



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 King of Love My Shepherd Is no. 802

Psalm 30

Come Sing to God, O Living Saints no. 805

Psalm 46

God is Our Refuge and Our Strength no. 329

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God no. 275

Psalm 84

How Lovely, Lord no. 402

Psalm 90

O God, Our Help in Ages Past no. 687

Psalm 100

All People That on Earth Do Dwell no. 385

Psalm 103

O My Soul, Bless Your Redeemer no. 439

Psalm 121

I to the Hills Will Lift My Eyes no. 45

Psalm 145

Your Faithfulness, O Lord, Is Sure no. 42

Psalm 146

I'll Praise My Maker no. 806

HYMNS APPROPRIATE FOR THE BEGINNING OR END OF THE SERVICE

Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!	no. 1
Jesus Christ Is Risen Today	no. 232
God of Compassion, in Mercy Befriend Us	no. 436
Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise	no. 12
God of Our Life	no. 686
Great Is Thy Faithfulness	no. 39
If Thou but Trust in God to Guide Thee	no. 816
Give to the Winds Thy Fears	no. 815
Fairest Lord Jesus	no. 630
Jesus, Thy Boundless Love to Me	no. 703
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling	no. 366
Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee	no. 611
For the Beauty of the Earth	no. 14
Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty	no. 35
For All the Saints	no. 326
I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art	no. 624
Abide With Me, Fast Falls the Eventide	no. 836
Day Is Done	no. 676

APPROPRIATE DURING WORSHIP—REFLECTION OR LAMENT

Precious Lord, Take My Hand	no. 834
Why Has God Forsaken Me?	no. 809
Blest Be the Tie That Binds	no. 306
There Is a Balm in Gilead	no. 792
O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go	no. 833
My Faith Looks up to Thee	no. 829
I Love the Lord, Who Heard My Cry	no. 799
Loving Spirit	no. 293
When I Survey the Wondrous Cross	no. 223/4
What Wondrous Love is This	no. 215
By the Babylonian Rivers (Ps. 137)	no. 72

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 Bloomfield, Melba Colgrove, and Peter McWilliams