

THE SERVICE OF WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION

Information, guidelines, and policies to assist in planning a memorial service.

The name of the service on the occasion of death is 'The Service of Witness to the Resurrection,' which reflects our fundamental beliefs that, in Christ, death has been conquered and the promise of eternal life is affirmed.



Westminster Presbyterian Church

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PURPOSE OF THIS BOOKLET

The purpose of this booklet is to assist members and friends in making arrangements and planning a service of remembrance at the time of the death of a loved one. Our Christian theology shapes not only our beliefs about death, but also how we celebrate the life of the one who has died.

We trust that you will accept this booklet in the spirit it is offered—with joyful gratitude born of the conviction that, “neither death nor life...nor anything else in all creation, has the power to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8)

The Congregational Care Council of Westminster Presbyterian Church

SERVICES ON THE OCCASION OF DEATH

The name of the service on the occasion of death is ‘The Service of Witness to the Resurrection,’ reflecting our fundamental beliefs that, in Christ, death has been conquered, and the promise of eternal life is affirmed. The presence or absence of a casket or urn does not change the name or purpose of the service.

The uniqueness of the Christian faith is especially apparent when death comes. Our hope of eternal life is based not upon a person’s worth, but upon the graciousness of God. Christians commend to God’s care those who die, trusting that by God’s grace, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, all who believe in God are raised from death to life.

As we affirm the hope of the Gospel in the face of death, it is also important that we acknowledge our grief. Faith plays a major role in the grieving process. Persons of faith do grieve. Expressing sorrow does not show a lack of faith. We need to grieve in order to be open to the healing help God offers.

Christians grieve as those who have a unique hope in the risen Christ. Reflecting this outlook, Christians should make the occasion of death a time in which the hope of the Gospel is reaffirmed with joy and peace. It is a time to celebrate the wonderful gift of God that was given to us in our relationship with the deceased. A properly planned service can be a benediction and a comfort to us, as well as a witness to our faith.

GUIDELINES

As a Presbyterian congregation, we follow the guidelines for services on the occasion of death that are outlined in the ‘Directory for Worship’ found in our *Book of Order*:

The resurrection is a central doctrine of the Christian faith and shapes Christians’ 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 Spirit in the community of faith. The church offers a ministry of love and hope to all who grieve.

Plans should provide for arrangements that are simple, which bear witness to resurrection hope, and in which the Christian community is central. (W-4.10000-4.10002)

PRACTICAL MATTERS

The Officiating Pastor

Ordinarily, a Westminster pastor will officiate at all Services of Witness to the Resurrection performed in our facilities. You may request that a particular minister officiate and, if she or he is available and willing, that person will officiate. Otherwise the officiating pastor will be designated for you.

We welcome the participation of other Presbyterian ministers and clergy of other denominations and faiths in our services. If you desire that another member of the clergy assist in a service, please discuss your request with the officiating pastor. Several factors are considered before the officiating pastor will invite another clergy person to assist in a service, including the "mutual recognition of ministry." In all instances the officiating pastor of this church makes the final decision and issues the invitation if it is appropriate.

In the case of inter-religious services, it must be understood that Christian services are conducted at Westminster. Various practices and traditional activities of other faiths may be included as long as they are consistent with the Christian understanding of the Service of Witness to the Resurrection.

Since we believe that death for the Christian is a triumphant experience in which the promises of God in Christ are manifest in the deceased, the occasion at once suggests dignity, reverence, and simplicity. All unnecessary expense and display are to be avoided as inconsistent with the Christian faith. The expenses for whatever arrangements are made should place no undue financial burden upon the family. The pastors can assist in suggesting various types of arrangements and service providers.

Time of the Service

The officiating pastor for the Service of Witness to the Resurrection must be consulted **before** a final decision is made about the time and place of the service. The church building is not available during religious or federal holidays. There may be other times and occasions when the sanctuary or chapel would not be available because of previously scheduled events. It is also Westminster's practice that Services of Witness to the Resurrection not be observed as a part of the regular Sunday morning worship service.

Place of the Service

The most appropriate place for the service to be held is at the church, either in the sanctuary or the chapel. It is in the church where we celebrate and mark all of life's passages: births, baptisms, weddings, confirmations, and other significant events. The life of the deceased should also be celebrated in these familiar surroundings. If particular circumstances dictate, or if the family firmly directs, services may be held in other places. The officiating pastor makes the decision on the appropriateness of the setting. At Westminster, the chapel comfortably seats 150 to 175 people and the sanctuary up to 1,500 people.

Interment Services

The final disposition of the remains is another matter requiring coordination and conversation with the officiating pastor. Depending on the choice made (ground burial or cremation) time may be of the essence. If ground burial or placement of an urn in a columbarium is the choice, additional arrangements must be made. The family may elect to arrange a separate time of interment for family and close friends, either before or after the Service of Witness to the Resurrection.

Burial, Cremation, or Donation

Burial is a dignified custom that many people may wish to observe. The practice of cremation is also consistent with the Christian faith and is much less expensive than traditional burial. It is not new; it has been practiced by Christians throughout the centuries. The remains are usually placed in an urn and may also be placed in a columbarium. Westminster provides a columbarium on our grounds, in the Memorial

Garden, where remains will be cared for in perpetuity. Separate information about the columbarium is available. Another option is the scattering of the ashes by family and friends at a location that holds special significance.

A third choice is to donate one's body to a medical institution for study or parts of the body, (eyes, kidneys, tissue, etc.) for medical use and/or research. Such donations are an act of love appropriate for all Christians. Advance arrangements are usually necessary for this option.

Memorial Wall

When burial or placement of the urn takes place away from Westminster, the Memorial Wall provides a dignified place for loved ones to be remembered at the church with their name engraved in limestone. Separate information about the Memorial Wall is available.

Flowers

Flowers are a traditional way of expressing sympathy. However, in keeping with Westminster's general worship practices, only a limited number of floral arrangements including those provided by the immediate family will be used in the sanctuary or chapel. Other arrangements will be displayed at the reception. Whether the service is held in the chapel or the sanctuary, one or two floral arrangements are sufficient and may be provided by the florist of the family's choice.

Memorial Contributions

In lieu of flowers, a memorial contribution may be given to the Westminster Presbyterian Church or to another recognized charitable organization. In this way, the memorial becomes a "living gift" and the deceased, in very tangible ways, continues to contribute to and support the work and ministry of the Church or other benevolent causes in which s/he had an interest. Memorial Contribution envelopes will be provided for contributions to Westminster.

The Service

The Service of Witness to the Resurrection is one which worships God, gives thanks for the life of the deceased, and affirms the promises of eternal life we have in Jesus Christ. Thus, the service is one of affirmation and positive spirit. The officiating pastor will meet with the family to plan the service and will give final approval to the order and contents of the worship service.

The typical order of the Service of Witness to the Resurrection is as follows:

THE SERVICE OF WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION

- Prelude
- Call to Worship
- Hymn
- Prayer of Invocation
- Remembrances
- Scripture Readings
- Meditation
- Solo or Special Music
- Affirmation of Faith
- Prayer and the Lord's Prayer
- Hymn
- Commendation
- Benediction
- Postlude

We recommend that the congregation participate in the service through responsive prayers, affirmations, and by singing hymns. This enables all to respond in a positive, active way in giving thanks to God for the life of the deceased. The celebration of the Lord's Supper (communion) as a part of the service requires approval of the Session.

If the family wishes, two or three individuals (including family members) may be invited to speak briefly during the Remembrances. In some instances, the congregation at large may be invited to share Remembrances. Other family or friends may be invited to read scripture or another appropriate reading as part of the service.

The casket or urn may or may not be present during the service. If the casket is present, it is closed before the service so that attention is directed toward God.

In the event that rites of a fraternal order are desired, this ceremony should be planned separately from the Service of Witness to the Resurrection. The Christian service is complete in itself and should be kept separate from other rituals.

Hymns and Music

Music that is respectful and worshipful in content can be a powerful ministry of healing in times of grief. Hymns or songs of significance to the deceased or the family can be included in the service if they are appropriate for the setting. Other meaningful music (instrumentals or solos) may be included in the prelude, postlude, or elsewhere within the order of service. The Minister of Music and the Arts and Organist, in consultation with the pastor, is available to discuss music selections with the family and assist in securing vocalists or additional instrumentalists, if desired. A list of appropriate hymns for a Service of Witness to the Resurrection is included at the end of this booklet. *A list of appropriate hymns for a Service of Witness to the Resurrection is included at the end of this booklet.*

Scripture Readings

The reading of scripture should be included in the service. Scripture passages of significance for the deceased or their family can be included. Ordinarily scripture readings will be taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible. *A list of appropriate scripture readings for a Service of Witness to the Resurrection is included at the end of this booklet.*

Worship Bulletins

Westminster will provide simple bulletins containing the order of the service and the names of participants, announcements about the reception, and memorial contributions. If the family wishes a color bulletin, the officiating pastor will make arrangements with an outside vendor at the family's expense.

Prior to the Service

Ordinarily, the family and participants in the service will meet at the church 30 minutes before the service in a room set aside for this purpose. The officiating pastor will meet them there and go over the final details of the service. The family then proceeds to the chapel or sanctuary where they will be seated in the first several pews reserved for them. They will arrive in time to join the other worshippers in listening to the end of the prelude.

Following the Service

After the benediction, the pastor will lead the family out of the sanctuary. If a reception is being held at the church, the family is escorted to the room where it is taking place to greet worshippers.

Guest Book

Families may choose to use a guest book for friends to sign as they enter the service, providing a helpful record of those present. The family or the funeral director should provide the book. When the service is in the sanctuary, the family may wish to provide two (or even three) guest books for each main doorway into the sanctuary.

Recording the Service

Families may request one complimentary audio CD recording of the service by contacting the officiating pastor or the Administrative Assistant for Congregational Care. For an additional fee, when the service is held in the sanctuary, the family may choose to have a DVD video recording of the service made and/or the service broadcast live on the church web site (live streamed). Arrangements for video recording and/or live streaming of the service must be made in advance with the officiating pastor.

Reception

Upon request, Westminster's Hospitality ministry will host a reception following the service, usually in the Meisel Room, the Great Hall, or the Heller Commons. During the reception, the family may want to display photographs and other items. Westminster will make every effort to accommodate reception requests, but, in some cases, previously scheduled events may make an on-site reception impossible. Saturday receptions at the church must end by 3:00 p.m. Westminster is a smoke-free building and alcoholic beverages are prohibited.

Westminster's Memorial Reception Coordinator is available to assist in your planning. The Westminster Hospitality Committee offers a reception, for up to 200 people, with light refreshments - cookies, coffee, tea, lemonade, mixed nuts, mints, and ice water. If a light meal is desired, a list of full-service caterers, who have been approved by Westminster, will be provided. For liability reasons, home cooked meals cannot be accommodated.

ADVANCE PLANNING

We encourage families to engage in advance planning for arrangements at the time of death. In addition to planning the Service of Witness to the Resurrection, there are several other actions and decisions which can be made in advance, including providing a written personal history, completing advance medical directives, executing a will, and listing the location of important documents. Westminster's pastors can provide you with forms and resources to assist in this planning process.

If you choose to complete a document indicating your wishes for the Service of Witness to the Resurrection, we urge you to share a copy (as appropriate) with family members, your attorney, your physician, and with the church. All documents delivered to the church will be considered strictly confidential. The church does not accept any legal liability for their custody nor may the church require others to follow their directions and requests. They will be made available only to appropriate individuals to whom they may offer guidance in carrying out your wishes. Of course, you may change any of the documents or have them returned to you at any time.

A FINAL WORD

We trust you find this material to be helpful. Please know that our pastors stand ready to assist you at every stage of your life's journey, including making preparations for death. Please feel free to contact any one of them for information, assistance, or to clarify your desires.

HYMNS

The following hymns are appropriate for congregational singing at a Service of Witness to the Resurrection. Numbers refer to the *Glory to God, The Presbyterian Hymnal*.

Hymn title.....	Page
A Mighty Fortress Is Our God	275
Abide With Me	836
All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name.....	263
Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound	649
Be Still My Soul.....	819
Be Thou My Vision	450
Blest Be the Tie That Binds	306
Breathe on Me, Breath of God	286
Christ the Lord Is Risen Today	245
Come, Christians, Join to Sing	267
Dear Lord and Father of Mankind	169
Eternal Father, Strong to Save Navy Hymn)	8
For All the Saints	326
For the Beauty of the Earth.....	14
Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken	446
God Be With You Till We Meet Again	541
God of Grace and God of Glory	307
Great Is Thy Faithfulness.....	39
Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah	65
His Eye Is on the Sparrow.....	661
How Firm a Foundation	463
How Great Thou Art	625
I Sing a Song of the Saints of God	730
I Was There to Hear Your Morning Cry	488
In the Bulb There Is a Flower Hymn of Promise).....	250
It is Well with My Soul	840
Jesus, Lover of My Soul.....	440
Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee.....	611
Leaning on the Everlasting Arms	837
Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing	546
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling.....	366
Near to the Heart of God.....	824
O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go.....	833
Our God, Our Help in Ages Past	687
Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven	619
Precious Lord, Take My Hand	834
Sing Praise to God, Who Reigns Above	645
Swing Low, Sweet Chariot	825
The Church's One Foundation	321
The King of Love My Shepherd Is Psalm 23)	802
The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want Psalm 23)	801
The Strife is O'er, the Battle Done.....	236
There is a Balm in Gilead	792
There's a Wideness in God's Mercy	435
To God Be the Glory	634
What a Friend We Have in Jesus.....	465

SCRIPTURE READINGS

The following scripture passages are appropriate for a Service of Witness to the Resurrection.

Old Testament

Job 19:23-27	<i>I know that my redeemer lives.</i>
Proverbs 31:10-31	<i>Ode to a capable woman.</i>
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 9-15)	<i>For everything there is a season.</i>
Isaiah 25:6-9	<i>God will swallow up death forever.</i>
Isaiah 26:1-4, 19	<i>God will keep them in peace. The dead will rise.</i>
Isaiah 40:1-11	<i>Comfort my people.</i>
Isaiah 40:28-31	<i>Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength.</i>
Isaiah 43:1-4a, 18-19 25	<i>When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.</i>
Isaiah 55:1-3, 6-13	<i>Seek the Lord while God may be found.</i>
Isaiah 61:1-4, 10-11	<i>The spirit of the Lord is upon me; comfort to all who mourn.</i>
Isaiah 65:17-25	<i>I create new heavens and a new earth.</i>
Jeremiah 31:31-34	<i>A new covenant written on the heart.</i>
Lamentations 3:21-26	<i>The Lord's steadfast love never ceases.</i>
Daniel 12:1-3	<i>Many of those who sleep in the dust shall awake.</i>

Psalms

8	<i>What are human beings that God is mindful of them?</i>
16:5-11	<i>The Lord is my chosen portion.</i>
23	<i>The Lord is my shepherd.</i>
27:1, 4-9a, 13-14	<i>The Lord is my light and my salvation.</i>
34:4-10	<i>Taste and see that the Lord is good.</i>
39: 4-5, 12	<i>Lord, let me know my end.</i>
42:1-6a	<i>As a deer longs for flowing streams.</i>
43	<i>Give judgment for me, O God.</i>
46:1-5, 10-11	<i>A very present help in trouble.</i>
84	<i>How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord.</i>
90:1-10, 12	<i>Teach us to number our days.</i>
91	<i>The one who dwells in the shelter of the Most High.</i>
103	<i>Bless the Lord, O my soul.</i>
106:1-5	<i>O give thanks to the Lord for God is good.</i>
116:1-9, 15	<i>The Lord has heard my voice and my supplications.</i>
118	<i>Open to me the gates of righteousness.</i>
121	<i>I lift up my eyes to the hills.</i>
130	<i>Out of the depths I cry to the Lord.</i>
139:1-12	<i>Where shall I go from your spirit?</i>
145	<i>I will extol you, O God my King.</i>
146	<i>Hallelujah! Praise the Lord, O my soul.</i>

Epistles

Romans 5:1-9	<i>Justified by faith; hope does not disappoint.</i>
Romans 6:1-11	<i>Baptized into Christ's death, raised to live with him.</i>
Romans 8:14-23, 31-39	<i>Nothing can separate us from the love of God.</i>
Romans 14:7-9, 10b-12	<i>Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.</i>
1 Corinthians 13	<i>Faith, hope and love; the greatest of these is love.</i>
1 Corinthians 15:1-11	<i>Christ was raised from the dead on the third day.</i>
1 Corinthians 15:12-28	<i>The resurrection of the dead.</i>
1 Corinthians 15:35-58	<i>The resurrection of the body.</i>
2 Corinthians 4:16-5:1	<i>Visible things are temporary, invisible things eternal.</i>
2 Corinthians 5:1-10	<i>From God we have a house not made with hands.</i>

Ephesians 1:20-23	<i>Living is Christ and dying is gain.</i>
Ephesians 3:14-21	<i>The love of Christ.</i>
Philippians 3:20-21	<i>Our citizenship is in heaven.</i>
Philippians 4:1, 4-9	<i>Rejoice in the Lord always, again, rejoice!</i>
Colossians 3:1-17	<i>Set your minds on the things that are above.</i>
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	<i>Do not grieve as others grieve who have no hope.</i>
2 Timothy 2:11-12	<i>If we died with him, we shall also live with him.</i>
Hebrews 11:1-3 4, 8, 23	<i>By faith they obeyed; the cloud of witnesses.</i>
Hebrews 32-12:21	
Peter 1:3-9	<i>New birth into living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.</i>
1 Peter 3:18-22; 4:6	<i>Christ's is dead in the flesh but alive in the Spirit.</i>
1 John 1:1-7	<i>God is light and those who know God walk in the light.</i>
1 John 3:1-3	<i>We are children of God and will be like him.</i>
Revelation 7:9-17	<i>The multitude who have come out of the great tribulation.</i>
Revelation 14:1-3, 6-7, 12-13	<i>Rest for the saints, those who die in the Lord.</i>
Revelation 21:1-7	<i>The new heaven and the new earth.</i>
Revelation 22:1-5	<i>The River of Life, the Lamb of God, and the Tree of Life.</i>

Gospels

Matthew 5:1-12a	<i>The Beatitudes.</i>
Matthew 11:28-30	<i>Come all that are weary and I will give you rest.</i>
Matthew 25:1-13	<i>Wise and foolish bridesmaids; you know neither the day nor hour.</i>
Matthew 25:28-30	<i>Come to me all you that are weary.</i>
Matthew 25:31-46	<i>The Last Judgment; As you did it to one of the least of these.</i>
Mark 10:13-16	<i>Let the children come to me.</i>
Luke 7:11-17	<i>Jesus raises the son of the widow of Nain.</i>
Luke 18:15-17	<i>Let the little children come to me.</i>
Luke 23:33, 39-43	<i>Today you will be with me in Paradise.</i>
John 3:16-21	<i>God so loved the world.</i>
John 5:24-29	<i>Whoever hears and believes has eternal life.</i>
John 6:35-40	<i>Anyone who comes to me I will never drive away.</i>
John 6:47-51	<i>Whoever believes in me has eternal life.</i>
John 10:11-16	<i>Jesus is the Good Shepherd.</i>
John 11:17-27	<i>I am the resurrection and the life.</i>
John 11:38-44	<i>Lazarus raised from the dead.</i>
John 14:1-6, 25-27	<i>Let not your hearts be troubled.</i>
John 15:1-17	<i>Jesus is the True Vine.</i>

OTHER RESOURCES

Downtown Coalition for Grief Support

A non-profit group which offers support for adults in the Twin Cities area who are dealing with the death of a family member, friend, or partner. The group is managed by volunteers and trained facilitators from nine Minneapolis congregations including Westminster. The Coalition's weekly Saturday meetings are free and open to the public, regardless of religious affiliation, and provide a safe, understanding environment for grief education, comfort, and recovery.

www.mplsgriefsupport.com

Westminster Counseling Center

The Counseling Center offers personal interfaith pastoral counseling, education, and consultation to individuals and families, including those experiencing loss and grief.

www.westminstercounseling.org

612-332-7743

Compassionate Friends

A resource following the death of a child.

www.compassionatefriends.org

Other Websites

Other websites that contain information, books, chat groups, testimonials, and more.

www.griefnet.org

www.aarp.org/griefandloss/

May the peace of Christ, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, remain with you always. (Philippians 4:7, adapted)