include stories where the main character in the story is their loved one.*

The content of “A Celebration of Life” should not include:

- Inappropriate jokes, language, or stories that are unfitting to the worship of God in a sacred worship space.
- Stories where the main character is the lay speaker rather than the loved one whose life is being celebrated.





Flowers and Sacred Music for Funeral/Memorial Services in the Sanctuary or Chapel

Decorations at First Presbyterian Church

Our Presbyterian *Book of Order* says, “Artistic expressions (such as flowers) should evoke, edify, enhance, and expand worshipers’ consciousness of the reality and grace of God” (W-1.3033)

To maintain the atmosphere of sanctity already created and to safeguard the chancel and the furnishings, the following policies apply:

Flowers are permitted in a single vase provided by the church. This vase will be on the communion table in the sanctuary or chapel during the funeral/memorial service.

Vases are available for your florist’s use, but they may not leave the church property.

Portraits, pictures, memorabilia of the deceased, other gifts of flowers and plants shall not be placed in the chapel or in the sanctuary. However, the family is welcome to have such remembrances present in the room where they will receive friends before or after the funeral/memorial service.

Sacred Music at First Presbyterian Church

Our Presbyterian *Book of Order* says, “Music suitable for the funeral/memorial service directs attention to God and expresses the faith of the church; Music as prayer is to be a worthy offering to God on behalf of the people” (W-2.1003, W-2.1004).

Funeral/memorial services that take place at First Presbyterian Church uphold this belief.

The Director of Music will assist the minister and family in selecting music of an appropriate character based on guidelines adopted by the church. The texts of all music for the funeral/memorial service should reflect an appropriate Reformed scriptural text. The Director of Music (in consultation with the pastor) has final say on music selections. *Pre-recorded music may not be used in the chapel or the sanctuary.*

When the Director of Music is not available to play, a guest organist will be secured by the church. The family is responsible for paying for the guest organist’s fee (*See page 10*).

If a vocalist or instrumentalist is desired, the Director of Music will make the arrangements. Families are expected to pay additional fees for these musicians (*See page 10*).

Receiving of Friends:

We have formal parlors adjacent to both our sanctuary and our chapel:

- **The Virginia Gilmer Room** is used when a funeral/memorial service takes place in the sanctuary.
- **The Blair Hagan Room** is used when a funeral/memorial service takes place in the chapel.

In these rooms, families may gather before or after the service to receive friends.

Portraits, pictures, and memorabilia of the deceased may be placed in these rooms along with gifts of flowers and plants from friends. In these spaces, friends and family can remember upon their loved one and share special stories and times with one another.

If the family would like to show a DVD or slideshow of their loved one in the Virginia Gilmer or Blair Hagan Rooms, it is required for the family to bring the slideshow on a disc or flash drive **the day before** the funeral/memorial service. Our staff can make sure that the disc or flash drive is compatible with our equipment. We cannot guarantee displaying the slideshow if it is not given to our staff twenty four hours before the service.

When receiving *before* the funeral/memorial service, receiving begins **one hour prior** to the worship service. Visitation will end fifteen minutes prior to the beginning of the service.

When receiving friends *after* the funeral/memorial service, families may greet for up to **two hours**, spending time in fellowship. Families are asked to respect the time frame allotted so that our support staff may prepare the facilities for the next gathering in that space.

If a family chooses to have refreshments when they receive friends at First Presbyterian Church, family will provide all of the items themselves or hire an outside caterer at their own expense. No alcoholic beverages may be served on the First Presbyterian Church campus.

If the funeral/memorial service takes place on a weekend, and the family chooses to provide catered refreshments or a seated meal, several areas are available at an additional cost. The same time frames apply. (See page 10 for fees).



Fees at First Presbyterian Church for Funeral/Memorial Services

Our Presbyterian *Book of Order* says, “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.”

In the spirit of this love and care for our members and their families,

- *There is no fee for the use of our sanctuary or chapel for a weekday funeral/memorial service.*
- *There is no fee* for the use of the Virginia Gilmer Room or Blair Hagan Room for receiving of friends for a weekday funeral/memorial service.
- *There is no fee* for our Director of Music or our pastoral staff’s worship leadership.
- When the Director of Music is not available to play, a guest organist will be secured by the church. *The family is responsible for paying for the guest organist’s fee of \$150.*
- When special music such as soloists or additional musicians is requested, a fee to be paid by the family will be required.
- When a DVD of the funeral/memorial service is requested in the Sanctuary, a fee of \$185 is required.
- When an audio CD of the funeral/memorial service is requested in the Chapel, a fee of \$85 is required.

Weekend Funeral/Memorial Service or On-Site Committal

- Fridays (12:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.)
- Saturdays (9 a.m.-1 p.m.)

To be good stewards of the use of our facilities and our support staff’s time, an additional weekend fee for support staff of \$200 is required. For an on-site committal only, the fee is \$60.

Weekend Receiving of Friends with Refreshments or a Seated Meal:

- Family, friends, and caterers may have access to the receiving space one hour prior to the service.
- Please note that First Presbyterian Church does not provide tablecloths, napkins, utensils, or cups. All items must be brought in by the family, friends, or caterer.

| | |
|---|-------|
| Rental of the Mullin Life Center or Redhead Hall..... | \$250 |
| Rental of the Virginia Gilmer Room..... | \$150 |
| Cannon Harmon Solarium..... | \$150 |

All fees incurred are payable to First Presbyterian Church and delivered to the Congregational Care office on or before the day of Funeral/Memorial service.



Cost of Niches

Garden Columbarium

(urn size: 9"x 9"x 9")

Single Niche\$1,500

Double Niche\$2,000

The cost above includes the engraving of the markers. Urns are at the family's expense

Memorial Columbarium

(urn size: 7"x 5 1/2" x 5 1/2")

Bronze plaque for niche (for those who purchased niche at \$650)\$300

At this time, our Memorial Columbarium is full. However, if niches become available for resale, the price for either a single or double includes the cost of the plaque\$1,100

Scattering of Ashes and Plaque

for Memorial Garden Tablet\$200

Memorial Gifts to

First Presbyterian Church

Friends and family may choose to make a memorial gift that honors the faith and values of the deceased. The family will receive acknowledgement of any gifts given to First Presbyterian Church in memory of their loved one.

Photography and Videography

The funeral/memorial service is first and foremost a worship service to God. To honor this sacred time and occasion, no personal recordings of the funeral/memorial service are permitted within the worship space. This includes but is not limited to cell phones, tablets, or video recorders.

If the family chooses to have the service recorded through our trained technicians, there will be a fee for the technician that will include a copy of a DVD of the service (See page 10).

Additional Funeral/Memorial Service Policies

- All First Presbyterian Church facilities are smoke- and pet-free.
- No alcoholic beverages are allowed on the First Presbyterian Church campus.
- **Childcare is available upon request:**
First Presbyterian Church hires childcare workers from Preferred Childcare. Our child protection policy requires at least two childcare workers to be present at all times, with the number of workers requested dependent upon the number of children in care. First Presbyterian Church requires twenty-four hour notice for securing childcare.
The family is responsible for paying for the childcare workers and their time spent at the church.
- First Presbyterian Church is not responsible for valuables left unattended during the funeral/memorial service or during the receiving of friends.

Important First Presbyterian Church Staff Contacts

The First Presbyterian Church Office: 336-478-4799

The First Presbyterian Church “Pastor on Call” Phone:
336-908-8615

Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care: Dolly Jacobs
336-478-4734; djacobs@fpcgreensboro.org

Executive Assistant: Debby Foster
336-478-4702; dfoster@fpcgreensboro.org

Office Manager: Carolyn Yow
336-478-4768; cyow@fpcgreensboro.org

