



**A WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION:  
MEMORIAL AND FUNERAL SERVICES**

**TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
1728 South Hull Street  
Montgomery, AL 36104**

**A WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION:  
MORIAL AND FUNERAL SERVICES AT  
TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA**

The Christian funeral is a service of worship in which God's people witness to their faith in the hope of the Gospel, the communion of saints, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting, and in which assurance of God's love and salvation in Christ is ministered, especially to the Christian bereaved.

In a funeral service we gather primarily to worship God and confess our faith in a living Savior. Though we mourn our loss and remember our loved one, our eyes are firmly fixed on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of the faith.

Just as the church embraces us in our baptism and throughout our Christian life, so it should embrace us in our death and in our hope of resurrection to eternal life. The purpose of this booklet is to assist members of Trinity Presbyterian Church in the realistic consideration of this eventuality and the decisions that are required at the death of a loved one."

"Upon the death of one of our members, a minister of the church should be notified as soon as possible. This is best accomplished by calling the Senior Minister's Office. Our ministers also earnestly desire to know of those who need comfort and counsel as they face death. By being involved early in situations of death or impending death, the minister can help immensely with the necessary service arrangements, as well as caring for the spiritual needs of those involved."

When contemplating the time of the burial service, consider the arrival of people from out-of-town, the publication of newspaper notices and deadlines, and the availability of the sanctuary and clergy at the desired time and hour. Always verify a day and time with the officiating minister prior to informing the newspaper, family, or friends.

The minister is available to assist you as you decide whether there will be a visitation. If so, will it be at Trinity Presbyterian Church, the funeral home, at home, or elsewhere? Will it be before or after the service?

The Women in the Church (WIC) will prepare and serve lunch to the family of a deceased church member. This meal may be held at the church or in a home. A member of the WIC will contact the bereaved family to make the necessary arrangements.

Work out the particulars of the service with the officiating clergy, including time and place, scripture readings, participants, music, etc. A member of the Chancel Guild at Trinity Presbyterian Church will contact you concerning the flowers.

There are three types of services available for use in Christian burial. They may be used separately or in conjunction with one another.

## TYPES OF SERVICES

### I. Memorial Service

The memorial service is a service where the body is not present. Internment of the remains in a service of committal has either preceded the memorial service or will take place at a later time.

### II. Graveside Service

The graveside service is a service that takes place at the burial site. The service of committal is a part of the graveside service.

### III. Funeral Service

The funeral service is a service where the body is present and is normally concluded with a graveside service at the burial site.



The services proper for such an occasion are:

- a. The singing of appropriate psalms or hymns;
- b. The reading of some suitable portion or portions of Scripture, with such remarks as it may seem proper to the minister to make;
- c. Prayer, in which the bereaved shall be especially remembered, and God's grace sought on their behalf; that they may be sustained and comforted in their sorrow, and that their affliction may be blessed to their spiritual good.

The funeral services are to be left largely to the discretion of the minister performing them, but he should always remember that the proper object of the service is worship of God and the consolation of the living.

## **VARIOUS ASPECTS OF A CHRISTIAN FUNERAL**

1. The Bible is central, and everything that takes place must be consistent with biblical principles of worship.
2. Prayer in all services normally includes thanksgiving for the life and memory of the deceased's triumph in the resurrection of Christ and intercession for the family and friends who remain.
3. Worshippers are participants in the service; therefore, the singing of psalms and hymns, confession of faith, prayer and hearing God's Word are appropriate means of worship.
4. Since God is the object of worship, the eulogizing of a person in worship is to be minimized.
5. A relative or friend may read lessons or speak during the service. All remarks must be preapproved by the presiding minister, and all music must be coordinated with the organist or Director of Music Ministry. If there is a homily, it will be done by a member of the ministry staff unless otherwise approved.

## LOCATION OF THE SERVICE

A church sanctuary is an appropriate place for a memorial or funeral service. The church is where we worship every Lord's Day. It is where we baptize our children, celebrate marriage, gather at the Lord's Table and remember the love and grace of God. Here we are surrounded by the symbols of our Christian faith. In this place we have tangible reminders of the "great cloud of witnesses" that surround us and the community of faith that supports us with compassion and love.

The funeral home is an attractive and accessible place as well. While its only associations are with death, it may hold out comfort for a sorrowing family.

Graveside services are often used for simplicity and convenience, and are sometimes the expressed wish of the deceased. One should take into account the special limitations that graveside services place upon a family. The time must be brief and sometimes the elements make it hard For the living.

## LOGISTICAL MATTERS OF POLICY

1. The practice of “viewing the remains” is not a part of the worship service; therefore, if the service is at the church, the casket should be located where the funeral service will be held and must be kept closed.

2. The church welcomes a time of visitation at the church for family and friends. The casket will not be present.

3. In keeping with the simplicity and understanding of the Christian faith to avoid ostentation, flowers are limited to two arrangements on pedestals in the front of the sanctuary and/or one arrangement in the chancel. This will encourage worshippers to focus their attention on the promises of Scripture and the grace of God. Typically, the family of the deceased will furnish the flowers for the service. Any additional floral arrangements should be displayed at the funeral home, the cemetery, or in the room used for visitation.

4. Many people choose to have the burial before the service; others have the memorial service before the burial. Either approach is appropriate, and the Session makes no recommendation in this regard.

5. The church has a pall that may be used in the sanctuary. A pall is a large cloth that covers the casket during the service. It represents the covering of the Christian by the righteousness of Christ and new life in Jesus. By use of the pall, the focus of the service may remain on the goodness and grace of God. If a casket is present at the service, it may be covered with the pall, the American flag (where appropriate) or flowers. Following the benediction, when the casket is taken from the church, the sanctuary pall will be replaced by the cemetery pall, greenery or flowers. For a service at the funeral home or at the graveside, the cemetery pall, flowers or greenery may be used. The church also has a small pall suitable for infant caskets.



6. Psalms and hymns which are chosen should affirm the goodness and grace of God and give comfort and support to those who grieve. The minister and organist will guide the selection of appropriate psalms and hymns.

7. When funerals are held at Trinity Presbyterian Church, staff ministers shall ordinarily conduct those services in their entirety. Session policy provides that our staff ministers have sole responsibility and discretion in carrying out the Session's guidelines for funeral services. Only those special requests (regarding things pertaining to the service itself, whether music or a guest minister) which meet the approval of the officiating minister and organist are acceptable.

8. Over the years Christians have by tradition buried the dead as opposed to cremating them. The Scriptures teach us that the human body is good and holy and to be treated with the greatest respect, in anticipation of the resurrection. Indeed, our Shorter Catechism reminds us that our bodies, even as they are resting in the grave are "still united to Christ." (I Thessalonians 4:14)

9. Because fraternal or civil rites are not a part of the worship service, these organizations should pay tribute to the deceased at another hour and place.

10. The Chancel Guild is available to assist the family with arranging for the use of the pall, the ordering of flowers, and any other arrangements involving the sanctuary.

11. As appropriate, a pulpit announcement on the Lord's Day may be made pertaining to the time, date and place of visitation and service for church members or the family of ministerial staff. Announcements may be made via church-wide email, at Wednesday services, Sunday evening worship services, Sunday School, or other meetings.

## **COSTS AND FEES**

The family may give an honorarium or love offering to the minister and organist; however, there are no charges or fees for use of the church's facilities or for the services of the minister and organist.

There will be costs to the family for the flowers the family provides at the service and for additional musicians and vocalists the family may request.

## **MEMORIAL GIFTS**

In place of flowers, it is common for families to suggest memorial gifts to the Church or to a charity for lasting remembrances. The Church will send letters of acknowledgement to the donor and the family of the deceased. Memorial Gifts may be designated for a specific use in the Church (such as the Building Fund, Missions, Children's Ministry, etc.). If left undesignated, memorial gifts will go into the memorial fund which is used to beautify the church property.



The following are brief answers to some of the questions that are often asked when a loved one is taken. It would be well to read these over when no need is in sight so that one can have these things in mind when called upon to make decisions and plans and to seek comfort in the death of a beloved family member or friend.

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A FUNERAL?**

A funeral at Trinity Presbyterian Church is worship of the living God. The funeral is God's way of bringing comfort to the hearts of those who mourn as Scripture is read and preached, prayer is offered, praises are sung, grief is expressed, and remembrance is cherished. It is an occasion in which we, by the grace of God, bless the name of the One who gives and takes away. The presence of family and Friends at this time supports and strengthens the sorrowing ones. The funeral gives thanks for the life of the one who has passed away, and we learn from it valuable lessons.

Children and grandchildren learn things about their dear one that remind them of character qualities they need to cultivate for the days ahead. The funeral gives a sense of closure to a life and brings a certain reality to the passing that may not happen in any other way. Spiritually it is used of God to bring us through the process of grieving. It is not something simply to be endured; rather, we are to enter into it with expectation of God's comfort and the easing of our pain through it.

### **WHAT DO I SAY WHEN FRIENDS COME TO CALL?**

Thank them sincerely for their kindness. They don't know just what to say. Receive their comfort as from the Lord and listen for God's leading through them in terms of strengthening. Don't be afraid to talk with them about your deceased loved one. Put them at ease, and they will be able to encourage you even more.

## WHAT PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE WILL HELP ME MOST?

The Word of God is a source of comfort and strength to you, especially in the Psalms.

### **O.T.**

Psalm 23

Psalm 24

Psalm 27

Psalm 34

### **N.T.**

1John 14:1-6

Romans 8:35-39

II Corinthians 5

Revelation 22



**WHAT HYMNS WILL BRING  
COMFORT AND OFFER PRAISE?**

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God  
Abide with Me  
Amazing Grace  
Be Thou My Vision  
Be Still, My Soul  
Children of the Heavenly Father  
Day by Day, and with Each  
Passing Moment  
For All the Saints  
Great Is Thy Faithfulness  
Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah  
He Will Hold Me Fast  
Holy, Holy, Holy  
How Deep the Father's Love for Us  
How Great Thou Art  
Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise  
In Christ Alone  
It Is Well with My Soul  
Jesus Shall Reign  
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling  
My Jesus, I Love Thee  
Nearer, My God, To Thee  
O God, Our Help in Ages Past  
O Love That Will Not Let Me Go  
Praise to the Lord, the Almighty  
Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven  
Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me  
This Is My Father's World  
Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus  
The King of Love My Shepherd Is  
What A Friend We Have in Jesus

## **HOW LONG WILL THIS DEEP SORROW THAT I AM FEELING LAST?**

Be patient with yourself. Sometimes when we think we have overcome the deep hurt, it returns again at little provocation. But grieve with each successive stage of your sorrow. Don't be afraid to weep and tell God how you feel. Seek Him in prayer and ask for His comforting help. It may take many months until you feel like yourself again, but that is not unusual. If the sorrow persists in a deep and agonizing way beyond that point, it would be important to speak to one of the ministers and find some special help at that time.

## **IS A GRAVESITE IMPORTANT?**

Yes. God's people have used burial places from the most ancient times. God Himself buried the body of Moses. The place of burial should eventually be marked by an appropriate character description so that grandchildren and other family members can learn about their spiritual heritage from visiting it. It will be a comfort for you to be there from time to time to pray, remember, and gather comfort.

## IN THE EVENT OF A DEATH, WHAT MUST I DO?

1. Call the Senior Minister's Office (386-1755).  
They can help you notify family members, if you need assistance. Ministers and Staff can bring comfort and help to you.
2. Call a funeral home of your choice. They will ask you to come to the funeral home to make arrangements for the service.
3. Select a resting place if you have not done so already. Keep in mind the coming generations who will be interested in the life and character of your loved one.
4. Put your trust in God. Seek to find comfort and strength from the Lord.

The Christian funeral should be a testimony to our Lord Jesus Christ, drawing attention to Him so that family and friends may be comforted and non-believers may come to Him by His grace. A Christian funeral can be a great climax to an earthly life that has been lived in trust and service to Jesus Christ.

Approved by the Session on February 28, 2023.



*A congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)*

15  
trinitypca.org