

# **Funeral Planning Guide and Worksheet Presbyterian Church of the Cross**



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# Funeral Planning Guide and Worksheet

## The Christian Funeral Service

This service is a gathering of family and friends, who form a community of hope. A funeral or memorial service is a rich opportunity to recall the promises of God through Christ. Because of His suffering, death, and resurrection to new life, each time we gather to worship upon the death of a loved one, we do so in the context of God's promise. Every funeral includes praising God in Christ who is our hope and our salvation, even as we remember the deceased and give thanks to God for the time shared with that person.

Christians view death as another step in our life as children of God. Yet, Christians also experience death as a time of loss when sorrow, grief, and bereavement are both natural and appropriate. These two truths inform the Christian funeral service and guide the church in its ministry to those who have lost a loved one to death, affirming with both joy and tears the promise and hope of the Good News of Jesus.

A funeral or memorial service should be comforting to those who mourn as well as bear witness to our faith in Jesus Christ. The concern of gathered friends does minister to our grief but, above all else, a funeral is a service of worship to God. There, in God's presence together, we witness to our faith in the communion of saints, the resurrection of the body, and the life ever-lasting. In doing so, the assurance of God's love and salvation in Christ become a ministry, especially to the bereaved. Since a funeral is a service of worship, all that takes place should be consistent with this principle.

Our Funeral Planning Guide and Worksheet is designed to:

- ◆ to provide a tool for planning for the future when your life on this earth ends, and
- ◆ to support and guide families making plans upon the death of a loved one.

In the first days following a loved one's death, the family makes an average of 200 decisions. During such an emotional, stressful and demanding time, plans that have been made earlier lighten the load after death.

If you've not made advance plans, this guide will be helpful to you as you arrange for services and burial of your loved one.

This guide will walk you through a series of questions. Your responses can be marked on the worksheet at the end. The Pastors are available to discuss any items with you. When you are finished, please share your worksheet with a family member or friend who will act on your behalf after your death. It would also be helpful to contact one of our pastors to share your worksheet so that it can be held in safekeeping for the future.

## Planning Faithfully, Choosing Wisely

### **What is the difference between a funeral and memorial service?**

Simply put, at a funeral service the body of the deceased is present, whereas at a memorial service either the deceased's ashes or no remains are present. Both services provide an opportunity to proclaim God's death defeating acts in Christ as we remember all that God has given us in the life of our loved one.

### **How does the Church view cremation?**

Cremation is an acceptable way for Christians to deal with one's earthly remains. The Scriptures tell us that we are formed "of the dust of the ground" (Genesis 2:7) and, after death, we shall return "again to dust." (Job 34:15)

### **If I choose cremation, do I need to secure the services of a Funeral Director?**

We highly recommend working with a Funeral Director. This professional will ease the strain upon family members by coordinating all the details and thus contributing to your wishes being carried out with dignity and honor. Even if cremation is your desire, a Funeral Director handles many details that are not taken care of by the church, the Pastor, or family members. Attempting to save money by not using a Funeral Director is likely to cause confusion and frustration at a time when you most need guidance and support.

### **Should I make pre-arrangements with a Funeral Director?**

Making the decision to pre-arrange some aspects of your funeral and/or burial is helpful. An appointment with a Funeral Director in advance of death is a wise step to help you decide what you and your family need from the many services available. If you are a family member caring for a dying loved one, making an initial contact now with a Funeral Director can be very helpful and will lessen the decisions and demands you'll face upon death.

When a funeral director is not involved additional planning by the family is needed, including, but not limited to: ushers to handout bulletins and direct people to be seated. Additional items to provide: a guest register, container for cards of sympathy, transferring floral arrangements and memorabilia to Fellowship Hall during funeral service for the reception.

### **How soon after death does a funeral or memorial service take place?**

Funeral services are generally held within three to five days following death, thereby allowing appropriate time for family members and friends to gather for the service. Memorial services can be held at any time. However, waiting for weeks or even months after a death will have a bearing on finding a sense of closure, and this will impact the grief work that follows the death of a loved one. Therefore, it is recommended that a memorial service be held within a few weeks after death.

If a funeral or memorial service is to be followed by a burial that same day, the schedule of the cemetery workers dictates that burials be held during normal business hours for city cemeteries. Surcharges apply for weekend burials, and burials are not available on holidays. It is also possible to have the burial in the morning, before the service, which allows for a late morning or afternoon service.

Funeral or memorial services on Sunday are highly discouraged, as Sundays are reserved for the worship services of the congregation.

### **What fees are associated with a funeral or memorial service at PCOC?**

There are fees for the people involved in providing the worship service. A fee schedule is available from the church office. There is no building utilization fee for PCOC members on Monday- Friday, however there is a building utilization fee for Saturday services. Payment of these fees are coordinated through the Funeral Director.

**Who makes arrangements for the musician(s)?**

PCOC's Director of Worship and Music and pastors assist in helping family coordinate music for all funerals. Our full time organist will provide the service music. A vocalist may be selected by you or your family, or the vocalist can be arranged by the Director of Worship and Music.

**May we have a visitation at the church the evening before the service, or must that take place at a funeral home?**

The visitation generally occurs at the Funeral Home.

**Who is responsible for producing the order of worship and bulletin?**

After the service has been planned with the Pastor, the funeral home or the church office produces the service program.

**Who is responsible for submitting the death notice and obituary to the newspaper?**

The Funeral Director can take care of this for you. A full obituary normally appears 2-3 days before the visitation and funeral. There is a cost for this, and the Funeral Director can assist you. Notices to other newspapers can also be handled by the Funeral Director at your request.

**Who plans the reception following the funeral or memorial service?**

The Board of Deacons provides a luncheon or reception, depending on the time of the service, for the friends and families of church members in Fellowship Hall. Other arrangements may be made by the family, if desired.

**Who is responsible for the floral arrangements following the service and/or reception?**

The floral arrangements belong to the family. It is the family's responsibility to remove the flowers from the church. They may choose to take arrangements to their home or to nursing homes, or other places where others may enjoy the beauty.

**What if I desire to have memorials directed to PCOC or other organizations?**

This is an honorable thing to do. PCOC and any other organizations you choose are blessed when memorials are directed to support their ministries and missions. The Funeral Director will be happy to include any memorial designation(s) in the notices about the funeral service. All memorial gifts received directly by PCOC will generate an acknowledgment to you. Twice a year all memorials are shared with the congregation as an insert in a Sunday bulletin.

# FUNERAL PLANNING WORKSHEET

When planning your funeral, or a funeral for a loved one, there are many choices to make. Facing some of those choices now will make the process less demanding for your loved ones later. This Funeral Planning Worksheet will lead you through a variety of decisions. After death, a Pastor of PCOC will meet with family members and review your worksheet to form the funeral or memorial service.

This worksheet may be used by:

- ◆ an individual making their advance plans known, or
  - ◆ a family planning the funeral of a loved one nearing death or recently deceased.
- Please supply as much information as you wish to share on any parts of the worksheet.

Guide for the Christian Funeral of \_\_\_\_\_  
 Full Name: First, Middle (Maiden), Last

Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

## For the Person Making Advance Plans:

When you have completed this worksheet, please consider sharing it with a PCOC Pastor. Your information will be kept in a confidential file available only to the Pastors of PCOC. It will be used in consultation with your family or whomever you have directed to carry out these wishes upon your death.

Also, after completing the worksheet, consider telling someone you trust about it. You may wish to discuss with them what you have written to be certain that it is clear. Consider providing copies:

1. To your Family
2. To a Funeral Director

Or simply give it to someone you trust with a note that says,

*I have recorded my desires regarding my death and burial. I keep this information in the following place:  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (i.e. on file at the church, with my will, etc.). At the time of my death, I ask that you use this information to provide guidance for my family and my church in making arrangements for the funeral I desire. Although this information is being left for safekeeping, I understand that it is not legally binding or enforceable. This worksheet does not make the church or anyone obligated or responsible for the execution of these instructions.*

*With gratitude,*

*Signature and Date*

## For Family Members Making Plans for the Funeral of a Loved One Nearing Death or Recently Deceased:

Please use this worksheet to assist with plans that will honor your loved one's expressed wishes or desires and will reflect his/her values. If you haven't already contacted a Funeral Director, please consider doing so now. The professional services, compassionate care, and guidance they provide will greatly assist you in the days ahead. The Trinity Pastors are available to refer you to Funeral Directors they know well and hold in high regard.

When death occurs, please contact the church office. If the office is closed, you may leave a message or contact a pastor directly.

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## Visitation

*A Visitation is an informal gathering for friends and family to express sympathy, view photographs/video tribute, etc.*

**Will a Visitation be Held?**

Yes

No

**Location of Visitation**

At the Funeral Home

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Will the Remains be Present at the Visitation?**

Coffin with Viewing of Body

Closed Coffin

Urn with Photograph next to it

No Remains Present

**Time of the Visitation**

Evening Prior to the Funeral or Memorial Service

Before the Funeral or Memorial Service Only

Both

**Displays**

Photographic Displays

Mementos (Awards, Certificates, etc.)

Bible of the Deceased

Video Tribute

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Christian Worship Service Plans

**Location of Service**

PCOC

Funeral Home

Cemetery (A Graveside Service Only)

Other: \_\_\_\_\_ (i.e. Care Facility Chapel, etc.)

**Time of the Worship Service**

Morning

Afternoon

**Will the Remains be Present at the Worship Service?**

Yes (Coffin or Urn with Ashes)

No

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**Will Holy Communion be Celebrated?** *(Only available for services at PCOC)*

- Yes  
 No

**Display Items to be On or Near the Casket/Urn**

- Floral Spray and/or additional Flower Bouquets  
 Bible or Other Symbol of Faith: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Photograph *(Normal size, used with an Urn only)*  
 Cross  
 Flag *(Only used, in place of flowers)*

**Readers**

- The Pastor who officiates will read.  
 I would like this/these person(s) to read at my service: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Bible Readings**

- The Pastor who officiates may choose the readings.  
 My Family will choose the readings.  
 I have chosen the readings as indicated below.

**Suggested Readings:**

**Old Testament**

- Job 19:23–27  
Isaiah 40:1–11, 28–31; Isaiah 40:28–31; Isaiah 65:17  
Psalm 23; Psalm 46:1–5, 10–11; Psalm 90:1–10, 12; Psalm 121; Psalm 130; Psalm 139:1–12

**Gospels**

- Matthew 5:1–12a  
Luke 23:33, 39–43  
John 11:17–27  
John 14:1–6, 25–27

**New Testament**

- Romans 8:14–23, 31–39  
Romans 14:7–9, 10b–12  
1 Corinthians 15:20–26, 35–38, 42–44, 50, 53–58  
2 Corinthians 4:16–5:1  
1 Thessalonians 4:13–18  
Revelation 21:1–4, 22–25, 22:3–5  
Revelation 22:1–5

**Other Readings Selected:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Congregational Hymns**

- The Pastor who officiates may choose the hymns.
- My family will choose the hymns
- I have chosen the hymns as indicated below.

**Suggested Hymns**

- “I Know That My Redeemer Lives!”
- “Love Divine All Loves Excelling”
- “O God, Our Help in Ages Past”
- “For All the Saints”
- “The King of Love My Shepherd Is”
- “Lift High the Cross”
- “Great is Thy Faithfulness”
- “A Mighty Fortress”
- “My Faith Looks up to Thee”
- “My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less”
- “Amazing Grace”
- “How Great Thou Art”
- “This Is My Father’s World”
- “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”

Other Hymns Selected: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Soloist**

If possible, I would like this vocalist to sing: \_\_\_\_\_

**Vocal Solos Selected** (*Selection of solos must aim to reflect the spirit of Christian worship.*)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Remembrances to be Shared During Worship by a Family Member or a Friend**

(*Please ask speakers to limit their remarks to 3 minutes.*)

- Yes
- No

I would like this person to speak: \_\_\_\_\_

**Reception Following Worship**

I would like a reception following the service for mutual conversation and consolation.

- Yes
- No

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**I would like the Reception**

- Immediately Following the Worship Service; Before Burial
- Following the Worship Service and After Burial

**Funeral Home**

**Preferred Company** \_\_\_\_\_

*(Specific arrangements in advance at the funeral home of your choice are encouraged.)*

**Have Pre-Arrangements Been Made?**

- Yes
- No

**Disposition of the Body**

- Embalm Body *(Usually required if unrefrigerated over 24 hours before burial.)*
- Cremate Body Shortly After Death
- Cremate Body After Visitation and/or Service

**Burial Wishes**

- Bury Coffin/Urn in Cemetery
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*In Nebraska, there are no state laws controlling where you may keep or scatter ashes. Ashes may be stored in a crypt, niche, grave, or container at home. If you wish to scatter ashes, you have many options. Cremation renders ashes harmless, so there is no public health risk involved in scattering ashes. (Use common sense and refrain from scattering ashes in places where they would be obvious to others)*

**Bury Coffin or Urn**

- Before Visitation
- After Visitation but Before Funeral Service
- After Funeral Service but Before Luncheon Reception
- After Luncheon Reception
- At a Later Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Eligible for Military Honors**

Yes  
 No

**Names of Pall Bearers** (*Six Pall Bearers needed only when there is a coffin for burial.*)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cemetery**

I have made arrangements for my burial.

Name of Cemetery \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Cemetery \_\_\_\_\_

I do not have arrangements for my burial. I suggest the following arrangements:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Desired Expressions of Sympathy**

Flowers

I desire Memorial Gifts in lieu of Flowers

**Memorial Suggestions**

PCOC's Memorial Fund

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Obituary**

Full Name (*including Maiden Name*) \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Date and Location \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Names (*including Mother's Maiden Name*) \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status, Marriage Date, and Name of Spouse \_\_\_\_\_

Other Marriages/Divorces/Spouse(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Names of Children \_

Additional Next of Kin

**Personal History**

*On a separate page, record additional information including place(s) of residence, special events, hobbies/interests, schools attended and degrees received, accomplishments, memberships, employment history, volunteer activities, military service, etc. Include as many full names, city of residence, birth and death dates, etc. as possible. All this information is important to your family.*

*This information does not need to be prepared in paragraph form.*

**Important Documents and Advisors**

*It is important that survivors be able to locate vital records and important documents. Before your death, you should have a current will/living trust and related health care directives which express your wishes on important personal, financial, medical, and charitable issues for your survivors. If you need information regarding estate planning, planned giving, and/or the inclusion of a Christian preamble for your will, please consult your legal or financial advisor.*

**Location and Date of Will/Living Trust**

**Location of my Living Will**

**Attorney/Will Preparer**

**Power of Attorney/Financial**

**Power of Attorney for Health Care**

**Executor of Will/Estate**

**Guardian (for Minor Children)**

**Additional Comments:**