

DRAPER'S VALLEY PCA - FUNERAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The resurrection is a central doctrine of the Christian faith that shapes the Christian's attitude and response to the reality of death. 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. At times of death the church offers a ministry of love and hope to all who grieve.

The death of a loved one is a difficult experience, even for a Christian. We grieve the loss of one who has been close, but we do not sorrow as those who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4: 13; Romans 15:4).

Because emotional stress makes wise planning difficult the DVPC Session encourages members to discuss and plan in advance the arrangements which will be necessary at the time of death. These plans should provide for arrangements that are simple, which bear witness to the resurrection hope, and that include the Christian community of which you are a part.

In order to help you, we have established these policies to minister to the families of our congregation in their time of need, and to assist them in the planning and provision of a Christian funeral that honors God.

PASTORAL STAFF

Upon the death of one of our members, a pastor of our church should be notified as soon as possible. Our pastors also earnestly desire to know of those who need comfort and counsel as they face their own death. By being involved early in situations of death or impending death, the pastor can help immensely with the necessary decisions regarding funeral homes, disposition of the body, and service arrangements, as well as caring for the spiritual needs of those involved. The pastor is available to go with the family to the funeral home to assist in making arrangements if desired.

Please note: It is very important that the pastor and funeral director work as a team. The coordination of date and time of the services involve the church and pastor's calendar, and the funeral director's availability.

It is normal that DVPC's pastors conduct all funeral services held at DVPC. If the family desires to have another pastor assist in the service, he may be invited to share in the funeral or even in some cases, act on behalf of the pastor of DVPC. Such requests for another pastor or lay person to officiate or assist in the service must be approved by the DVPC Session.

Funeral services will be conducted for members and those who are active attendees of DVPC. By special request and permission of the Session, others may have services conducted at DVPC.

Conducting funerals for people who have no connection with the church at local funeral homes is a normal part of the ministerial obligation. However, it is up to the discretion of the pastor to allow himself or the church to participate.

WORSHIP SERVICES

Memorial, Funeral and Graveside Services are acts of worship among the Christian community. The purpose of such services of worship are to glorify God, to affirm our belief in the resurrection to life everlasting and to comfort the bereaved. Gratitude and honor are to be expressed to God for the life and witness of the deceased, however, the focus of worship is upon God. Therefore, prolonged and undue attention upon the deceased is discouraged. It has become common to have what is often called "A Celebration of Life" where the primary focus is on the deceased. Such joyous reminders and shared memories are not to be discouraged - in their place - apart from the worship service. The Funeral or Memorial Service is primarily about the glorious hope of the resurrection grounded in the person and work of Christ. Therefore, as in all worship services, the focus and praise goes to God and God alone.

Although funeral services may be held in funeral homes, the best place for conducting a funeral service upon the death of a Christian is at their regular place of worship. By having the service at the church building, all who attend will be reminded of our hope and assurance in Jesus Christ. Here is where we worship every Sunday. Here is where we baptize our children, celebrate marriage, gather at the Lord's Table and remember the love and grace of God. Here we are surrounded by the symbols of our Christian faith. In this place we have tangible reminders of the "great cloud of witnesses" that surround us and the community of faith that supports us with compassion and love.

Therefore, all members of Draper's Valley PCA are encouraged to use the church building for funeral services. Or, a family may desire a simple, private graveside service for family members as soon as possible after death or a public service of worship conducted at the church at a later time.

All services conducted by pastors of the church are services of worship for the community of faith. While the form of services may differ, each is a Service of Witness to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

A Memorial Service is a service where the body is not present. Interment of the remains in a Service of Committal has either preceded the Memorial Service or will take place at a later time.

A Funeral Service is a service where the body is present in either a casket or an urn. The Funeral Service is concluded with a Service of Committal at the burial site.

A Graveside Service – The Graveside Service is a service that takes place at the burial site. The Service of Committal is a part of the Graveside Service.

THE ORDER OF WORSHIP

It is appropriate for worshipers to sing hymns, psalms or spiritual songs which affirm God's power over death, belief in the resurrection to life everlasting, and the assurance of the communion of saints. Scripture shall be read; a sermon or exposition of the Word shall be proclaimed; an affirmation of faith may be made by the people. Aspects of the life of the one who has died may be briefly recalled. Prayers shall be offered, and thanks given to God. The service ends by commending the one who has died to the care of the eternal God and sending the people forth with a hopeful benediction.

It is the policy of DVPC that funeral or memorial services not be held on Sundays.

SERVICE ELEMENTS

The pastor will guide in the selection of appropriate scripture passages, and would welcome suggestions of those with particular meaning for the family or the deceased. Hymns should be chosen which affirm the goodness and grace of God, and which give comfort and support to those who grieve. The pastor and the musician will guide the selection of appropriate hymns. The church's musician may also provide suitable sacred music and is available for consultation with the family concerning these musical selections. The appropriateness of musical selections will be determined by the pastor. Additional instrumentalists or vocalists may also be used, but must be approved by the pastor. The family is expected to contact and to cover the cost of musicians. In cases where an outside musician is desired, permission must be secured from the pastor. Please note that the use of recorded music or pre-recorded accompaniments is discouraged. If a printed bulletin is desired, service elements must be decided upon and communicated to the DVPC Church Administrator in a timely manner to allow for the production of the bulletin.

During the Worship Service, the casket will be closed to direct attention to God. If the family desires an open casket the viewing will take place at the funeral home. If the family wishes, a United States flag may be used to cover the casket of those who have seen service in the military. This is done at the grave site, not in the place of worship.

FLOWERS

In keeping with the simplicity and understanding of the Christian faith to avoid ostentation, flowers at the church are limited to one or a few arrangements. This will encourage worshipers to focus their attention on the promises of Scripture and the grace of God. Typically, the family of the deceased will furnish the arrangement of flowers for the service.

FRATERNAL, CIVIC OR MILITARY RITES

The worship service shall be complete in itself, and any fraternal, civic, or military rites must be conducted separately, apart from the service and place of worship.

COSTS AND FEES

There are no charges or fees for use of the church's facilities or for the services of the pastor(s). Costs to the family will be for flowers the family provides at the service and for musicians and/or vocalists the family may request.

MEMORIAL GIFTS

Memorial gifts in memory of the deceased that will benefit the church are entirely fitting. A list of needed items can be supplied such as special projects, library books, hymnals, flower fund or other church needs.

NURSERY

The church does not provide a nursery attendant for funeral services. If needed, the family is responsible for securing an attendant.

FAMILY MEAL

The church will do everything reasonably possible to accommodate a member's request for refreshments before or after a funeral service. There is no fee charged for this, however, donations are accepted to cover the cost of the food.

FUNERAL AND MEMORIAL SERVICE CHECKLIST

Before Going to the Funeral Home - It will save you considerable time and phone calls if you have the following information available:

1. Full name of deceased (include nickname or other names person may have used) _____

2. Date of Birth _____

3. Place of Birth _____

4. Father's Name _____

5. Mother's Name (Maiden) _____

6. List of relatives and relationship to the deceased _____

7. List of church, professional organizations, clubs, and other organizations in which membership was held. _____

8. If you wish, indicate memorial to be designated in obituary in memory of the deceased.

9. Compile a list of individuals who might be available to serve as pallbearers.

10. If a memorial or funeral service is announced in the newspapers, take extra precaution for security at the home of the deceased during the indicated time of the service.

The following information will be needed for the Funeral Home and for the planning of the service:

Name of Deceased _____

Family Contact _____ Relationship _____

Family Address _____

Family Phone _____ Other Contact Phone _____

Funeral Home _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Funeral Director _____

Phone _____

Number of Family Members _____

Family Hour Scheduled _____ Yes No

Location _____

Floral Requests _____