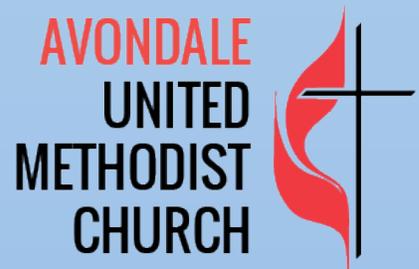


# Funerals & Memorial Services

at Avondale United Methodist Church

May 2015



Dear Avondale Family,

When the death of a loved one is imminent or has occurred, it is often a time of deep grief and pain as we wrestle with loss. It can also be a very stressful time for those charged with making final arrangements and coordinating with service providers and others. At Avondale UMC we are honored to provide care and support during this difficult time.

Our goal at Avondale UMC is to help you navigate the many decisions you must make when a loved one dies and to find closure and peace in this process. Planning a funeral or memorial service can be a blessing to those in grief, not only a time for the joys and struggles of a person's life to be named and entrusted to God but also a time for remembering and reaffirming Jesus' promise of resurrection for the deceased and for ourselves.

The information in this packet is provided as a beginning point for families and friends facing the death of a loved one. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you have questions or would like to discuss your circumstances.

Pastor Brandon

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## Planning in Advance

It is never too soon to consider end-of-life decisions. And, in the wake of death, families of the deceased are often comforted knowing what their loved one would have wanted. For any members or friends of Avondale UMC, our pastor will be happy to visit with you to discuss your wishes and create a file for you that will be available for future arrangements.

## When Death is Imminent or Has Occurred

When a death is imminent, our pastor or a member of our Congregational Care team is honored to come and pray with you. If there is time, please call the church at 205-592-3739. If it is after hours, please call the church and go to the pastors' voice mail to be given his/her cell phone number. We will make every effort to have someone come to you.

When a death has occurred, please contact the pastor as soon as possible so that he/she may work with you in planning the next steps.

## Date, Time, and Place

- The timing of a funeral service will often depend on the scheduling constraints of the funeral home and the church. You may also wish to consider the scheduling needs of other mourners who may need to arrange travel or time off from work.
- If you wish for our pastors to conduct the funeral for your loved one or you wish to use the church facilities, please visit with him or her before you schedule the service.
- **Sanctuary:** When possible, we encourage those planning a service to consider holding it in the church sanctuary, as it is most conducive to congregational services of worship. It also has the resources like hymnals, candles, and musical instruments to support the worship experience. Our sanctuary can accommodate as many as 500 mourners, but is also suitable for small gatherings.
- **Funeral home chapels:** when it is not possible or is impractical to use the church sanctuary, the funeral home chapel is an acceptable alternative. Funeral home chapels are generally discouraged as a first choice, however, because they often lack the aesthetics that contribute to positive worship experiences (such as crosses, a communion table, candles etc.) and thus they can result in a bleak or dreary funeral service.
- **Other locations:** the graveside, crematorium, or a location where ashes will be scattered may be suitable for smaller gatherings of 10-20 people before, after, or instead of a full funeral service. The pastor can guide you on planning these services.

## Planning the Service

There are four primary types of funeral services. All are planned as worship services in which Christ is proclaimed as our hope for eternal life and in which those who are gathered are encouraged to remember the story of salvation and to put their trust in the Lord.

1. A traditional funeral (where the casket or urn is present), with graveside (also called a committal service, usually following the funeral, but occasionally before)
2. A memorial service (where there is no casket/urn)
3. A graveside service only

Following the selection of the date, time, place, and type of service the pastor will arrange to gather the family. This is usually a gathering of the immediate relatives and closest friends of the deceased. It can be either at the family home or at the church. It is an opportunity for loved ones to share stories and memories of the life of the deceased and for the pastor to know how best to memorialize the deceased. This will be a time to plan the details of the service as well.

Some things the pastor may ask about:

- favorite scriptures and songs of the deceased
- events and accomplishments that were significant in his/her life
- any memorabilia that are especially important in understanding the individual (e.g., a family bible, photo, letters, etc.)
- an estimate of the number of mourners that may attend the service
- how the family would like to gather before the service, how they would like to be seated, will they process into the service, etc.
- whether the family has any persons who they want to take part in the service
- whether any special instructions should be included in the funeral worship bulletin (e.g. instructions to the grave site, requested recipient of memorial gifts, etc.)

## Eulogies and the Witness of Family and Friends

Sometimes family members and friends will want to share their own memories of their loved one during the service in addition to the pastor's sermon. If you wish to do this, please keep these suggestions in mind:

- Funerals are very emotional experiences, and intense grief can surprise even seasoned public speakers. Speakers should type their eulogy in advance of the service so that the pastor can read it in the event that the speaker is unable to continue.
- A eulogy should be targeted to two double-spaced typewritten pages (about 500 words) in length. This will take about 4-5 minutes to present. Longer eulogies can easily lose a congregation's attention or fail to communicate about the deceased effectively.

- No more than two eulogies (total of 8-10 minutes) should be planned. The service will become uncomfortably long when more eulogies are included.

Even when a deceased person is not well known to the pastor, the pastor will give full attention to honoring and naming the memory and identity of the individual in his/her sermon.

## Music

Music is an integral part of any worship service. So often music can speak volumes when we are unable to speak ourselves. Congregational singing and vocal music at funerals are especially helpful as they enable our voices to join together in a shared expression of worship, grief, and hope.

Avondale UMC has a quality organ and piano and highly accomplished accompanists who can play for your service. Other instruments like stringed instruments and winds are also appropriate, but the family will need to provide for instrumentalists. Avondale UMC may also be able to provide for soloists depending on the scheduling of the service.

The pastor will help you help you choose appropriate music for the service. Note that secular music is not appropriate for a funeral service but, if it is meaningful to the family or the deceased, may be appropriate for use during a visitation, reception, or photo slideshow to be played at a visitation.

The following types of music will typically be included in a service:

- **Prelude:** the organist/pianist will play for 20 minutes prior to the service. This may include requested hymns or a selection of the musician's choice.
- **Solos and congregational hymns:** these complement the service and will be interspersed at the discretion of the pastor. Suggestions are available on our website.
- **Recessional:** the casket (if applicable), pastor and family exit the sanctuary to this music usually played in an uplifting tempo
- **Postlude:** the organist/pianist will play until the guests have left the chapel

## Scripture

Scripture readings are the heart of the funeral service, as they provide a firm foundation for our understanding of what God is doing in our lives through Jesus, for his promises to us that transcend our doubt, and for his life that redeems our deaths. The pastor will offer suggestions for readings, but will also include readings that are important to the family or the deceased.

Passages are frequently selected from the following list:

- Genesis 42.29-end *The sorrow you would cause me would kill me*
- 2 Samuel 1.17,23-end *David's lament for Saul and Jonathan*

- 2 Samuel 12.16-23 *David's son dies*
- Psalm 6
- Psalm 23
- Psalm 25
- Psalm 27
- Psalm 32
- Psalm 38.9-end
- Psalm 42
- Psalm 90
- Psalm 116
- Psalm 118.4-end
- Psalm 121
- Psalm 130
- Psalm 139
- Job 19.23-27 *I know that my Redeemer lives*
- Isaiah 40:28-31 *Do you not know?*
- Isaiah 53.1-10 *The suffering servant*
- Isaiah 61.1-3 *To comfort all who mourn*
- Lamentations 3.22-26,31-33 *The love of the Lord never ceases*
- Ecclesiastes 3:1-15 *there is a time for everything*
- Daniel 12.1-3[5-9] *Everyone whose name shall be found written in the book*
- Matthew 25.31-end *The final judgement*
- Mark 10.13-16 *Let the little children come to me*
- Mark 15.33-39; 16.1-6 *He has risen, he is not here*
- Luke 12.35-40 *The coming of the Son of Man*
- Luke 24.1-9[10-11] *The Resurrection*
- John 5.[19-20]21-29 *Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life*
- John 6.35-40[53-58] *All that the Father gives me will come to me*
- John 11.17-27 *I am the resurrection and the life*
- John 14.1-6 *In my Father's house are many rooms*
- John 19.38-end *The burial of Christ*
- John 20.1-11 *The Resurrection of Christ*
- Romans 6.3-8[9-11] *All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death*
- Romans 8.18-25[26-30] *The future glory*
- Romans 8.31-end *Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ*
- Romans 14.7-12 *Christ the Lord of the living and the dead*
- 1 Corinthians 15.1-26,35-38,42-44a,53-end *The resurrection of the dead*
- 1 Corinthians 15.20-end *The resurrection of the dead*
- 2 Corinthians 4.7-15 *We carry in our mortal bodies the death of Jesus*
- 2 Corinthians 4.16 - 5.10 *The heavenly body*
- Ephesians 3.14-19[20-21] *The power to understand Christ's love*
- Philippians 3.10-end *God's purposes for us*
- 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18 *So we shall always be with the Lord*
- 2 Timothy 2.8-13 *If we have died with him, we shall also live with him*
- 1 Peter 1.3-9 *We have been born anew to a living hope*

- 1 John 3.1-3 *We shall be like him*
- Revelation 7.9-end *The crowd worshipping in heaven*
- Revelation 21.1-7 *Behold I make all things new*
- Revelation 21.22-end; 22.3b-5 *The Lord God will be their light*

## Basic Outline

The following is a basic outline of the service. It will be adapted to fit the circumstances of each service.

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|--|--|
| 1. Prelude   | 10. Sermon                                   |
| 2. Family entrance                                   | 11. Prayers of the Church                    |
| 3. Pastoral greeting and introduction of the service | 12. The Lord's Prayer                        |
| 4. Congregational Hymn                               | 13. Congregational Hymn                      |
| 5. Congregational Prayer                             | 14. Prayers of Commendation and Thanksgiving |
| 6. Scripture Readings                                | 15. Congregational Hymn                      |
| 7. Psalm   | 16. Dismissal and Blessing                   |
| 8. Special Music                                     | 17. Family recessional                       |
| 9. Scripture Readings                                | 18. Postlude                                 |

## Fees

There are no fees for funerals or memorials held at Avondale UMC. Some families will wish to give a gift of appreciation (called an honorarium) to the church, the pastor, and/or the organist. These are not expected and are solely at the discretion of the family.

If outside musicians or vocalists are invited, the family will be responsible for compensating those participants. Our pastor can suggest honoraria for these individuals, which is only a guideline.

## Memorabilia

Frequently, family members set up a memory table in the entry area with photos, albums, awards or certificates of achievement, hobby examples, or other personal items relating to their loved one. We have tables and tablecloths that can be used for these displays. Given the layout of our sanctuary, there is generally not room for these displays in the sanctuary.

## Funeral Home Responsibilities

There are many reputable and reliable funeral homes in the Birmingham area. They are accustomed to working with our pastor and staff to provide for fitting service for your loved one. We encourage you to review the websites of area providers and speak with a funeral director about their services before selecting one. Our church staff cannot

recommend a specific funeral service provider, but will be happy to answer specific questions you may have about our experiences with a provider you are considering.

These are a few of the things you should rely on the funeral home to provide or give guidance:

- Options for the disposition of your loved one's remains, including casket or urn choice, cemetery choice, plot, or niche
- Flowers
- Transportation of flowers to/from church, funeral home, and cemetery.
- Processional to cemetery
- Visitation, if held at the funeral home
- Obituary in the local newspaper
- Guestbook

## Memorial Gifts

Memorial gifts provide a meaningful way for individuals, families and groups to witness their thanksgiving for the life of a loved one and are often requested in lieu of flowers as expressions of love and appreciation of a person's life. To give a gift in another's memory is a faithful expression of respect and love that goes beyond death. Gifts to the Memorial Fund enable our church to provide special items or ministries that benefit our church which are not provided for in the regular budget. Many families include a notice in the obituary or in the funeral bulletin asking that gifts be given to the church in lieu of flowers.

If you would like to consider funding a special project in memory of your loved one and/or asking others to do so, please contact the pastor. The trustees maintain a list of needs in the church which are not funded in the church budget and which would be very suitable as a memorial gift.