

# THE SERVICE OF WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION

## Policy and Guidelines

### Guiding Principles

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 life eternal. 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 the Pastor 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 PCUSA 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)*

The Service of Witness to the Resurrection is an act of worship among the Christian community. The community gathers to glorify God, to affirm our belief in the resurrection to life everlasting, and to comfort the bereaved. Although gratitude and honor are to be expressed to God for the life and witness of the deceased, the focus of worship is upon God; therefore, prolonged emphasis upon the deceased is discouraged.

### Guidelines

- Before arrangements for the service are announced, the date and time should be cleared with the Pastor who will confirm plans with the Church Office.
- The Service of Witness to the Resurrection shall be under the direction of the Pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church. Other ministers or participants may take part only by invitation of the Pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church. It is appropriate for family members to assist in the service by reading selected Scriptures.
- The casket may be placed in the sanctuary prior to the beginning of the service or be brought into the sanctuary in procession at the beginning of the service. If the casket is present, it will remain closed at all times.
- The casket will be covered by the white pall belonging to the church while it is in the sanctuary so that the attention of the worshiper may be directed to our equality in Christ and the Author and Finisher of our salvation. The pall must be removed from the casket in the church narthex following the service. Caskets may also be covered by a U.S. flag for a qualified veteran.
- If an urn or similar container is present, it is placed in the front of the sanctuary on a table beside the communion table.
- The furnishings and simplicity of the sanctuary make it a place of dignity and reverence. It is fitting, therefore, that a minimum of floral decorations be placed in the sanctuary. A maximum of 2 floral arrangements may be placed in the sanctuary. Other arrangements, including a casket spray, may be placed in the narthex.
- All music must be appropriate for Presbyterian worship. The Pastor will work with the family to select appropriate hymns, if desired, for the service. Neither secular nor pre-recorded music is permitted. The Director of Music will provide additional suitable sacred music for services held in the Westminster Presbyterian Church sanctuary.
- Video tributes are not permitted in the sanctuary. Pictures or other personal effects are allowed in the narthex and at the reception only.
- Videotaping is permitted from the balcony only.
- Any fraternal, civic or military rites are to be conducted at the conclusion of the committal service or at another time and location separate from the service of worship.

## **Costs and Fees**

There are no charges or fees for the use of the church's facilities or for the services of the pastor and church organist. Cost to the families will be for flowers the family provides at the service and for additional musicians and vocalists the family may request. Any honorarium is at the sole discretion of the family.

## **Meals and Receptions**

The family's deacon, upon notification that a death has occurred, will contact the family to offer condolences and discuss food needs. WPC deacons are pleased to provide food for a family gathering at the home or a simple reception at Westminster prior to or after the funeral service. A typical reception menu includes sandwiches, cookies, sweet treats, fresh fruit, nuts, punch, and water.

## **Order of Worship**

The Service of Witness to the Resurrection

Prelude  
Call to Worship  
(Hymn)  
Opening Prayer  
Scripture Readings  
Sermon  
Prayer of Thanksgiving  
(Hymn)  
Commendation  
Benediction  
Postlude

*The use of hymns in the service is customary but not required. Appropriate vocal or instrumental music may be added upon request.*

Committal Service (at graveside)

Sentences of Scripture  
Prayer  
Words of Committal  
Closing Prayer  
Blessing

*Committal may follow or precede the Service of Witness to the Resurrection.*

*The Session, pastor and members of Westminster Presbyterian Church open our hearts to all who are grieved by death and loss. We take seriously our vows to pray for all who are so afflicted. It is our prayer and hope that Westminster Presbyterian Church may be a source of strength, comfort and hope through the promises of the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord. The pastor, elders and deacons stand ready to assist you in your time of grief following the worship service. May God's peace be with you.*