



The Guide to Preparing a Witness to the Resurrection

People are generally fascinated with death, not their own, but that of others. Facing death can be challenging, but as Christians we can face death with hope because of the resurrection. For many, death is not to be feared but the process of dying is what people fear. For Christians, death simply is part of the process of living and we believe that eternal life can happen now, even before we die physically. In theology we call this the ***“already and not yet”*** of eternal life. Jesus speaks to Martha, the sister of Lazarus, in John chapter 11 about this kind of eternal life when he says,

“I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

In the same way that Jesus tells Martha he ***already is*** the resurrection, and also the ***one coming into*** the world, we too are ***already*** saved by the work of Jesus Christ on the cross and able to experience eternal life now as well as ***in the life to come***.

One of the best ways to face death is to talk about it and thinking through what one would prefer for his or her final memorial. ***The Guide to Preparing a Witness to the Resurrection*** and form can help individuals and families have that conversation, no matter what your age. As a pastor, I have found that thinking ahead and putting one’s desires about such things in writing is a gift to the family in a time of grief. Making decisions without having had such conversations can be difficult and even conflicting for some family members. To ***already*** have thought about ***the not yet***, prevents the potential for additional grief during an already difficult time for most families.

Your pastors, session, and diaconate, appreciate you taking the time to work through this guide and make what decisions you can at this point in your lives. For some it is a document to begin and file at the church and home and come back to at a later date. For others it is timely and helpful to begin thinking about what may be on the horizon or the sunset. If you would like a pastor to speak with you about any questions you may have, please do not hesitate to contact one of us. We are here for you and welcome your questions and conversations.

Blessings!

Mary A. Morrison

Associate Pastor for Discipleship

Fort Hill Presbyterian Church
Guide for Preparing
A Service of Witness to the Resurrection

The service on the occasion of death is both a thanksgiving to God for the life of the deceased and a witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, in whom we too can have eternal life. It is both a public expression of our faith in Christ and an illustration of our solidarity as a Christian community. 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, celebrating the victory over death made manifest by God's act of raising Jesus from the dead. The Presbyterian Church (USA) Book of Order states:

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 and the community of faith. The church offers a ministry of love and hope to all who grieve. (W-4.10001)

Because it is difficult under emotional stress to plan wisely, the session encourages members to discuss and plan in advance the arrangements which 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 which are simple, which bear witness to resurrection hope, and in which the Christian community is central. (W-4.10002)

This *Guide for Preparing A Service of Witness to the Resurrection* is offered to enable thoughtful planning for the worship of God at the time of death. Such planning is often a comfort to family members of the deceased and provides for suggestions that relieve others of wondering what the deceased's desires were concerning final things. Your pastors also appreciate knowing your preferences about practical considerations as well as your service suggestions about Scriptures and hymns in particular.

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

~Romans 6:3-5~

Fort Hill Presbyterian Church
101 Edgewood Avenue
Clemson, SC 29631
(864) 654-2061

Pre-Planning A Service of Witness to the Resurrection

To those who will make decisions for my Christian Service of Witness to the Resurrection:

I have given prayerful thought to the worship service following my death. The following are my preferences. I realize that circumstances may apply which will make it impossible to fulfill every suggestion. I offer these preferences as a gift to those who will worship God at my Service of Witness to the Resurrection.

Date _____

Name _____
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Address _____

Birthdate _____ Phone _____

Name _____ Signature _____
of Person Providing Information of Person Providing Information

1. Emergency Contacts and Information

Name _____ Relationship _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Name _____ Relationship _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Doctor's Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Name of Health Insurance Policies _____

Location of Will and Personal Papers _____

Other pertinent information _____

2. I prefer that my body be . . . (please check appropriate boxes)

- Buried in the earth Cremated Donated to a medical school

I have made those arrangements Yes No

Contact information for Funeral Home Crematory Medical School

Name _____ Phone _____

3. My wishes regarding the service

I would like the following person(s) to conduct or assist with my service . . .

- Fort Hill pastor(s) _____
- Other church pastor _____
- Musicians _____
- Pall Bearers (6) _____
- Family _____

The type of service I desire is . . . (please check appropriate box)

- Family Internment or Graveside Service, then Memorial Service
- Graveside Service alone
- Memorial Service alone (*the body or ashes are not present*)
- Funeral Service (*the body or the ashes present*), then Internment or Cremains or Graveside

I prefer the following place(s) for the service . . . (please check appropriate boxes)

- Fort Hill Sanctuary _____
- Fort Hill Tartan Hall _____
- Funeral Home _____
- Memorial Garden _____
- Columbarium _____
- Cemetery _____ Lot/Crypt No. _____
- Other _____

I hope the community of faith will visit with my family at . . . (please check appropriate box)

- Church Reception—Tartan Hall Funeral Home _____
 No Visitation Desired Private Home _____

I would like the following hymns from *Glory to God* to be sung by the congregation . . .

Hymns _____

If possible I would like the following music included in the service . . .

Other _____

Some meaningful Scriptures to me are . . . (a list of suggested readings is attached if needed)

Regarding flowers, I prefer the following . . .

- Give to shut-ins Place on grave Give to family
 Memorial contribution instead of flowers

Memorials may be given in my memory to the following . . .

- Fort Hill Presbyterian Church Building Fund General Fund
 Other charity name and address _____

- Charity of one's choice

4. Obituary information

I would like my obituary to be written by _____

- I am attaching information that may be used in writing my obituary.
 A first draft of my obituary is attached.

Please keep the original of this form in a safe place (but not in your safety deposit box). Return a copy to the church to be stored in a file there. The instructions contained on these sheets are not legally binding, and may be altered at your request. Please notify the church if you make any changes.

LIST OF SUGGESTED READINGS For Funerals and Memorial Services

OLD TESTAMENT

* Job 19:23–27	I know that my redeemer lives
Isa. 25:6–9	God will swallow up death forever
Isa. 26:1–4, 19	God will keep them in peace
* Isa. 40:1–11, 28–31	Comfort my people
* Isa. 40:28–31	Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength
Isa. 43:1–3a, 18–19, 25	When you pass through the waters, I will be with you
Isa. 44:6–8	I am the first and the last
Isa. 55:1–3, 6–13	Ho, everyone who thirsts
Isa. 61:1–4, 10–11	The spirit of the Lord is upon me
* Isa. 65:17–25	I create new heavens and a new earth
Lam. 3:19–26, 31b–32	The Lord’s steadfast love
Dan. 12:1–3	Many of those who sleep in the dust shall awake
Joel 2:12–13, 23–24, 26–29	Return to the Lord with all your heart

Some have found this passage from an Apocryphal book useful in certain circumstances:

Wisdom of Solomon	
3:1–7, 9; 5:15–16	The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God

At the loss of a child:

Zech. 8:1–8	Children playing in the streets of the city
* Isa. 65:17–25	I create new heavens and a new earth

For those whose faith is unknown:

* Eccl. 3:1–15	For everything there is a season
Lam. 3:1–9, 19–23	The Lord’s steadfast love

LIST OF SUGGESTED READINGS For Funerals and Memorial Services

PSALMS

The following psalms are appropriate for singing or reading in the service.

For another translation of the psalms see pages 611–783.

Ps. 16:5–11	The Lord is my chosen portion
* Ps. 23	The Lord is my shepherd
Ps. 27:1, 4–9a, 13–14	The Lord is my light and my salvation
Ps. 39: 4–5, 12	Lord, let me know my end
Ps. 42:1–6a	As a deer longs for flowing streams
Ps. 43	Give judgment for me, O God
* Ps. 46:1–5, 10–11	A very present help in trouble
* Ps. 90:1–10, 12	Teach us to number our days
Ps. 91	The one who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
* Ps. 103	Bless the Lord, O my soul
Ps. 106:1–5	O give thanks to the Lord
Ps. 116:1–9, 15	The Lord has heard my voice
Ps. 118	Open the gates of righteousness
* Ps. 121	I lift up my eyes to the hills
* Ps. 130	Out of the depths I cry to the Lord
* Ps. 139:1–12	Where shall I go from your spirit?
Ps. 145	I will extol you, O God my King
Ps. 146	Hallelujah! praise the Lord, O my soul

LIST OF SUGGESTED READINGS For Funerals and Memorial Services

EPISTLES

Rom. 5:1–11	Hope does not disappoint
Rom. 6:3–9	Baptized into Christ's death, raised to live with him
* Rom. 8:14–23, 31–39	Nothing can separate us from the love of God
* Rom. 14:7–9, 10b–12	Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's
1 Cor. 15:3–8, 12–20a	Christ raised from the dead
1 Cor. 15:20–24a	In Christ shall all be made alive
* 1 Cor. 15:20–26, 35–38, 42–44, 50, 53–58	Death is swallowed in victory
1 Cor. 15:35–44	The natural body and the spiritual body
1 Cor. 15:50–57	We shall all be changed
* 2 Cor. 4:16–5:1	Visible things are temporary, invisible things eternal
2 Cor. 5:1–10	From God we have a house not made with hands
Eph. 1:11–2:1, 4–10	Saved by grace through faith
Phil. 3:7–11	Knowing him and the power of his resurrection
Phil. 3:20–21	Our citizenship is in heaven
Col. 3:1–17	Set your minds on the things that are above
* 1 Thess. 4:13–18	The comfort of Christ's coming
2 Tim. 2:8–13	If we died with him, we shall also live with him
Heb. 2:14–18	Christ was tested in every way
Heb. 11:1–3, 13–16; 12:1–2	Faith, the pilgrimage, the cloud of witnesses
1 Peter 1:3–9	Without seeing Christ, you love him
1 Peter 3:18–22; 4:6	Christ's ministry to the spirits in prison
1 John 3:1–3	We are children of God
Rev. 7:2–3, 9–17	These are they who have come out of the great tribulation
Rev. 14:1–3, 6–7, 12–13	Rest for the saints
* Rev. 21:1–4, 22–25; 22:3–5	A new heaven and a new earth
Rev. 22:1–5	The Lord God will be their light

For those whose faith is unknown:

Rom. 2:12–16	The law written on the heart
Rom. 14:7–9, 10c–12	None of us live to ourselves

LIST OF SUGGESTED READINGS For Funerals and Memorial Services

GOSPELS

Matt. 5:1–12a	The Beatitudes
Matt. 11:25–30	Hidden from the wise, revealed to infants
Matt. 25:1–13	Wise and foolish bridesmaids
Matt. 25:31–46	The Last Judgment
Luke 7:11–17	Jesus raises the son of the widow of Nain
Luke 18:15–17	We enter the kingdom only as children
* Luke 23:33, 39–43	Today you will be with me in Paradise
John 3:16–21	God so loved the world
John 5:24–29	Whoever hears and believes has eternal life
John 6:37–40	Anyone who comes to me I will never drive away
John 6:47–58	Whoever believes in me has eternal life
* John 11:17–27	I am the resurrection and the life
John 11:38–44	Lazarus raised from the dead
* John 14:1–6, 25–27	Let not your hearts be troubled

At the loss of a child:

* Matt. 18:1–5, 10	The greatest in the kingdom of heaven
* Mark 10:13–16	Let the children come to me

For those whose faith is unknown:

Matt. 25:31–46	As you did it to one of the least of these
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