

Planning a Funeral

*Jesus said to her,
"I am the resurrection and the life.
Those who believe in me,
even though they die, will live,
and everyone who lives
and believes in me will never die.
(John 11:25-26)*

**Blue Ridge Presbyterian Church
Raytown, Missouri**

Funeral Service Notes and Resources

Blue Ridge Presbyterian Church

Updated 02-27-11

1. **Purpose.** While there are unique circumstances in each funeral, the purpose of a funeral service is twofold -- to (a) celebrate the life of the loved one and (b) witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. So when we consider what to include in a service, we ought to think about what would help us do both.
2. **Readings.** You may choose to do a number of readings. They may be from scripture and/or from other sources, such as poetry, a novel, a contemporary song – or whatever you wish so long as it is in keeping with a service of worship.
3. **Words of Scripture.** Below is a sample of scripture that may be appropriate for a service. This list is not exhaustive – there are other wonderful passages that may be meaningful to you and would help us celebrate your life and speak to the promise of resurrection for us all.

Hebrew Bible

Job 19:23-27	I know my redeemer lives
Ecclesiastes 3:1-15	For everything there is a season
Isaiah 25:6-9	God will swallow up death forever
Isaiah 26:1-4, 19	God will keep them in peace
Isaiah 40: 1-11, 28-31	Comfort my people
Isaiah 40:28-31	Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength
Isaiah 41:10	Do not fear, for I am with you
Isaiah 43: 1-3, 18-19, 25	When you pass through the waters, I will be with you
Isaiah 44:6-8	I am the first and the last
Isaiah 55:1-3, 6-13	Ho, everyone who thirsts
Isaiah 61: 1-4, 10-11	The spirit of the Lord is upon me
Isaiah 65: 17-25	I create new heavens and a new earth
Lam. 3:22- 24	The Lord's steadfast love, the Lord is my portion
Joel 2:12-13, 23-24	Return to the Lord with all your heart

Psalms

Psalms 16:5-11	The Lord is my chosen portion
Psalms 23	The Lord is my shepherd
Psalms 27:1, 4-9, 13-14	The Lord is my light and my salvation
Psalms 42:1-6	As a deer longs for flowing streams
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 106: 1-5	O give thanks to the Lord

Psalm 121	I lift up my eyes to the hills
Psalm 130	My soul waits for the Lord
Psalm 139	Where shall I go from your spirit?
Psalm 146	Hallelujah! Praise the Lord, O my soul

The Gospels

Matthew 5:1 – 12	The Beatitudes
Matthew 11: 28-30	Come unto me all of you who are weary
Matthew 18:1-5, 10	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 6:47 – 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	In my Father's house there are many rooms
John 14:25-27	My peace I give to you, do not let your hearts be troubled

Epistles

Romans 5:1-11	Hope does not disappoint
Romans 6:3-9	Baptized into Christ's death, raised to live with him
Romans 8: 31-39	Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ
Romans 14:7-9, 10-12	Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's
1 Cor. 15:20-24	In Christ all shall be made alive
2 Cor. 1:3-4	God consoles us in all our afflictions
2 Cor. 4:16 - 5:1	Visible things are temporary, invisible things are eternal
Ephesians 1:11-2:10	Saved by grace through faith
Philippians 3: 7-11	Knowing him by the power of the resurrection
Philippians 3:20-21	Our citizenship is in heaven
2 Timothy 2:8-13	If we died with him, we shall also live with him
Heb. 11:1-3,13-16,12:1-2	Faith, the pilgrimage, the cloud of witnesses
1 John 3:1-3	We are children of God
Rev. 14:1-3,6-7, 12-13	Rest for the saints
Rev. 21:1-4, 22-25	A new heaven and a new earth

4. Prayer of Confession. A prayer of confession is an opportunity to confess how we all fall short in life. Yet any prayer of confession is also accompanied by a declaration of forgiveness – the message that God loves us, forgives us, and welcomes us home. At the time of a funeral, this message of grace can be comforting to all.

5. Hymns. Below is a list of hymns from our Presbyterian Hymnal that are appropriate for a funeral service, although again this is by no means an exhaustive list from our Presbyterian Hymnal and there may be hymns from other denominations which would be appropriate. And any hymn that is a favorite of yours is suitable for your funeral service.

Hymn #	Hymn Title	Hymn #	Hymn Title
118	The Day of Resurrection!	344	Christ of the Upward Way
119	The Strife is O'er	379	My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less
174	The Lord is my Shepherd	384	O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go
191	God Is Our Refuge and Our Strength	403	What a friend we have in Jesus
210	Our God, Our Help in Ages Past	404	Precious Lord, Take My Hand
260	A Might Fortress Is Our God	438	Blest Be the Tie That Binds
275	God of Our Life	447	Lead On, O Kind Eternal
276	Great is Thy Faithfulness	464	Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee
280	Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound	467	How Great Thou Art
281	Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah	469	Morning Has Broken
302	I Danced in the Morning	488	The God of Abraham Praise
304	Jesus Loves Me	525	Here I am, Lord
316	Breathe on Me, Breath of God	526	For All the Saints
339	Be Thou My Vision	543	Abide with Me
341	Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine!	--	In the Garden

6. Solos (pending availability). You may wish to have a solo sung or an instrumental piece of music played. Many of the hymns above have been sung as solos in a service. Below is a list of additional songs that have been sung at times – just to give you an idea. At Blue Ridge Presbyterian Church, we are blessed to have a number of people who have sung at funerals. Their ability to do so depends on the timing of the service and their availability.

Ave Maria
 Beautiful Savior
 Friends
 He Walks with Me
 Just a Closer Walk with Thee
 It is Well with My Soul
 Lord's Prayer

Nearer, my God, to Thee
 On Eagles Wing's
 Somewhere Over the Rainbow
 The Old Rugged Cross
 What a Friend We Have in Jesus
 You Raise me Up
 You'll Never Walk Alone

7. Homily. As the pastor, I seek to realize the goals of the service at large in the homily itself. So on one hand I aim to lift up the gift of your life, or that of the person who has passed. I do that through my own knowledge of the person as well as stories that I may hear from family members. On the other hand, I seek to witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ through an angle in your life (or the person who has passed) as it connects to the gospel story. If you are preparing your own service in advance, I would greatly value any notes that you would choose to share with me. In these notes you could talk about what your life has meant to you, what the people in your life have meant to you, special experiences that shaped your life. You could speak about your journey of faith and what being a Christian has meant to you. Your notes could be serious, hilarious, sad, thoughtful, silly – all of the above.

8. Affirmation of Faith. Including an Affirmation of Faith can be meaningful for people. Examples of this could be a unison reading of the Apostles' Creed or a responsive reading of Romans 8: 35, 37-39 which could appear as:

Leader: Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

People: No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

9. Memorial Gifts. You may wish to designate a particular charity (your church, some other organization) or some other institution to receive donations upon your passing. If you wish to set up a memorial with Blue Ridge Presbyterian Church, please complete the Memorial gift form and indicate if you have a preference for how any funds would be spent.

10. Graveside Ceremony. Following the funeral service, there will typically be a short graveside ceremony (for both traditional burials as well as cremations). Those consist generally of the pastor reading some words of scripture, sharing a prayer, and leading the gathered in the Lord's Prayer. If the person who has passed was a Veteran, it is at this point that there could be military honors.

Worksheet for Creating a Funeral Service for: _____

Include? Yes/No	Possible Service Element	Who does this?	My Choices
	Gathering Music		
Yes	Words of Welcome	Pastor	
Yes	Opening Words of Scripture	Pastor	
	Hymn or other music		
	Prayer		
	Prayer of Confession & Declaration of Forgiveness	& Pastor	
	Words from the Family		
	Reading(s) from Scripture and/or some other source		
	Music (solo, instrumental)		
Yes	Homily	Pastor	
	Affirmation of Faith		
	Prayer of Thanksgiving and The Lord's Prayer	Pastor	
	Hymn or other music		
Yes	Commendation	Pastor	
Yes	Benediction	Pastor	
	Closing music		

Gifts in Honor of Your Life	
Yes/No?	At the time of your death, do you want people to . . .
	Make gifts of flowers to the church or my surviving relatives
	Establish a memorial fund with the church (if yes, please see Memorial Gift form, p. 8)
	Make donations to another organization(s):

Questions Related to Visitation		
Include? Yes/No	Possible Element of Visitation	My Choices
	Visitation before funeral	
	Location of Visitation (home, church parlor)	
	What (if anything) should be displayed during visitation?	
	If traditional burial, should my casket be open or closed?	

Pick your Funeral Program Cover		
Yes/No	Scene	Scripture on Cover
	Plain	You may select (and we can suggest some)
	Rainbow	For all the saints who from their labors rest, Alleluia, Alleluia!
	Mountains, lake and sunset	In my father's house there are many rooms, I go and prepare a place for you.
	Sea gull flying in the clouds & sunbeams	I am the resurrection and the life.
	Monarch butterfly on a flower	For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life
	Sunset with mountains	Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see. Twas grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed.
	Mountain, stream, wild flowers	When peace, like a river, attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll; whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well with my soul.

Words for my Pastor

Below, please share as you wish any reflections about your life, the people you have loved, experiences that shaped you, your faith, and anything else you would like me to know. Add pages as you need them.

Blue Ridge Presbyterian Church



MEMORIAL FUNDS

*The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.
The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
I have a goodly heritage. - Psalm 16:5-6*

Please print all information

Memorial funds for _____

Date _____

Please use any and all funds as directed below

Funds are non-designated and can be used for anything the church needs.

Funds are to be used for:

1 _____

2 _____

Special instructions or comments:

Family Members Signature _____