



# LAST ACTS OF LOVE

PREPARING AND PLANNING FOR DEATH



## The Promise of Our Faith

Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Nothing – not tragedies, suffering, sickness or even death – can tear us from God’s embrace. This central truth is the foundation of our Christian faith and the good news of the Gospel.

What is also true is that all of us will die. Scripture tells us we are dust, and to dust we shall return. Even though talking about death can be uncomfortable, it is important for us to communicate our final wishes to our loved ones. Talking about end of life issues, making decisions, and planning our memorial or funeral service can be true acts of love.

As Christians we believe that the power of resurrection is greater than the power of death; that Jesus, by his death gives us life, and by his resurrection gives us hope. And so each memorial service or funeral service is a Witness to the Resurrection. As we gather for these services, we proclaim that death does not have the final word: life does, love does, God does. Because we are Easter people, we live in the hope of resurrection, new life, and God’s eternal love. In life and in death, we belong to God. This is the promise given to us through faith in Jesus Christ.

## What is Heaven Like?

We have a relationship with God now that continues beyond the grave. Our true home is with God. We call that home heaven. We have only the contours of what life with God will look like, but Scripture tells us to expect rest from all of the burdens and limitations of earthly life, and life abundant in fellowship with God and the “great cloud of witnesses” that have gone before us. This understanding of death does not erase the sadness of losing someone we love, but it allows us to grieve with hope in God, who will never let us go.

There are many images and metaphors that the New Testament uses to describe life with God. These glimpses of life beyond death bring comfort. Jesus told his followers that he was preparing a place for them “in my Father’s house”:

*In my Father’s house there are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, that where I am, there you will be also. (John 14:2-3)*

## When Death Occurs

The church should be notified as soon as a death occurs. Our pastors can offer comfort to family, support with difficult decisions, and help with arranging for final services.

*The church office number is 609-896-1212.*

## Planning a Service

The pastors and staff of the Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville are available to help you plan a service to celebrate the life of your loved one and to proclaim the promises of our faith. It is vital to contact the church prior to setting a time for the service. The church's schedule and the personal schedules of the pastoral staff and organist must be considered when planning the time and place of the service.

Pre-planning a service can lessen last minute decisions and ensure that final wishes are respected. The Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville can assist you and your family by keeping a record of your requests on file.

### THE SERVICE OF WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION

The Service of Witness to the Resurrection is a service of worship, designed to glorify God and comfort the living, and is conducted with dignity and simplicity. One of the pastoral staff normally conducts the service. Close family members, friends, or guest clergy may participate at the invitation of the pastor. Guest musicians and soloists may participate in cooperation with the church organist. Fraternal, civic, or military rites should be conducted at a time and place other than the funeral or memorial service. Once the details of the service have been determined, the church office will prepare a bulletin.

The Meetinghouse seats approximately 200 comfortably on the ground floor; the chapel seating capacity is approximately 60. Please notify the church office if handicap access is needed for those who plan to attend the service.

### TWO TYPES OF SERVICES

Funerals traditionally include a closed casket in the worship space during the service, which is then taken directly from the church to the cemetery for burial. In a memorial service, there is no casket present because the burial has already taken place, the body of the deceased has been donated to science, or the deceased has been cremated (an urn may or may not be present for the service). Burial can precede or follow any memorial service.

## Suggested Readings for Funerals or 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

**PSALMS**

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

**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 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, 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 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

**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

# A Time to Sing

Music for funeral and memorial services may be instrumental, vocal or a combination of both. Congregational singing can be a loving gift in support of those most affected by loss. Singing has the power to proclaim the faith, connect us to each other, open us to God's healing presence, and assure us that in life and in death, we belong to God.

## HYMNS FROM THE PSALMS

### *Psalm 23*

The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want	no. 170
The King of Love My Shepherd Is	no. 171

### *Psalm 30*

Come Sing to God, O Living Saints	no. 181
-----------------------------------	---------

### *Psalm 46*

God is Our Refuge and Our Strength	no. 191
A Mighty Fortress Is Our God	no. 260

### *Psalm 84*

How Lovely, Lord	no. 207
------------------	---------

### *Psalm 90*

O God, Our Help in Ages Past	no. 210
------------------------------	---------

### *Psalm 100*

All People That on Earth Do Dwell	no. 220
-----------------------------------	---------

### *Psalm 103*

O My Soul, Bless Your Redeemer	no. 223
--------------------------------	---------

### *Psalm 121*

I to the Hills Will Lift My Eyes	no. 234
----------------------------------	---------

### *Psalm 145*

Your Faithfulness, O Lord, Is Sure	no. 251
------------------------------------	---------

### *Psalm 146*

I'll Praise My Maker	no. 253
----------------------	---------

## HYMNS APPROPRIATE FOR THE BEGINNING OR END OF THE SERVICE

Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!	no. 138
Jesus Christ Is Risen Today	no. 123
God of Compassion, in Mercy Befriend Us	no. 261
Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise	no. 263
O God of Bethel, by Whose Hand	no. 269
God of Our Life	no. 275
Great Is Thy Faithfulness	no. 276
If Thou but Trust in God to Guide Thee	no. 282
Give to the Winds Thy Fears	no. 286
Fairest Lord Jesus	no. 306
Jesus, Thy Boundless Love to Me	no. 366
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling	no. 376
Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee	no. 464
For the Beauty of the Earth	no. 473
Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty	no. 482
For All the Saints	no. 526
I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art	no. 457
Abide With Me, Fast Falls the Eventide	no. 543
Day Is Done	no. 544

**APPROPRIATE DURING WORSHIP—REFLECTION OR LAMENT**

Precious Lord, Take My Hand	no. 404
Why Has God Forsaken Me?	no. 406
Blest Be the Tie That Binds	no. 438
There Is a Balm in Gilead	no. 394
O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go	no. 384
My Faith Looks up to Thee	no. 383
I Love the Lord, Who Heard My Cry	no. 362
Loving Spirit	no. 323
When I Survey the Wondrous Cross	no. 100/1
What Wondrous Love is This	no. 85
By the Babylonian Rivers (Ps. 137)	no. 246

**VOCAL MUSIC (APPROPRIATE FOR SOLOISTS)**

My Shepherd Will Supply My Need	arr. Virgil Thomson
Amazing Grace	numerous arrangements available
His Eye Is On the Sparrow	arr. Luigi Zaninelli
Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us	arr. Luigi Zaninelli
Rock of Ages, Cleft For Me	arr. Luigi Zaninelli
Children of the Heavenly Father	arr. John Ferguson
Thy Holy Wings	arr. John Ferguson
Pie Jesu (Blessed Jesus)	Faure, Durufle, or Lloyd-Weber
Come, Ye Disconsolate	arr. Alice Parker
On Eagles Wings (Psalm 91)	Michael Joncas
There is a Balm in Gilead	numerous arrangements available
For the Mountains Shall Depart	Felix Mendelssohn

He Shall Feed His Flock –	
Come Unto Him (Messiah)	G. F. Handel
I Know That My Redeemer Liveth (Messiah)	G. F. Handel

**CHORAL MUSIC (FOR CHOIR OR MULTIPLE VOICES)**

See What Love	Felix Mendelssohn
My Shepherd Will Supply My Need	arr. Wilberg or Thomson
Wondrous Love	arr. Alice Parker
Beautiful Savior	arr. David Cherwien
O For the Wings of a Dove	Felix Mendelssohn
Jesu, Joy of Our Desiring	J. S. Bach
He, Watching Over Israel (Elijah)	Felix Mendelssohn
Let Nothing Ever Grieve Thee	Johannes Brahms
When I Survey the Wondrous Cross	arr. Gilbert Martin
God So Loved the World	John Stainer
The Lord My Faithful Shepherd Is	J. S. Bach
My Eternal King	Jane Marshall
Deep River, My Home is Over Jordan	numerous arrangers



# Service Considerations

## ACCESSIBILITY

The church Meetinghouse can be entered from the north parking lot through the double glass doors. The first room on the right of this entrance, the Lounge, is available for families to gather and receive guests prior to the service. Non-family guests usually enter the Meetinghouse through the church entrance facing Main Street (Route 206). Chapel guests may use the main chapel entrance facing Main Street, or they may enter the Chapel from the inside using the steps leading to the church office. Designated handicapped parking spaces are available in the north parking lot.

## CASKET

If a casket is brought to the church, it will be closed at all times. Funeral home staff will be responsible for assisting the pallbearers in placing and removing the casket. Funeral home staff must remain on the premises when a casket is in the church building.

## DISPOSITION OF THE BODY

Burial, cremation or donation of the body for medical research are all appropriate options within the Christian tradition. The body or ashes may be interred prior to the service or following it. If the body has been donated to science, a memorial service may be held immediately, with an interment at a later date.

## MEMORIAL GARDEN

The Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville has a lovely memorial garden on the north side of the church. A central feature of the garden is an obelisk carrying the names of church members and their loved ones. Arrangements to add a name to the obelisk may be made by contacting the church office at 609-896-1212.

## FLOWERS

Because the funeral or memorial service is a service of worship, the Meetinghouse or the Chapel should appear much as it would on any given Sunday. Dignity and simplicity suggest that arrangements not be lavish or numerous. It is the responsibility of the family to dispose of the flowers following the service if they do not remain for a Sunday service. It may be helpful to have the funeral home personnel assist with moving flower arrangements.

## RECEPTIONS FOLLOWING THE SERVICE

Receptions can be held in the Fellowship Center or in the church Lounge following the service. The church office can help with scheduling the space and facilitating arrangements. Food and beverages are the responsibility of the family.

## MEMORIAL GIFTS

Frequently families request that in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the church or to other charities. This information should be included in the obituary. Memorial gifts may be directed to the Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville Memorial Fund. Acknowledgements will be sent to the family and to the donor of the gift. The church address is 2688 Main Street, Lawrenceville, NJ, 08648. Contact the church office (609-896-1212) for more information.

## GUEST BOOKS

Guest books and pens are provided by the family and should be placed at the church one hour prior to the service.

# Grief Support

Every grief is unique because every individual is unique. Death can come suddenly and tragically or it can come as a friend, bringing release from pain and suffering. In every case, death leaves a void. It is important to remember that while life will never be the same again, life can be good again. People do not “get over” grief, but they can learn to live with it and work through it.

Remember that you do not have to be alone in your grief. Find people who will listen, offer comfort, prayers and other kinds of support. Do not hesitate to contact the church pastoral staff for support at 609-896-1212.

## RESOURCES ON GRIEF

*Lament for a Son*, Nicholas Wolterstorff

*Psalms of Lament*, Ann Weems

*A Grief Observed*, C.S. Lewis

*Understanding Grief: Helping Yourself Heal*, Alan Wolfelt

*Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart: How to Relate to Those Who are Suffering*, Kenneth Haugk

*Healing After Loss: Daily Meditations for Working Through Grief*, Martha Hickman

*Tracks of Fellow Struggler*, John Claypool

*Grieving: A Beginner's Guide*, Jerusha Hull McCormack

*Companion Through the Darkness: Inner Dialogues of Grief*, Stephanie Ericsson

*How to Survive the Loss of a Love*, Harold Bloomfeld, Melba Colgrove, and Peter McWilliams





The Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville  
2688 Main Street (Rt. 206)  
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648  
(609) 896-1212

*[www.pclawrenceville.org](http://www.pclawrenceville.org)*

**Funeral Pre-Planning Worksheet**  
***Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville***

For many people, it is a comfort to know that the details of a funeral or memorial service have been prepared in advance. Still others prefer to have the pastor and loved ones plan the service at the time of death. This worksheet gives you the opportunity to make your preferences known now regarding your service. If you would prefer to leave any of these decisions to the pastor or your next of kin, simply leave the options blank. Also there is an option to communicate bequests to the church, and memorial gift designations. This information will remain confidential and on file in the church office until the time of death, and you may update it at any time.

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of next of kin and/or those making funeral arrangements upon your death:

1) \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse \_\_\_\_\_ Years married \_\_\_\_\_

Children (name and contact information)

---

---

---

---

---

Names of Grandchildren \_\_\_\_\_

---

Great-grandchildren \_\_\_\_\_

Brothers and Sisters (name and contact information)

---

---

---

Activities in the community (job, church, volunteer service, etc.)

---

---

---

---

Hobbies and/or Interests

---

---

---

---

Some thoughts I think would be important to express in my funeral sermon or some

words of comfort and consolation I would like to say to those who mourn my death:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Service location:

- the Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville  
 the funeral home  
 other location

Usually there are 2-3 Scripture passages read from the Old Testament followed by 2-3 from the New Testament. These reflect not only the faith of the church, but also the personality and favorite passages of the deceased. I would like the following Scripture readings from the Old and New Testaments: (See Last Acts of Love for suggestions)

---

---

---

I would like the following hymns/songs: (See Last Acts of Love for suggestions)

---

---

---

I would like the following people to be involved in the worship as readers, soloists, etc.

---

---

---

Other preferences for the service:

---

---

---

#### Funeral Home & Visitation

Name of funeral home: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you done any pre-planning with the funeral home? Yes / No

Visitation location (Check one):  At funeral home  At the church

Time of visitation (Check one): immediately prior to the service  after

Interment (Check one):  in the earth  mausoleum

Name of Cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

If interment will be in the ground, have you secured a cemetery plot? Yes / No

If cremation, how are ashes to be kept/disposed? \_\_\_\_\_

Will your body be donated for medical research? Yes/No

Donation to a medical school requires proper legal documentation. Which institution will be the recipient? \_\_\_\_\_

What are your wishes regarding organ donation?

---

#### Memorial Gifts

\_\_\_ I have shared with my next of kin where financial gifts in my memory should be directed. Recipients include:

\_\_\_ Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Planned Giving (Optional Section)

\_\_\_ I/We have included Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville in my/our will.

\_\_\_ I/We have planned another type of deferred gift.

(Please list: Life Insurance, Gift-Annuity, Charitable Trust, etc.):

---

Please share any additional details or requests:

Name of person preparing this form (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you desire a visit with a pastor to discuss these plans? Yes / No

Please return to: Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville

2688 Main St.

Lawrenceville, NJ 08540

**SCHEDULING:** Funerals or memorial services are conducted by our clergy or pastoral care staff and may be held at the Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville or off-site. Before a date and time can be confirmed, the family must have a conversation with the minister who will be officiating. He or she will set up a time to finalize the plans for the service, which will typically include a printed bulletin. If the family wishes to have music for the service, the church office will handle securing our church organist. If our organist is unavailable, another qualified organist will be provided.

#### **VISITATION PRIOR AND/OR RECEPTION AFTER THE SERVICE**

If the family desires to have a time for visitation at the Church prior to the service or a reception following it, they will need to make arrangements with the minister in charge or the Church Office Manager. Because there is no food service provided by the church, the family is encouraged to engage a caterer or other help.

#### **PAYMENTS (MEMBERS)**

There is no charge for a funeral or memorial service for members. However there is an organist fee of \$200\*, and an honorarium (gift) may be offered to the minister or

staff member. Checks for the organist (and minister/staff member) should be made out directly to them.

For a non-member service, the fee schedule is as follows:

Organist - \$300\*

Custodian - \$125

Minister/Staff Member - \$300

Use of sanctuary (Meetinghouse) - \$600

Use of Chapel - \$300

Use of Fellowship Center for Reception (optional) - \$200

Checks for the minister/staff member and the organist should be made out directly to them. Checks for the custodian and the use of the building should be made out to The Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville and earmarked accordingly.

\*Organist fee on holidays may be higher.

**FLORISTS**

Florists making deliveries should call the church office to insure access.

Last updated: January, 2014