

# MEMORIAL SERVICE GUIDELINES



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**A Brief Overview** ..... 1

**Where to Begin**

- Who do I call? ..... 2
- Will it be a memorial service or funeral? ..... 2
- Who will conduct the service? ..... 2
- Where should the service be held? ..... 3
- What’s in the service? ..... 3
- What about military honors or fraternal rites? ..... 3
- Disposition of the body ..... 3

**Logistics**

- What are the time considerations? ..... 4
- Will we have a worship bulletin? ..... 4
- What about flowers, photos, and videos? ..... 4
- Who provides the guest book? ..... 4

**Choosing Music**

- Who will play for the service? ..... 5
- May we sing?..... 5
- What about a soloist? ..... 5
- Can we bring in our own pianist or organist? ..... 5
- Who pays the musicians?..... 5

**Choosing Scripture**

- The Psalms..... 6
- Old Testament Readings ..... 7
- The Gospels ..... 7
- New Testament Readings..... 7

**The Memorial Garden**

- Why a Memorial Garden? ..... 9
- Who may use the Garden?..... 9
- How is the Memorial Garden maintained? ..... 10
- How are ashes committed? ..... 10
- What is the charge for using the Memorial Garden? ..... 10

**Memorial Gifts** ..... 10

**After the Service**

- May we have a reception? ..... 10

**Fees** ..... 11

**Planning Worksheets** ..... Available Separately

*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)*

## A BRIEF OVERVIEW

“In life and in death, we belong to God.”

“With believers in every time and place, we rejoice that nothing in life or in death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Thus begins and ends *A Brief Statement of Faith* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). These statements are not abstract theological assessments. They are personal affirmations of the most deeply felt commitments of a person’s life.

Death brings loss, sorrow, and grief to all. In the face of death, Christians affirm with tears and joy the hope of the gospel: the resurrection—life after death. The resurrection is a central doctrine of the Christian faith and shapes Christians’ attitudes and responses to the event of death. As Christians, we do not have to bear bereavement alone. We are uplifted by the Holy Spirit and sustained by our community of faith. The church offers a ministry of love and hope to all who grieve.<sup>1</sup>

Because it is difficult under emotional stress to plan wisely, we encourage you to discuss and plan in advance the arrangements that 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 that are simple, that bear witness to resurrection hope, and that keep the Christian community central.<sup>2</sup>

When a loved one dies, many decisions must be made in a short period of time. We hope that this guide will help you make some of these decisions as together we plan the memorial service. This document may also serve as a guide to planning your own memorial service while you are living. Planning it now gives you the opportunity to select the scripture, music, and other worship elements that are meaningful to you and your family. It also takes an enormous weight off grief-stricken family members after your death.

## WHERE TO BEGIN

When you are planning a memorial service for someone who has recently died, you have a difficult job even when some prior planning has been done. You must make decisions when you may not feel prepared, and at the same time, you are deeply grieving the loss of someone close to you. In our ministry at Immanuel, we are committed to helping you in this time of grief—helping you not only in the task of making the necessary arrangements, but also in the more difficult work of grieving and entrusting your loved one into God’s hands.

If you are planning your own memorial service, it is important to consult with your family members when making the plans. Be sure to have conversations with them about your preferences and the arrangements you prefer. You will want to provide guidance for the decisions they will make, without creating strict directives that will be difficult or uncomfortable for them to honor. Do allow your family the flexibility they need to make good decisions regarding your memorial service.

**Who do I call?**

As soon as you think or know that you must schedule a memorial service, please call the church office to speak with the pastor. We will make every attempt to accommodate the needs of your family regarding the time and day of the service. However, some church activities such as weddings are planned months in advance and cannot be changed. Weekdays are typically the easiest to schedule. Saturdays are frequently chosen to give those who work the opportunity to attend without absence from their jobs. Sundays are ordinarily not available due to the worship services being held that day.

In the brief time leading up to the memorial service, the pastor will visit with you and your family about the worship service and all the logistics involved. He will help you select a date and time that will work for your family and for out-of-town guests. If you wish, he will suggest Scripture. He will also put you in touch with the Director of Music, who will assist you in choosing music for the service.

**Will it be a memorial service or a funeral?**

A Christian memorial service, or Celebration of Life, acknowledges life with God after our death and celebrates the life of the person who has died. It is frequently held *after* interment of the body or ashes, anytime from a few days to a few weeks or longer after death. A funeral service is usually held *prior* to burial, within a few days of the person's death, with the body or the ashes of the deceased present.

Church members and friends of the family of the deceased may gather at the graveside or in the memorial garden for a service of committal. This service is frequently held in addition to, rather than instead of, the memorial service, but in some situations, it may be the only service that is held. The service of committal includes Scripture readings, prayers, words of committal, and a blessing. It reflects the reality of death, entrusting the one who has died to the care of God, and bears witness to faith in the resurrection from the dead.<sup>3</sup>

While all these services honor, remember, and celebrate the life of the deceased, the heart of service is always the gift of life that God grants. This good news provides hope and comfort to all who worship, and it proclaims Jesus Christ as Lord of both the living and the dead.

**Who will conduct the service?**

Our pastor is always available to provide comfort and to assist with the practical realities of dealing with grief and loss. Typically, Immanuel's pastor will lead the service, and other people may be invited to participate.<sup>4</sup>

We will seek to honor your family's request for a specific pastor to conduct the service. If you wish a minister of another church to conduct or assist in conducting the service, please make the request of the officiating minister as soon as possible, so that, if appropriate, he may extend the invitation to the guest minister on behalf of Immanuel.

**Where should the service be held?**

The memorial service ordinarily should be held in one's usual place of worship, because this service is part of the worshipping community's continuing life. The significant moments of a Christian's life from baptism to burial should take place where the setting, symbols, and associations are directed toward the God who created us, loves us, and receives us.<sup>5</sup> Even if you are not a member of Immanuel, you are welcome and invited to hold a memorial service here, using this guide for planning the service.

Although there may be extenuating circumstances whereby funerals would be held at the funeral home, you are strongly encouraged to hold worship in the church sanctuary. This is where the people of God regularly gather to hear the good news of Jesus Christ, and the strong ties of friendship among church members can help to support the grieving family as they cope with their loss. Holding the service in the sanctuary also helps all who attend to understand more clearly that what we do at a memorial service is worship God.

**What's in the service?**

In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Directory for Worship outlines the elements of worship in the memorial service, and The Book of Common Worship contains orders of worship for memorials services, funerals, and graveside services. The memorial service begins with the reading of Scripture. Hymns may be sung; prayers, including the Lord's Prayer, will be offered; a sermon or other exposition of the Word of God may be proclaimed; and an affirmation of faith such as the Apostles' Creed may be made by those attending. It may include remembrances of the one who has died. The service will usually end by commending the one who has died to the care of the eternal God, and sending the people forth with a blessing.<sup>6</sup>

It is important and meaningful to share memories of the deceased in the eulogy/remembrances portion of the service. Because the service is a celebration of the resurrection, it is important to keep remembrances or the eulogy (if given by a family member or friend) focused and succinct in order to keep the emphasis of the service on Christ and the everlasting life he provides for us.

**What about military or fraternal rites?**

In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Christian memorial service, a witness to the resurrection, is considered complete in itself, and any fraternal or civic rites or military honors should be conducted separately.<sup>7</sup> Military rites may be performed after the worship service is completed at the church. Fraternal rites are to be performed separate from the service in a non-church context.

**Disposition of the body.**

Since the resurrection of the body is a certain hope for all who put their trust in Jesus Christ, there is no reason to be uncomfortable with or reject methods of disposal of the body other than burial; therefore, cremation or the donation of the body or parts of the body for medical use or research are Christian possibilities for those who desire to do so. When one elects to donate one's body for medical use or research, a memorial service frequently is held shortly after death.

## LOGISTICS

### **What are the time considerations or constraints?**

The memorial service may be held within days of a person's death, or it may be several weeks or a couple of months later. Time constraints are often dictated by whether or not you have family members who must make travel arrangements. Many families prefer to choose a date at least a week or 10 days after death. If interment or burial will not be local, you may wish to hold a memorial service here with your friends present, and later hold a committal service at the place of interment.

### **Will we have a worship bulletin?**

The church office normally will provide a worship bulletin that outlines the order of worship. The bulletin will have any congregational readings or prayers printed in it. You may submit a brief biographical sketch and a photo if you wish.

### **What about flowers, photos, and videos?**

Flowers are appropriate as tokens of love and esteem. People *want* to give flowers to show that they care. Even though families may express a wish not to have flowers, it is nearly impossible to stop the flow of flowers from caring friends and relatives. It is easier to graciously accept the gift with thanks.

You and your family should decide ahead of time what you will do with the flowers when the memorial service is over. In most cases, family members appoint someone in their family to remove the flowers from the church. Flowers left at the church will be distributed to nursing homes, homebound persons, or disposed of as otherwise appropriate.

A framed photograph of the deceased is welcome. Because of the sacramental nature of the Lord's Supper in our tradition, photos and flowers should not be placed on the communion table, but may be placed on the flower stands, of which there are several. Photographs and articles of remembrance also may be placed in Witherspoon Hall if a reception is to take place there following the memorial service.

If you wish to prepare a PowerPoint presentation or DVD of photographs of your loved one's life, it can be projected in Witherspoon Hall during the reception following the service. On occasion, we use photo presentations during the memorial service. Please give us as much advance notice as possible if you wish to do this project photos, so that the appropriate equipment and video technician is available.

### **Who provides the guest book?**

The mortuary usually provides a guest register which is displayed at the entrance to the sanctuary. If they do not provide one, you may wish to purchase one at a stationery store or card shop. Having a record of the presence of family and friends will offer additional support in the days and weeks after the service. At the service, the ushers will invite guests to sign the register as they arrive. If time runs out prior to the beginning of the service, the guest book may be taken to the reception and placed on a table there.

## CHOOSING MUSIC

*“Music is a basic need of human survival. Music is one of the ways we make sense of our lives, one of the ways in which we express feelings when we have no words, a way for us to understand things with our hearts when we can’t with our minds.” – Karl Paulnack, Boston Conservatory.*

Music is an integral part of a memorial service and may include any or all of the following: prelude, postlude, hymns, and vocal or instrumental solo(s).

### **Who will play for the service?**

The Director of Music at Immanuel Presbyterian Church will provide organ or piano music for the prelude and the postlude, and will accompany hymns and solos. He or she will welcome your input concerning these musical selections, and will guide you as to what is appropriate.

### **May we sing?**

By all means! Hymns and songs that affirm the grace and goodness of God and that give comfort and support to those who grieve are very appropriate in memorial services. The pastor and the Director of Music will guide the selection of suitable hymns and songs. Please let them know if there are any that are particularly meaningful to you or your family.

### **What about a soloist?**

In special circumstances, instrumentalists or vocalists may also be used, but the choice of music should be made in coordination with the Director of Music. The soloist will be expected to rehearse with the Director of Music (organist) on a day other than the day of the service. Even though the soloist is not a member of the church staff, it is customary to give him/ her an honorarium.

### **Can we bring in our own pianist or organist?**

Immanuel’s church organist is a full-time staff member, and playing for weddings and memorial services is part of his/her responsibilities. If you have another musician whom you wish to have play, the church’s organist should receive his/her customary fee (known as a “bench fee.”) Occasionally, the church’s organist may be out of town or unavailable for a particular date. In that case, we have a list of organists we can recommend and the “bench fee” does not apply.

### **Who pays the musicians?**

Fees for the organist and soloist should be paid by you, directly to the musicians at or before the time of the service. The fees are discussed in the foregoing paragraphs and listed in the fee schedule on page 11 of this guide.

## CHOOSING SCRIPTURE

The Scriptures are a rich resource to which Christians have turned for comfort and assurance in times of grief. While planning for the service, the pastor will guide the selection of appropriate lessons from the Scriptures and will welcome suggestions of scriptures that have particular meaning for your family.

The following is a list of some of the most beloved, comforting, and inspiring scriptures. We have included some or all of these passages as a reminder of them. If you do not have a Bible at home, please feel free to borrow one from our church library and look through it—you can read these verses in context, and there may be others that you find meaningful for this memorial service.

### The Psalms

- Psalm 23 (KJV)      The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.
- Psalm 24:1-5      The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters. Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God his Savior.
- Psalm 27:1, 4-6      The Lord is my light and my salvation—shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—whom shall I be afraid? One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock. Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the Lord.
- Psalm 46:1-7      God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms



fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

**Psalm 121**

I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord watches over you—the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

**Old Testament Readings**

**Isaiah 40:28-31**

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

**The Gospels**

**Matthew 11:28-30**

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

**John 14:1-3**

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

**New Testament Readings**

**2 Corinthians 4:14-18**

We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus, will also raise us with Jesus and present us to himself together with you. All of this is for your benefit. And as God's grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory. That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

- 2 Corinthians 5:1-8 For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long to put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing. For we will put on heavenly bodies; we will not be spirits without bodies. While we live in these earthly bodies, we groan and sigh, but it's not that we want to die and get rid of these bodies that clothe us. Rather, we want to put on our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by life. God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit. So we are always confident, even though we know that as long as we live in these bodies we are not at home with the Lord. For we live by believing and not by seeing. Yes, we are fully confident, and we would rather be away from these earthly bodies, for then we will be at home with the Lord.
- Ephesians 1:3-11 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding. God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan regarding Christ, a plan to fulfill his own good pleasure. And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth. Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.
- Philippians 4:4-9 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.
- Romans 8:31b-39 If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. Who then will

condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God’s right hand, pleading for us.

Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, “For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.”) No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Revelation 21:1-4 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

## THE MEMORIAL GARDEN

### **Why a Memorial Garden?**

An increasing number of families are choosing cremation as a form of respectfully commending the bodies of loved ones. As stated by the Apostle Paul in First Corinthians 15, in the resurrection our “earthly bodies” will be replaced by “spiritual bodies.” Therefore, we believe that burial and cremation are equally valid for Christians.

Immanuel Presbyterian Church maintains a Memorial Garden as a sacred place on our campus for the perpetual memory of loved ones. This columbarium holds cremated remains in separate niches that have been reserved and purchased. Many church members have contributed toward making this an area of peace and tranquility. Here one may pause for prayer and meditation in seeking God’s Presence.

### **Who may use the Garden?**

Our Memorial Garden is a witness to our faith, and a part of our ministry and life together. It is available to members and friends of Immanuel as a fitting place to remember loved ones. The Garden is open for visiting on Sundays during worship hours, and can be opened to you at other times of the week by inquiring in the church office.

**How is the Memorial Garden maintained?**

The Memorial Garden is maintained by a special fund accumulated from the gifts of persons and families who wish to use the Garden. Anyone is welcome to contribute to this fund, which is used solely for the perpetual care of the area, including the fountain and the landscaping. Friends and family of those whose cremated remains are placed in the Memorial Garden are encouraged to contribute to the church in memory of their loved one.

**How are ashes committed?**

If desired, family and friends are invited to plan a service with the pastor for committal of the ashes in the Memorial Garden. The service of committal may be in addition to the memorial service or funeral. It is frequently held just before the memorial service. The ashes are received from the funeral home in a plain container, and respectfully held by the church until the committal service. A wooden cover plaque will be placed on the outside of the niche until the permanent bronze plaque arrives.

**What is the charge for using the Memorial Garden?**

The cost for a niche in the Memorial Garden is \$600. The fee covers the individual bronze plaque and its attachment to the wall and the interment of the ashes. A portion of the fee is placed in the Memorial Garden Fund for the general maintenance and perpetual care of this area. This fee may be adjusted for families facing financial hardship. The cost for a memorial plaque for someone buried elsewhere is \$200.

## MEMORIAL GIFTS

People often want to express their support in a tangible way for those who have experienced the loss of someone special to them. Over the years, memorial gifts for members and friends of the congregation have supported many ministries of Immanuel Presbyterian Church. If you would like memorial gifts to be designated to the church, please indicate this in the obituary notice and in the memorial service bulletin.

You may choose to designate a memorial fund to which friends may give. If you plan to do this, please set this up through this church office at the earliest opportunity, so that people can be informed about it.

Gifts to the Immanuel Presbyterian Church Endowment Fund leave a legacy. The interest income from the Endowment Fund helps to expand our mission presence in our community, across the nation, and around the world.

Gifts to the Immanuel Memorial Fund will be acknowledged through the church office to both donors and families of those remembered.

## AFTER THE SERVICE

**May we have a reception?**

It is customary, but certainly not mandatory, for a reception to follow the service. Fellowship and food helps to continue the celebration of the deceased's life. If you or your family wishes to

have a light meal or dessert following the service, the Deacons of Immanuel will prepare and serve it.

The scope and variety of food served is related to the season of the year, the time of day, and the desires of your family. The cost will depend on the type of food requested and the number of people attending, and this should be coordinated directly with the Deacons. The following options are possible:

- a dessert reception (coffee, lemonade, iced tea, and/or punch, and cookies or cake)
- a light lunch (meat & cheese trays, bread or rolls, vegetable tray, fruit tray, light salad, cake or cookies, and beverages)
- a catered hot meal (Deacons will set up the room and coordinate with an outside vendor, but you or your family would pay the vendor directly for the meal)
- a reception where your family provides, pays for, and sets up the food for the reception.

The Deacons will be happy to guide your decision and your choice. If your family wishes more, they may pay an additional fee to cover the cost of the food or have it brought in. (Immanuel Presbyterian Church maintains an alcohol-free, tobacco-free, and drug-free campus.)

People from the church will set up tables and chairs in the room where the reception will be held, and you are most welcome to bring photos to put on display, or other accoutrements that represent the deceased's life.

## FEES

The fees associated with conducting a memorial service or a funeral are as follows:

- Use of Sanctuary by non-member (to cover custodian service) – \$50
- Sound or video technician (not a staff member), if used – \$50  
(under ordinary circumstances, a sound or video technician will not be needed)
- Organist – \$125 (see also page 5 for discussion of “bench fee”)
- Suggested honorarium for soloist (rehearsal and service), if used – \$50
- Suggested honorarium for pastor – \$200 (if only a Service of Committal, an honorarium of \$50 is suggested)
- Suggested honorarium for assisting pastor – \$50
- Childcare, if needed – \$50
- Donation to Deacons for a reception – suggested minimum donation – \$100 (see discussion of cost in “After the Service,” above)
- Niche in the Memorial Garden – \$600 (see pages 9-10)
- Memorial plaque in the Memorial Garden for someone buried elsewhere – \$200

Please talk with the pastor if any of these fees create a hardship for you.

## ENDNOTES

Information provided on pages 1–3 of this guide is taken directly from the Directory for Worship contained in The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part II, Book of Order.

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<sup>1</sup> The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part II, Book of Order: The Directory for Worship, W-4.10001

<sup>2</sup> The Directory for Worship, W-4.10002

<sup>3</sup> The Directory for Worship, W-4.10006

<sup>4</sup> The Directory for Worship, W-4.10003

<sup>5</sup> The Directory for Worship, W-4.10003

<sup>6</sup> The Directory for Worship, W-4.10004

<sup>7</sup> The Directory for Worship, W-4.10005