

Mount Olive Presbyterian Church Funeral Guidelines



As God's people, called into relationship with God through Jesus Christ, we believe and affirm that God is eternal Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of our lives. We confess that in life and death we belong to God. We affirm the resurrection as a central belief of the Christian faith that shapes our attitudes and 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 Holy Spirit and the community of faith.

With this understanding, the funeral should be planned to remember and show respect and honor to the deceased, to encourage the community of believers to gather to console the bereaved, and to witness to our Christian faith in the assurance of God's love and promise of our resurrection to eternal life. The following guideline shall aid in the planning on the funeral.

1. The Christian funeral is a service of worship. It is entitled, "The Funeral: A Service of Witness to the Resurrection." Accordingly, the minister shall be involved in making appropriate arrangements for worship. The funeral service should ordinarily be held in the sanctuary of the church where people customarily gather for worship in order to join this service to the church's continuing life and witness to the resurrection. It is recognized that there are sometimes extenuating circumstances that place the service in another location (i.e. auditorium, funeral home, graveside). The service may be observed on any day. 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 session.

2. The installed pastor of Mount Olive Presbyterian Church will ordinarily officiate the funeral service. If the family requests that a former minister or an associate share in the service, they may be invited to participate at the discretion of the pastor. Visiting ministers shall be approved by the pastor or the session. The pastor should maintain an active role in the service with the visiting minister.
3. Floral arrangements and decorations should be in keeping with a service of worship. No elaborate decorations shall be permitted. Further, the music should be consistent with that which is a part of our Reformed tradition of worship. The family may wish to consider requesting memorials or charitable donations in lieu of flowers. For memorials made to our church, it is suggested that they be “unspecified” rather than designated to a particular area, so that the church can put them to the best possible use.
4. In consultation with the pastor, other elements, such as remarks from family members and friends, may be included in the service. It is suggested that each will be no longer than five minutes and that no more than three people will speak. The officiating pastor shall make the final determination on the elements of worship. All music choices, including the use of a soloist or guest musicians, should be approved by the minister and/or the music director. The use of recorded music is permitted as an accompaniment to a soloist, or at the discretion of the music director. If the family would like a recording of the service, they must contact the church office prior to the service to make this request.
5. The church will provide a bulletin for the service. This bulletin will include a color, or neutral, cover with scripture, the order of worship on the inside pages, and the option to include the obituary or one photo of the deceased on the back of the bulletin.
6. This 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. It may be covered with a funeral pall (available from our church).

7. Cremation is an appropriate alternative for Christians. Orders of worship and committal remain the same in cases of cremation, with the exception that the committal may take place on a different date from the service in the church.
8. The service shall be complete in itself, and any fraternal, civic, or military rites should be conducted separately. It is suggested these rites be conducted at the cemetery.
9. The Service of Committal at the graveside or crematorium shall be conducted with simplicity, dignity, and brevity, 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.
10. One way the Spiritual Growth, Care & Fellowship Committee ministers to the bereaved is by providing a meal during this difficult time. A representative from the committee will contact the family about arrangements.

If you have questions or need further guidance, please contact the church office at 919-658-2044

Pastor – Rev. Diane Knauf
Music Director/Organist – Cathy Mason