

## **Death**

### ***In Christian Perspective***

The Christian funeral is first and foremost a service of worship. At the time of the death of a member of our family or congregation, we gather together in worship to thank God for the life of the deceased and to ask God for His love and support for us in these difficult times. All that happens in the funeral services should be focused around the fact that the service is one of worship.

### ***Notify the Church***

The church office should be notified immediately of the death of a member or constituent of our congregation. All arrangements should be made and approved in consultation with a pastor. A pastor will want to meet with one or more members of the family as soon as feasible to provide pastoral care and to help in thinking through the various details needing to be considered. Consultation is particularly important in setting the place and the time for the service.

## **Service**

### ***at Church Encouraged***

For a member of our church, it is always appropriate for the service to be held at the church. Members of our church are encouraged to use the church for funerals rather than a funeral home chapel. We are baptized in the church, we are confirmed in the church, we are married in the church, we experience many meaningful moments in the church in worship, in learning, and in being with friends. It is appropriate that our funeral or memorial service also be held in the church that is so much a part of our lives.

## **Funeral or Memorial Service**

The worship service is called a funeral when the body of the deceased is present and a memorial service when the body is not present. Either practice is appropriate and neither is fundamentally different from the other. Personal wishes, family preferences, and circumstances decide which is best.

## **Discuss**

### ***Details with a Pastor***

After you and a pastor have set a date, time, and place, details for the service should be discussed. These details include such things as who is to participate, choice of pall bearers if any, preferred Scriptures, choice of hymns if used or other music, whether Communion will be celebrated, and whether interment will precede or follow the service. It is not appropriate to give the pastor an honorarium for the funeral of a church member.

## **Music**

Music used in the church should be carefully selected. It should remind us of God's presence and be performed in the spirit of worshipfulness and praise.

Since the funeral or memorial service is worship, only music appropriate to worship may be used. Our music staff will be glad to assist in selecting appropriate works for the funeral. The church will furnish the services of the organist for the funeral of a church member.

## **Flowers and Pall**

Since the funeral or memorial service is a worship service, the sanctuary should not be changed in any way except for the presence of the casket or run. The floral decoration of the church should be quite simple in keeping with what is appropriate in a worship service. It is entirely appropriate to have just two vases of flowers on the flower stands. If the family desires, not more than four additional baskets of flowers may be placed at the front of the sanctuary. The narthex should be considered part of the sanctuary.

The church owns a funeral pall given by the United Methodist Women in memory of Mary Helen Wilson. This is available for any church family that should desire to use it to cover the casket. Our pall is white, symbolizing the resurrection, and contains the symbols of Christ - the cross and the Greek letters for "Christ" and the "beginning and the end." The pall is placed over the closed casket; therefore, the casket will need to be closed before the funeral service begins. There are several theological and practical reasons to use the pall. In death, we are all equal regardless of wealth or position in life. The pall covers the casket during the service and helps us to focus our attention on Christ in whom we live and die and not on the casket itself. A pall also connects the service with the new life in Christ that the Christian puts on at baptism, and it prefigures the purification that faith looks forward to in Christ. This contributes a great deal to the atmosphere of worship.

## **Memorials**

Gifts in honor of the deceased can be made as memorials to the church. The surviving family is notified of all gifts received as memorials by the church.

In your advance planning, you may choose to bequeath gifts to the church. Consultation with a pastor is encouraged in choosing where to direct bequests.

## **Fraternal, Civic, or Military Rites**

These groups often wish to have a last rite before interment. For Christian services, it should be clear that they are secondary to the funeral or memorial service. To preserve the integrity of the Christian service, these rites are allowed only after the service has concluded.

## **Thinking and Planning Ahead**

There is nothing unseemly or morbid or inappropriate about anticipating what should be done when death comes. Thought in advance about medical directives, living wills, organ donations, the kind of service preferred, choice of funeral director, place of interment, the desire for burial or cremation, memorials preferred, are all to the good. It is appropriate to remember the church when preparing your will, and seeing that gift as a lasting tithe.

This policy was officially  
adopted by the  
Administrative Council  
on  
March 10, 1996.

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704-545-6785

# *Funeral & Memorial Services Brochure*



## **Blair Road United Methodist Church**

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Located on Hwy 51,  
just 1 mile north of the  
Wilgrove-Mint Hill Rd. intersection  
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