

Appendix C – CHRISTIAN FUNERAL POLICY

"The resurrection is a central doctrine of the Christian faith and shapes Christians' attitudes and are 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" (Book of Order, W-4.10001).

Because we believe the proper object of the funeral service is the worship of God and the consolation of the living, the session of First Presbyterian Church of Kerrville, Texas, has adopted the following as guiding principles and rules for such services conducted in the church.

THE EVENT OF DEATH

When death occurs, the church will be looked upon as the first resource of help and comfort. Before anything else is done, the session advises that one of the pastors be notified immediately in order to assist the bereaved in relating to the reality of death, provide pastoral counseling, and marshal the resources of the church to serve the needs of the family. In the event that a pastor is not available, one of the elders known to the family should be called to serve until a pastor arrives.

FUNERAL PLANNING

"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" (Book of Order, W-4.10002).

Usually the funeral service should be held in the church chapel or sanctuary, and the session grants priority for the use of the building for this purpose in case of conflict with previously scheduled uses. The entire service in the church and at the graveside or columbarium will be under the direction of a pastor on staff at First Presbyterian Church, who will coordinate with and seek to carry out the wishes of the immediate family as they are in keeping with the history and tradition of our faith. When the presence of other ministers to assist the PFC pastor is desired, the invitation for their service will be issued by the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church and at the pastor's discretion. "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" (Book of Order W-4.10003).

Because the proper object of the service is the worship of God and the consolation of the living, it follows that the body of the deceased is not necessary to the service. The casket, if it is to be present during the service, shall be closed at all times and may be covered with a

white pall in order that the attention of those assembled may be directed to the Author and Finisher of their salvation. Flowers are limited to one spray on the casket and other arrangements as appropriate. The service may be held before or after the disposition of the body. "The service shall be complete in itself, and any fraternal, civic, or military rites should be conducted separately" (Book of Order, W-4.10005).

The funeral director will not announce definite plans, time, date, etc., of a funeral in which this church or its ministry is involved without the prior approval of the pastor or, in the absence of the pastor, any other pastor or the clerk of session.

THE CHURCH SERVICE

The funeral service for a Christian is a witness to God's love and the resurrection. "The service begins with scriptural sentences." It should include readings from the scriptures and prayers of thanksgiving for the life and witness of the deceased. "It is appropriate for worshippers 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 the 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 the 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"
- (Book of Order, W-4.10004).

SERVICE OF COMMITTAL

Interment may precede or follow the worship service, but the session commends for the consideration of each family the immediate disposition of the body of the deceased followed by a public service at an appointed time in the church. It is Presbyterian to have a brief, dignified graveside service in the immediate presence of members and friends of the family of the deceased. "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 of the dead" (Book of Order, W-4.10006).

COSTS

The physical facilities and the services provided by the church at the time of death are offered without charge to families of the church. The pastors, organist/pianist, custodian, and ushers are a part of the pastoral ministry of the church. Any soloist, if requested, is to be paid for services, usually by the funeral home as a convenience to the family.