

Hilton Presbyterian Church  
Newport News, Virginia

## FUNERAL POLICY

"The central doctrine of the Christian faith is the resurrection. Christians affirm their common faith in their attitude toward death and in their witness during the approach and experience of death. The reality of death, with all of its attendant sorrow and sense of loss, must be anticipated for us all, and there must be created the kind of health of mind and spirit that allows Christians to live their faith in this critical area of human existence. Christians should seek to make the occasion of death a time in which they reaffirm with joy the hope of the gospel." (adapted from "The Directory for Worship," Book of Order, Presbyterian Church (USA))

**1. Anticipating the Event** Christians recognize with all persons both the inevitability and the emotional strain of the event of death. None of us knows when death may come, and it is difficult to plan or act wisely under emotional stress. It is recommended, therefore, that each family make a calm appraisal of intents and wishes before death is imminent. The ministers are available for counseling if such help is needed. It is useful to prepare a memorandum or document of agreement in advance which should be kept in a place where it will be readily available to the surviving family members. This document should include the following details:

- A. The Disposition of the Body: There are three acceptable Christian methods of disposition:
  - a. Internment
  - b. Cremation
  - c. Donation for Medical Purposes (this should be arranged in advance)
- B. The Selection of a Mortician
- C. Any Desires Concerning the Cost of the Funeral
- D. Any Desires Concerning the Funeral Service (clergy, music, scripture readings, pall bearers, memorials)

**2. The Event of Death** No one should be forced to face the event of death alone. When death is unexpected, it is an even more debilitating experience. The Christian community is a sustaining and uplifting resource. Before anything else is done, the Session strongly urges that one of the ministers be notified. The ministers stand ready to assist the family with any of the details which need to be attended to. The ministers are available to go with the family to the funeral home and aid in the arrangements. The ministers will also notify the appropriate people in the congregation of the death and the funeral arrangements.

### 3. The Christian Funeral

- A. The Session grants priority for the use of the church building to funeral services in the case of any schedule conflict, with the exception of regular worship services. The Session likewise grants priority for the time of the staff of the church to implement the service.
- B. The service is to be a simple, dignified witness to the hope we have in Jesus Christ. All music and readings should be in keeping with the tone. Special music and hymns which are consistent with the Biblical affirmations of God's power over death are to be chosen. The ministers are ready to offer suggestions regarding hymns and scripture readings.
- C. The Book of Order states that "because the proper object of the service is the worship of God and the consolation of the living ... when the casket is in the church, it will be closed at all times and will be covered by a white pall provided by the church. The covering symbolizes the protective love of God and the absence of distinction between persons at death. It allows those present to focus their attention on the Author and Finisher of their salvation." However, in deference to individual family concerns, flowers or the U.S. Flag may be placed on the casket.
- D. Floral arrangements placed in the Sanctuary are to be limited to the number which can be arranged so as not to interfere with the conduct of the service.
- E. When the funeral is held at the church, any fraternal or civic rites are to be conducted at the funeral home. If fraternal rites are conducted at graveside, they should always precede the Christian committal service.

F. The service may be held before or after the committal of the body. A brief graveside service for the family and friends is held first. Later, the family and congregation assemble in the Sanctuary for a memorial service of worship.

G. For members of the church, there are no fees for the use of the church building and no honoraria are necessary for the staff. For non-members of the church, a customary fee of \$50 to be paid to the church organist will be charged. It is always appropriate to give an honorarium to soloists or others who provide special music at a funeral. The amount is left up to each family or individual.

#### **4. Memorial Gifts**

A. When death occurs, friends wish to express their sympathy in some evident fashion. The Session encourages its members to recommend to friends the opportunity to make memorial gifts to the church or some other worthy charitable cause. Individuals may designate where their memorial gifts will be used in the church. In the event that the individual does not wish to designate the gift, the Session will determine where the gift will be used in the church. The Memorial Fund Committee appointed by the Session will draw up a list of projects suitable for memorial gifts. After these have been approved by the Session, persons may designate contributions to a specific project.

Frequently, the pastors are asked by members of the family of the deceased if there are particular requests made for the time of the funeral arrangements. Please discuss your wishes with your family and pastors and complete the following information to be kept on file in the church office. This information should be updated any time your personal situation or feelings on any of these matters change.

HILTON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA

**PERSONAL FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

NEXT OF KIN: (1) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

I PREFER: (check one)

\_\_\_\_\_ A funeral service (a time of worship held prior to the disposition of the body)

\_\_\_\_\_ A memorial service (a time of worship held after the disposition of the body)

I PREFER A SERVICE BE HELD (check one)

\_\_\_\_\_ At the church sanctuary

\_\_\_\_\_ At the funeral home

\_\_\_\_\_ At the graveside

\_\_\_\_\_ Other

I PREFER THE DISPOSITION OF MY BODY BE IN THIS MANNER: (check one)

\_\_\_\_\_ Burial

\_\_\_\_\_ Cremation

\_\_\_\_\_ Medical science

IF YOU HAVE WILLED YOUR BODY OR ORGANS TO MEDICAL SCIENCE, WHERE MAY THAT DOCUMENT BE LOCATED?

\_\_\_\_\_

VISITATION

I would like visitation: \_\_\_\_\_ Night before service \_\_\_\_\_ Before service \_\_\_\_\_ After service \_\_\_\_\_ At church

\_\_\_\_\_ At funeral home \_\_\_\_\_ At my home \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

I WOULD LIKE MY CASKET: \_\_\_\_\_ Open \_\_\_\_\_ Closed

I HAVE THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS FOR WORSHIP:

Hymns: (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_\_\_

Soloists: \_\_\_\_\_

Organist: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Religious Music: (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_\_\_

Scripture Readings (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_\_\_

On Casket: \_\_\_\_\_ Pall \_\_\_\_\_ Flowers

Pall Bearers: (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_\_\_ (3) \_\_\_\_\_

(4) \_\_\_\_\_ (5) \_\_\_\_\_ (6) \_\_\_\_\_

Alternates: (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT FAMILY MEMBER(S) OR FRIEND(S) SHOULD BE CONTACTED CONCERNING THE SERVICE?

(1) NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

(2) NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

FUNERAL DIRECTOR  I prefer \_\_\_\_\_

I do not have a preference

LOCATION OF FAMILY BURIAL PLOT, IF ANY: \_\_\_\_\_

MEMORIAL GIFTS: (you may choose more than one)

The church  Designated \_\_\_\_\_

Undesignated

A specific charitable cause (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

The donor's choice

OTHER COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_