

## **Presbyterians believe**

(from The Directory of Worship PC (USA))

The resurrection is a central doctrine of the Christian faith. Although death brings loss, sorrow, and grief to all, 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 4.10001)

Because it is difficult under emotional stress to plan wisely, the session should encourage members to discuss and plan in advance the arrangements necessary at the time of death. These plans should provide for arrangements which are simple, which bear witness to the resurrection hope, and in which the Christian community is central. (4.10002)

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. (4.10003)

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

- for life in Jesus Christ and the promise of the gospel;
- for the gift of the life of the one who has died;
- for the comfort of the Holy Spirit; for the community of faith; making intercessions
- for family members and loved ones who grieve
- for those who minister to and support the bereaved;
- for all who suffer loss lifting supplications
- 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. (4.10004)

The 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 and may be covered with a 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. (4.10005)

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 Scriptures, 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. (4.10006)

Jesus said: "I am the resurrection, and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live and everyone who believes in me will never die." John 11:25-26 NRSV

“God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, that everyone who has faith in him may not die but have eternal life. John 3:16 NEB

“We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.” Romans 14:79 **NRVS**

“...I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:37-39 NRSV

## **Other questions**

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

A funeral service is typically held prior to committal of the body. A memorial service is usually held afterwards and stresses celebration of the life of the deceased.

### **What can the family of the deceased expect from the pastor and the church?**

When death comes, the church in its pastoral care immediately offers the ministry of presence, of shared loss and pain, of faith and hope in the power of the resurrection, and of ordinary acts of care and love. The church continues special pastoral care during the time of grieving and adjusting.

### **Are there any fees/charges for the use of the church?**

Yes, there can be fees related to a funeral! memorial service. The pastor is a full-time employee, so there is no charge for his services. For members of the church, there is no charge for the use of the building. If a choir or ushers are used, the members are volunteers. However, the choir director, organist and soloist are not full-time employees, so there is a charge for them. Some funeral homes include these fees; some do not.

### **What are the theological considerations for services on the occasion of death?**

Funeral or memorial services are called "A Witness to the Resurrection." This places the emphasis on the life and faith of the deceased. It is a worship service, a joyful reminder that though the body or temporary tent (2 Corinthians 5:14) is dead, the person has been raised to new life. Though we properly grieve the loss of our loved one, we celebrate the new resurrected life in Christ. The graveside service and viewing at a funeral home give family and friends an appropriate opportunity to acknowledge physical death. Having a worship service in the sanctuary without the body present more accurately represents a faithful witness to our Christian faith, lifting the power of the Spirit of the Living God.

### **How can I record my wishes for services on the occasion of my death?**

The church office has available forms that may be completed so that the worship service in witness to the resurrection is one of reverence and praise.