

FUNERALS

(Pastoral Care and Services of Death and Resurrection)

Introduction

Christians recognize the inevitability of death, and the Christian gospel powerfully addresses the reality and experience of death. Christians are expected to affirm their confidence in Christ's victory over death and the grave and to proclaim that death cannot separate human beings from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. Such is the faith by which Christians live and in which Christians die.

The belief of Christians in the resurrection from the dead is not a belief, which denies the reality of death or suggests that persons have within them some form of immortality. Rather, it is a belief that God's love and power are greater than the power of death, so that though we die and cease to exist, we are given new life, a new existence in God's eternity. All this, Christians affirm because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead on the first day of the week.

The Christian community has special responsibilities toward persons who are dying and toward those who are bereaved. Persons who are confronted with imminent death should not be isolated from the Christian community nor should members of the community try to convince them that they are not dying. Instead they should be supported with love, and affirmed as persons loved and forgiven by God.

The pastors at Batavia UMC realize that the funeral is a cultural event as well as a religious event. Consequently every effort is made to be sensitive to the customs regarding death and burial of the dead which are characteristic of each particular community and honor those customs whenever possible. The Batavia UMC pastoral staff will work creatively with funeral directors to ensure that there is adequate understanding of the funeral with respect to our own church theological understanding and practice.

POLICY

Even for Christians, the death of a loved one is a difficult experience. We grieve the loss of one who has been close, but we do not sorrow as those who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4: 13). It is our desire and privilege to minister to the families of our congregation in their time of need. It is particularly through the private and public ministry of the Word of God that we have hope at the time of the death of a loved one (Romans 15: 4). This policy is provided to assist our families in planning and providing a Christian funeral.

Christian households affiliated with Batavia United Methodist Church are urged to hold the Service of Death and Resurrection (Funeral/Memorial Services) in the Sanctuary of the church building. All reputable Funeral Homes and staff recognize and respect the value of sacred worship and the resources for such worship in the Sanctuary of the Church with which a grieving family is associated.

The general guidelines for funerals/memorial services are contained in the rubrics of the United Methodist Church as found in the United Methodist Hymnal and the Book of Worship. These determine areas where the policy of Batavia United Methodist Church is silent. Decisions concerning areas outside

the scope of this funeral policy and the rubrics of the United Methodist Church shall be decided at the discretion of the directing pastor. Only the liturgy and rites of the United Methodist Church as defined in the current United Methodist Hymnal and the Book of Worship may be used in the sanctuary. Fraternal rites may not be held inside the sanctuary of Batavia United Methodist Church.

The Christian funeral service is understood as a service of worship and should be approached as such. Thought should be given to the designing of the service, and it is expected that those present will participate in corporate worship. The singing of hymns, reading of scripture, preaching of gospel, confession of sin, affirmation of faith, the celebration of the Lord's Supper are all appropriate to the Christian funeral service. In designing such a service, the family should be consulted and their desires should influence the shape and design of the service. It is strongly recommended that Christian funerals be conducted at the church.

It is not necessary to have the body of the deceased present for the service for worship, which is occasioned by death. Services of worship with the body being absent are recognized as appropriate and equally meaningful as when a casket is present. Such a service may be scheduled before or after the committal service, if the body is to be interred.

The committal service should be performed with dignity and simplicity. It is to be brief, with scripture, prayer and a statement of the Christian hope. The church is encouraged to support the wishes of the family of the bereaved with respect to memorial gifts in lieu of or in addition to flowers.

Notification

Please call the church office or directly contact one of the pastors. A Pastor will endeavor to visit with you as soon as possible and be ready to comfort and assist you in any way possible. In the event of terminal illness, this visit or meeting may take place ahead of the actual death. The Directing Pastor must approve all funeral arrangements at Batavia UMC. Any of our pastoral staff can work with you in helping print up obituaries to be used in the church service, choose music, and design services in a timely manner.

Place of Service

We desire to make the sanctuary available for the funeral services of our members and their families. If you desire, the service can also be conducted at the funeral home.

Procedure

Upon notification of a death the Office Manager will notify the following people

- The pastoral staff
- The chair of the Worship Team (if funeral will be in sanctuary)
- The choir director/organist

- The head usher (if funeral will be in sanctuary)
- The sound technician
- The church hostess (for tissues, heating/cooling, lighting, entrance and access)

Date and Time of Service(s)

Every effort will be made to accommodate requests, but certain appointments may be difficult to re-arrange. Sometimes the burial service may take place at a different time of day from the funeral or memorial service.

Memorial Meal

Upon request the Funeral Luncheon Committee will provide a meal for the loved ones of a Batavia church member following the funeral or the graveside service. This meal is usually served at the church. The request may be made to the Office Manager or to the Pastor who is in ministry with the grieving family. Contact information is received from the grieving family so that a member of the Funeral Luncheon Committee can contact the family to develop the meal plans (estimate of attendance, main entrée request and/or budget, any special arrangements). It is customary for the Funeral Luncheon Committee to provide the beverages, tableware, salads and desserts (donated by Church members), flowers for the tables, and the Fellowship Hall setup. The family may request and cover the cost of a main entrée (usually one or more meat items or sandwiches) which the Funeral Luncheon Committee will order, secure and serve. The family is encouraged to enjoy the remaining food by distributing or taking all that is desired to their homes after the meal. Any foods still remaining are delivered to outreach facilities in the area (Lazarus House, Hessed House, etc.). The family is encouraged to make a financial donation as able to support the ongoing ministry of Memorial Meals. Checks can be made to: Batavia United Methodist Women/Memorial Meals.

Visitation

People attending funeral or memorial services desire to express their love and comfort to family members. This can be done the evening prior to the worship service and one hour before the service on the day of the funeral.

Funeral Home

It is customary to collaborate with Funeral Homes in the area for all details of funeral/memorial services. In most cases honoraria or fees for Pastors and Musicians are arranged and delivered by the Funeral Home. However, families may offer honoraria/fees directly to assisting personnel from Batavia United Methodist Church.

Recording of the Service

Funeral/Memorial services are not normally recorded. Please speak to the Office Manager if you desire a recording to see if arrangements are possible. The time and date of the service may also affect the availability of a sound technician.

Music

Only music appropriate to a worship service shall be used. The Pastor and/or Director of Music Ministries can help arrange music for a funeral/memorial service. Time and date may affect the availability of music leadership. As with weddings, a funeral is a service of Christian worship. Therefore, sacred or Christian music would be appropriate. Recorded instrumental and accompaniment music, soloists and solos, anthems, and guest musicians must have the approval of the Director of Music Ministries or the Pastor. The use of congregational hymns is encouraged and may be selected with the Pastor or Director of Music Ministries in consultation with the family during the service planning process. The funeral service from the Order of Worship found in The United Methodist Hymnal or from a printed bulletin may also be used.

Flowers and Paraments

Appropriate liturgical colors for funerals and memorial services are white, purple, and red. The cross must remain on the altar. Collection plates and the flower pedestals will be removed from the Sanctuary. It is suggested that the casket be closed prior to the beginning of the worship service. Four floral arrangements may be used. It is preferred that only fresh flowers in the altar vases be used. A pall or a spray of flowers may drape the casket.

Personal Information Forms

The church office manager should be provided with the name of the funeral home, times of visitation and worship service, place of funeral, and any other information that will enable Batavia UMC to be as helpful as possible in this difficult time.