

*Our Funeral Guide*

# Witness to the Resurrection

Blessed are those  
who mourn, for  
they will be  
comforted.



Matthew 5:4

**Goodyear Heights  
Presbyterian Church**

Rev. J. Christy Ramsey, Pastor

WORSHIP SERVICES ON THE OCCASION OF DEATH

Updated by Session 7/26/11

**Goodyear Heights  
Presbyterian Church**  
1430 Goodyear Blvd.  
Akron, OH 44305-4168  
Phone (330) 784-7633  
Fax (325) 784-1238  
office@ghpcaakron.org  
www.ghpcaakron.org

## Table of Contents

The Purpose of A Presbyterian Funeral.....	3
Pastor's Message.....	4
Advantages of a Sanctuary Service.....	5
The Funeral Service.....	6
Witness to Resurrection.....	6
Service of Committal ( <i>Gravesite</i> ).....	8
Prayers.....	9
Common Questions.....	12
Family Interview Questions.....	13
Some Suggested Scripture Readings.....	15
Credits.....	15

## About Goodyear Heights Presbyterian Church

Empowered by the Spirit, members of Goodyear Heights Presbyterian Church journey together in the life of faith joyfully sharing the good news of the sovereign love of God. We welcome all to join with us in living out a personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord by ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of people everywhere.

We are in East Akron at 1430 Goodyear Boulevard at Pioneer Street on bus route 30. Parking is behind our main building with a handicapped accessible entrance and elevator at the glass doors. Funeral dinners are in the fellowship hall down the stairs on the left of the entrance and then left at the end of the hall. The sanctuary is on the second floor to your left as you enter by the stairs; on your right as you exit the elevator. The church and pastor's office is also on the second floor in the opposite direction from the sanctuary.



## Some Suggested Scripture Readings

Job 19:23-27	I know that my redeemer lives
Isaiah 40:1-11, 28-31	Comfort my people
Isaiah 40:28-31	...wait on the Lord renew their strength
Isaiah 65:17-25	I create a new heavens and a new earth
Ecclesiastes 3:1-15	For everything there is a season
Psalms 23	The Lord is my shepherd
Psalms 46:1-5, 10-11	A very present help in trouble
Psalms 90:1-10, 12	Teach us to number our days
Psalms 103	Bless the Lord, O my soul
Psalms 121	I lift up my eyes to the hills
Psalms 130	Out of the depths I cry to the Lord
Psalms 139:1-12	Where shall I go from your spirit?
Romans 8:14-23, 31-39	Nothing can separate us from God's love
Romans 14:7-9	Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's
1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 35-38, 42-44, 50, 53-58	Death is swallowed in victory
2 Corinthians 4:16-5:1	Visible temporary, invisible eternal
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	The comfort of Christ's coming
Revelation 21:1-4, 22-25; 22:3-5	A new heaven and a new earth
Romans 14:7-9, 10c-12	None of us live to ourselves
Luke 23:33, 39-43	Today you will be with me in Paradise
John 11:17-27	I am the resurrection and the life
John 14:1-6, 25-27	Let not your hearts be troubled

## Credits

Setting & Service explanations are from the Directory for Worship for the Presbyterian Church, (USA).

Witness to Resurrection Service and Suggested Scripture readings are from the Book of Common Worship of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

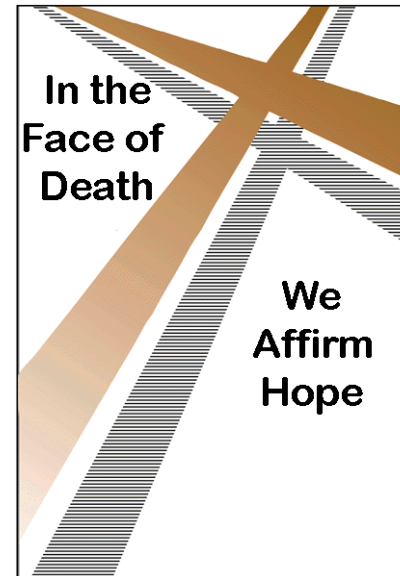
Prayers are from *Celebrate God's Presence A Book of Services for the United Church of Canada*.

Most interview questions are from a Ministry magazine article by an unknown author.

## Family Interview Questions

1. What is one descriptive word you would use to describe her?
2. Did he have any particular loves or hobbies?
3. Did she serve in the armed forces?
4. What was his church experience?
5. Did she enjoy any particular songs, poems, or Scriptures?
6. If you could name one value or lesson he wanted to teach the next generation, what would it be?
7. What is the one accomplishment that would make her face light up when you mentioned it?
8. What were some of his favorite phrases or sayings?
9. Did she ever put anything up on the wall -- a picture, a motto, a clipping that expresses who she really was?
10. Did he like his first name? What nicknames did he have?
11. Was there a cause, organization or movement that she felt deeply about and supported with time and treasure?
12. If he could say one thing at the service, what would it be?
13. Why is the world a little different because of her?
14. What will you miss most about him?

## The Purpose of A Presbyterian Funeral



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.

**Therefore Presbyterian Church offers a ministry of love and hope to all who grieve.**

*—Presbyterian Book of Order*

**Arrangements surrounding a time of death should be simple, bear witness to resurrection hope, and keep Christian community central.**

*—Presbyterian Book of Order (edited)*

## Pastor's Message

Grief is the other side of Love. When we allow ourselves to love others, we grieve when a loved one is gone. This is no less true for Christians than for those who have no hope. Even Jesus wept when he was faced with the death of his friend Lazarus and the grief of his family and friends. The support of the community of faith means you do not have to bear this sadness in isolation.

*"When Jesus saw her weeping...he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled."*

I come as a pastor employed by God and supported by the congregation of Goodyear Heights Presbyterian Church. I know the message of Christian faith and witness of the Presbyterian community that I bring can help you through this difficult time.

In our worship services, whether in a church sanctuary or, in case of special need, a funeral home, I highlight what was good and kind and faithful in the life of the one who is gone. This is informed primarily by a meeting with family to reflect on the life and faith of their loved one. From my sermon, all will know the good news of the life of your loved one and how it illustrates the good news of Jesus Christ.

I hope you will allow me and the good folks at Goodyear Heights Presbyterian Church to bring a worship service of God's comfort, healing and hope into the sacred space of love and grief that you and your family are wrapped in now. As the people pray, sing, and affirm their faith together you will be comforted in your grief and renewed in your faith.



- Q. *May we suggest a favorite scripture, poem or hymn to include?*  
A. Yes. Reverend Ramsey will receive these requests during the family interview and strive to honor them as he prepares the worship service and sermon.
- Q. *Should a family member say something during the service?*  
A. Scripture readings are very appropriate. Any remarks need to fit into a worship setting giving glory to God, it is usually better to share personal remembrances at the fellowship dinner.
- Q. *May a fraternal, military, or civic group take part in the service?*  
A. Such services are to be at a different time. Some groups hold a service during visitation. Some families choose to have a ceremony by such a group at the gravesite and invite Reverend Ramsey or another pastor to say a prayer as well.
- Q. *How long will the service last?*  
A. Services last about 40 minutes, but have been as short as 10 minutes and as long as an hour by request.
- Q. *May we have a funeral dinner at the church?*  
A. Yes. Regardless of where the service is held, the Deacons are happy to provide a dinner for family and friends after the service. Contributions from the family for expenses are accepted.
- Q. *May we have the committal at graveside first?*  
A. Yes. After a more intimate time at the gravesite, the family can travel to the church for the more public service and dinner.
- Q. *May we have just the committal service?*  
A. Yes. Reverend Ramsey is able to provide ministry at the time of death in a variety of special circumstances.
- Q. *How much does the church charge?*  
A. No fees are charged. However, the funeral home might have associated charges for their services.
- Q. *Does Reverend Ramsey do services for non-members?*  
A. Yes.
- Q. *What about a special request not covered in this pamphlet?*  
A. Reverend Ramsey is always ready to talk with families.

## Common Questions

There is no substitute for face to face discussions and sharing of hope and faith. Please use these as they are helpful to you and as a guide to a personal discussion with the pastor.

Q. *May we have a service at the funeral home?*

A. Yes. When there important reasons not to have the service in the church sanctuary a worship service may be held there.

Q. *How much should we pay the pastor?*

A. Reverend Ramsey views leading worship services as part of his call and privilege as full-time pastor and declines payment.



Q. *Will the casket be open during the service?*

A. Since the service is to focus on God and our faith, the casket is normally closed during the service. The pastor often prays with the family in the Gathering room just before the casket is closed and the service begins.

Q. *Will the service be personal?*

A. As family members share insights and memories during the family interview, Reverend Ramsey is able to give personal sermons that go beyond a simple secular eulogy by bringing the faith and witness of the person to light.

Q. *Why is the casket covered with a cloth?*

A. The white cloth that covers the casket is a pall. It symbolizes that in Holy Baptism Christians are clothed in the righteousness (purity) of Christ, and that at their death, that righteousness is complete. It also reminds us that all are equal at death.

## Advantages of a Church Service

Funeral homes offer several necessary services at the time of death including space for worship. However, for Presbyterians, the service on the occasion of death ordinarily should be held in the usual place of worship in order to join the service to the community's continuing life and witness to the resurrection. We have both the sanctuary and chapel available.

Our sanctuary and chapel are designed to bring people to God. The stained glass windows and other symbols of the faith anchor the memories, hopes, and faith of generations. It is in this place that faith and life intersect; from the celebration of new life in baptism through the affirmation that death is not the end of life and love.

There are practical reasons to have funerals at the church:

*A Church Service*

*Helps Honor a Lifetime of Faith*

- Hymnals allow the people to join in singing favorite hymns giving voice to faith where words fail.
- Service music can be provided by our organist.
- The casket can easily be closed in private before the service or held *after the committal* (gravesite) service.
- If a committal is held before the church service, transportation costs are reduced and the complications of a funeral procession are avoided.
- The service and dinner can be held at the same place



## The Funeral Service

Funeral services vary widely. Many families and communities have their unique traditions. Presbyterians honor those meaningful practices and respect those who choose to follow them and expect the same respect for their beliefs and practices in return. There is no condemnation for those who decide not to have a worship service led by the pastor and wish to direct and plan their own experience as they desire. In such an event, funeral home staff are trained and experienced in accommodating a variety of desires.

For those who wish to be blessed by a Christian worship service led by Presbyterian pastor we offer the service of Witness to Resurrection and a Service of Committal which may be held at a funeral home or chapel and graveside.

## Witness to Resurrection

### *The Setting*



The service ordinarily should be held in the usual place of worship in order to join this service to the community's continuing life and witness. When there are important reasons not to do so, it may be held in another place.

In order that the service be directed to God, when a casket is present, it is normally closed. A pall is used to cover the casket in the sanctuary or chapel.

The service is under the direction of the pastor. Others may participate at the pastor's discretion.

DECLARATION OF PARDON  
SCRIPTURE READINGS

SERMON

Rev. J. Christy Ramsey



### AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

**I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.**



### HYMN

PRAYERS OF THANKSIGIVING AND INTERCESSION

### LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen**

COMMENDATION

BENEDICTION

## A Service of Witness to Resurrection



*The icon at left invites you to stand,  
while **Bold** print asks you to read the part aloud.*

PRELUDE

SENTENCES OF SCRIPTURE



HYMN

PRAYER

. . . and your years shall have no end. **Amen.**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Holy God, you see us as we are,  
and know our inmost thoughts.**

**We confess that we are unworthy of your gracious care.**

**We forget that all life comes from you**

**And that to you all life returns.**

**We have not always sought or done your will.**

**We have not lived as your grateful children,**

**Nor loved as Christ loved us.**

**Apart from you we are nothing.**

**Only your grace can sustain us.**

**Lord in your mercy forgive us,**

**Heal us and make us whole.**

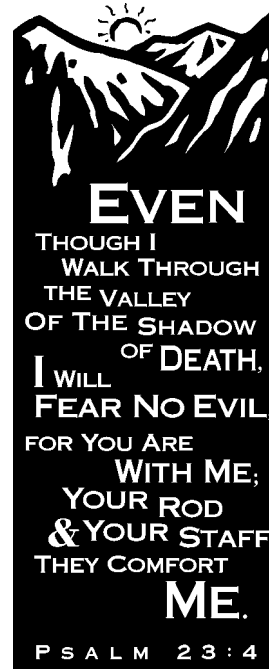
**Set us free from our sin**

**And restore to us the joy of your salvation**

**Now and forever.**

## The Service

The service begins with scriptural sentences. It is appropriate for worshipers to sing hymns, psalms, spirituals, or spiritual songs which affirm God's power over death, a belief in the resurrection to life everlasting, and the assurance of the communion of the saints.



Scripture shall be read; a sermon or other exposition of the Word may be proclaimed; an affirmation of faith may be made by the people. Aspects of the life of the one who has died may be recalled.

Prayers shall be offered:

- ◆ *giving thanks to God* for life in Christ and the gospel, for the life of the one who has died, for the comfort of the Holy Spirit, for the community of faith;
- ◆ *making intercessions*: for family and loved ones who grieve, for those who support the bereaved, for all who suffer loss;
- ◆ *lifting supplications* for faith and grace for all present and concluding with the Lord's Prayer.

The service ends by commending the one who has died to the care of the eternal God and sending the people forth with a benediction.

Any additions to the service must not detract from or diminish the Christian understanding of death and resurrection.

## Service of Committal (*Gravesite*)

### *The Setting*

Members and friends of the family of the one who has died should gather at the graveside or crematorium for a service of farewell, which is to be conducted with simplicity, dignity, and brevity. Any fraternal, civic, or military rites shall be conducted separately.

The service can occur before or after the Witness to Resurrection service. One option is a small committal service with family and friends at the cemetery followed by the witness to resurrection or memorial worship service at the church building with a fellowship meal immediately following.



### *The Service*

The service includes readings from Scripture, prayers, words of committal, and a blessing, reflecting the reality of death, entrusting the one who has died to the care of God, and bearing witness to faith in the resurrection from the dead.

This service may be before or after the committal of the body and either following or preceding the witness to resurrection service.

## Prayers

### *For the Family Interview*

God of all compassion, we bring to you our sorrow and distress, and pray that you will give us the courage to bear it. As we celebrate the life of a loved one, fill our minds with precious memories, our hearts with peace, and our souls with the solace of your Spirit. Give us the grace to say goodbye in the certain hope of eternity within your peaceable realm. Amen.

### *For the Closing of the Casket*

Hear these words from Scripture: "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known." *1 Corinthians 13:12*

Loving God, we commend to you our loved one, N., whose face we will no longer see as our journey here continues. We trust that you have received her/him into your eternal embrace and that she/he can see you more clearly. Grant us relief from our sorrow, in the sure and certain hope of joyful reunion with all those we love, when again we will be face to face. Amen.

### *For Fellowship Dinner*

God of grace and glory, we thank you for N. who was near and dear to those gathered here. We thank you for the friendship he/she gave and for the strength and peace he/she brought. We thank you for the love he/she offered and received while he/she was with us here. We pray that nothing good in the life of this man/woman will be lost, but will be of benefit to the world; that all that was important to him/her will be respected by those who follow, and that everything he/she valued will continue to mean much to us now that he/she has died. We ask you that he/she may live on in the hearts and minds of his/her family and friends, inspiring courage, informing conscience. We ask you that we who were close to him/her may now, because of this death, be even closer to one another, and that in peace and friendship here on earth, we may always be deeply conscious of your promise to be faithful to us in death. God of grace and glory, grant us courage and confidence. Amen.