

SERVICES ON THE OCCASION OF DEATH

A Policy Statement

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Christians and Death

The resurrection is a central doctrine of the Christian faith and shapes a Christian's 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 and the community of faith. The church offers a ministry of love and hope to all who grieve.

Setting of the Service

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. This 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 the service requires the approval of the session.

Form and Order of the Service

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, making intercessions, lifting supplications and 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.

Alternatives and Options

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 covered with a funeral 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. When there are important reasons not to hold the service in the usual place of worship, it may be held in another suitable place such as a home, a funeral home, a crematorium, or at graveside.

Service of Committal

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 Scripture, 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.

Bereavement Liaison

A bereavement liaison position may be established to meet with families in order to review fees and logistics, answer questions about the use of the church and social hall, to make sure that the sanctuary and social hall (if needed) are prepared on the day of the service and to collect payment from the family. The liaison would support the pastor, coordinate with the minister of music and follow up with RPC administration for disbursement of any fees.

Planning the Service Music

The minister of music can help the family select hymns and other appropriate music and recommend soloists, if any are desired. If the family wishes to arrange for its own musicians and music, such requests must be approved by the minister of music or the pastor. It is the policy of RPC to not reproduce copyrighted materials, such as hymns, poems, and songs, as part of the bulletin for the service unless the family arranges for permission from the copyright holder.

Fee Schedule

There are two schedules: one for members and one for non-members. The members' schedule applies if either the deceased or a member of his or her immediate family is a member of the church. If the deceased or a family member is not a member, but is or has been an active participant in its activities, the member schedule may be used at the discretion of the pastor. The pastor may also waive the facility charges if in his or her judgment they would pose a financial difficulty to the family. The pastor and the music minister are also free to waive their own fees if they so choose.

Item	Member fee	Non-member fee
Clergy	\$250	\$250
Organist	150	150
Organist w/guest musicians	200	200
Soloist (found through RPC)*	75-150	75-150
Sanctuary use	n/a	200
Social Hall w/kitchen	n/a	150
Custodian	75	75

* Families may find their own soloists and arrange to pay them separately, but the minister of music should be notified and the "organist with guest musicians" rate would apply if the minister of music needs to accompany and/or rehearse with the soloist.