

# **New Hope Presbyterian Church**

## **Policy For Funerals and Memorial Services**

The resurrection is a central doctrine of the Christian faith and shapes Christians' attitudes and responses to [life and]... death. Death brings loss, sorrow, and grief to all. In the face of death, Christians do not bear bereavement in isolation but are sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit and the community of faith. The church offers a ministry of love and hope to all who grieve. As this is the basis of a Christian funeral defined by the *Book of Order* (Part II of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA)), the Session of New Hope Presbyterian Church has set forth the following policy on funeral/memorial services that take place at the church.

### **Policies and Practices**

#### **Officiants**

Primary arrangements will be made with the pastor of New Hope Presbyterian Church. The pastor will officiate at the service and/or committal. Requests for the participation of a "guest" pastor to assist in the service must be made to the officiating pastor who will, if it is appropriate, extend an invitation. Family members, friends, and members of the congregation may be invited by the pastor to assist in the service.

#### **Service at Church**

Church members are encouraged to use the church for funeral/memorial services. Just as we are baptized by God in church and have been nourished by God through the church, so it is wholly appropriate that thanksgiving to God for our lives should be offered in church.

In the Presbyterian tradition a funeral/memorial service is considered a service of worship, a witness to the resurrection, and will be approached with the dignity and joyful celebration accorded worship. This should be the primary focus.

A typical order of worship will include: prelude and postlude of sacred music; hymns and songs of praise and faith; scripture lessons from the Old and New Testaments; a message – which expresses thanksgiving to God for the life of the deceased, and reminds all of Christ's resurrection and promise of eternal life; prayers of intercession and thanksgiving; a benediction. The officiating pastor will make the final determination on the elements of worship.

This service may be observed before or after the committal of the body.

#### **Style of Service**

New Hope Presbyterian Church services reflect a traditional approach to worship and take place in the sanctuary.

**Casket/Cremins**

The casket/cremins of the deceased may be present for the service, and shall arrive at the church at least 45 minutes prior to the announced start time. In order that worship may focus on God and the gift of resurrection, rather than upon the earthly remains of the deceased, the casket will be closed during the service.

**Cremation**

Presbyterians believe that cremation is an appropriate alternative for Christians. Orders of worship and committal remain the same, with the exception that the committal may take place on a different date from the service in the church.

**Pictures and Photography**

As the focus of Christian worship is God, it is not appropriate to display pictures of the deceased in the sanctuary during the service. Photo displays of the deceased are encouraged, and more appropriately placed in the reception area. Non-flash photography is permitted during the service from a stationary position behind the worshipping congregation.

**Music**

Only New Hope's organist, or the guest organist chosen by our organist, will play the organ or electronic keyboard. The New Hope organist, if available, will ordinarily provide music for funerals. All music must be approved by the pastor and organist. All music must be sacred and liturgically appropriate. Appropriate music includes hymns, psalms and spirituals. Any music rehearsals must be scheduled at separate times. Additional rehearsals might impact the organist's fees.

**Flowers**

The use of flowers and other forms of decoration are not required, and should be limited in order that they do not detract from the purpose of worship. One or two simple central floral arrangements for the sanctuary symbolize adequately God's gift of new life. Other arrangements may be placed at the back of the sanctuary, in the reception area, or at graveside.

**Visitation**

There may be occasions when it is desirable for visitation with the family to take place at the church rather than the funeral home. In such cases a reception area (Schulenberg Hall) is available.

**Committals and Interments**

The pastor is available upon arrangement to lead a brief committal service at the site (locally) where the casket/cremins are to be interred. The service typically includes: scripture; prayers; words of committal; a benediction. It may be held before or after a funeral upon arrangement with the pastor.

**Bulletin (or printed order of service)**

The church office staff will ordinarily produce the bulletin (or printed order of service) for funerals. Special requests should be made as early as possible through the pastor.

## **Honoraria**

The pastor of New Hope Presbyterian Church believes that funerals are a part of his/her pastoral call to ministry. He/she counts it both a great responsibility and a great privilege to be with families in their moment of need, offering through his/her words, work, and witness the life and love of Jesus Christ.

It is at the family's discretion as to whether or not they choose to provide an honorarium to the officiating pastor(s). It is also at the family's discretion, should they choose to provide an honorarium, to follow the guidelines suggested or to determine other amounts they deem appropriate. The church office may be contacted to ask what is customary. If a family chooses to provide an honorarium to the pastor(s), the amount chosen should be made payable to the pastor and presented to him/her the day of the funeral.

## **Scheduling a Funeral at New Hope Presbyterian Church**

Please contact the pastor or the church office as soon as possible. The pastor will visit with the family to offer pastoral care and guidance and to begin the process of planning the funeral service. The pastor will work with the family and funeral home to ensure your loved one's funeral is handled with the utmost dignity and respect.

New Hope Presbyterian Church works with a number of funeral homes. While we do not endorse one funeral home over another, we most often work with the Schmitt Funeral Home in Katy. We also work with the Memorial Oaks Funeral Home in Houston. The family is encouraged to include the pastor in its meetings with the funeral home to make arrangements.

## **Receptions and Meals**

When the deceased is a member of New Hope Presbyterian Church, the church through its Congregational Care Committee and Presbyterian Women, will provide, at the request of the family, a reception in Schulenberg Hall for people attending the funeral.

## **Building Use – General**

For an application form and general guidelines, procedures and fees concerning the use of the building, please refer to the church's "General Building Use Policy."

## **Memorial Gifts**

Gifts given to New Hope Presbyterian Church in memory of a loved one are appropriate and welcomed. Letters of acknowledgement will be sent to donors (without reference to the specific amount donated), and copies sent to the deceased person's family. A year-end giving statement will be mailed to each donor (that may be used for tax purposes). Unless otherwise designated, the church may use these funds for any purpose approved by the Session. Should the family voice a special request for use of the funds, the Session will take this request under consideration (Memorial Policy, approved by the Session, May 12, 2009).

The congregation, ministry leaders and staff offer this policy as a faithful way to proceed at the time of death. In the name of our Risen Savior, we stand with those who grieve the loss of their loved ones and who celebrate the resurrection of Christ Jesus our Lord. By the grace of God, may this policy guide us in honoring and respecting our loved one's passing into our Savior's heavenly Kingdom.

*Adopted by the Session of New Hope Presbyterian Church on August 20, 2013*

**ADDENDUM      A Sample Service Order and Funeral Bulletin**

**A Service of Witness  
to the Resurrection**

**In Loving Memory of  
(name of person)  
(years of birth - death)**

**Prelude  
Opening Sentences of Scripture  
Welcome  
Call to Worship  
Hymn  
New Testament Readings  
Solo  
A Life Celebrated (Family Memories – optional)  
Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer  
Hymn  
Commendation and Blessing  
Response  
Postlude**