

## **Guidelines for Funerals and Memorial Services**

### **Oakmont Baptist Church**

### **Greenville, NC**

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 (I Thessalonians 4:13). It is our desire and privilege to minister to the families of our congregation in their time of need. These guidelines are provided to assist our families in planning and providing a Christian funeral or memorial service.

The pastors welcome the opportunity to work with a family in making plans for services for their loved ones. Generally a service will take place at either the church or the funeral home. However, there may be alternative methods or locations for the conducting of services, such as a private graveside service for family members as soon after death as possible and/or a public service of worship (a memorial service) conducted at a later date, or in another location chosen by the family in consultation with the officiating pastor.

The officiating pastor will meet with the family as soon as possible following the death of the loved one to plan the worship service.

At times, non-Oakmont Baptist Church members or the local funeral home may request a pastor to conduct a funeral service. All Oakmont Baptist Church ministers, as their schedule permits and consciences dictate, have the freedom to conduct services and/or decide for whom they will conduct funeral services.

### **Dates and Time of Funerals**

Dates and time for funerals are to be arranged in consultation with the officiating pastor based upon his or her availability, the availability of the church facility, and the preferences of the deceased's family. The officiating pastor should be consulted before committing to a date and time with the funeral home. Funeral services at Oakmont Baptist Church will need to be planned around already scheduled events such as regularly scheduled worship services, weddings, conferences, etc. Decisions concerning areas outside the scope of these guidelines shall be decided at the discretion of the officiating pastor.

### **Who Will Officiate?**

Oakmont Baptist Church ministers will normally conduct all funeral services held at Oakmont Baptist Church. At the request of the family, and with approval by the Oakmont minister, an additional pastor may be invited to officiate or assist in the service. The Oakmont minister will render the invitation to the guest clergy.

## **Structure of the Funeral Service**

A funeral or memorial service is a service of worship, celebrating the deceased person's life and the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ. All parts of the service are to be consistent with the present worship practices of Oakmont Baptist Church. The officiating pastor, in consultation with the family, will design the order of worship for the funeral or memorial service, along with the graveside service of interment. Please see our recommended "A Service Template" at the end of this document.

## **Funeral Music**

Normally, the musicians of Oakmont Baptist Church, as available, will play for all funeral or memorial services in the church, as he or she is familiar with the instruments. The officiating pastor will provide guidance regarding the use of congregational hymns, songs, and other special music. The Minister of Music also is available to assist families with special music as needed. A funeral or memorial service is an occasion of Christian worship; therefore, music should be fitting for the worship experience. Generally, all music used during the funeral service, including prelude and postlude, will be of a sacred nature. The officiating pastor and/or the Minister of Music will approve any exceptions. In cases where an outside musician or soloist is desired, permission must be secured from the officiating pastor and/or Minister of Music. Such musicians should be available to practice before the service. Live music is always preferred, but other options can be considered upon approval of the officiating pastor and/or the Minister of Music.

## **Video**

The church will work with families who wish to show pictures or a video of the deceased. Church ministers are not available to create slide shows or videos. However, many funeral homes do offer that service for an additional cost. If the family wishes to create something to be shown, it should be formatted in PowerPoint or MOV files. The video must be presented to the technical team or Minister of Media and Arts minister no later than one hour before the service.

We will make every effort to provide families with a funeral or memorial service video recording, depending on the availability of media technicians. A DVD copy of the service will be provided to the family upon request. Additional copies may be purchased in the church office.

When possible, depending upon the availability of media technicians, services may be streamed live to allow those who are unable to attend in person to see the service.

## **Decorations**

Families may wish to display the deceased's remains, as well as certain mementoes or photographs of the deceased and his/her family. The following guidelines would be applicable in these situations:

- Any displays or pictures must be appropriate to a worship setting.
- No more than two easels holding pictures should be placed in the church narthex. Items may be placed on the existing table(s) in the narthex. Additional pictures and items may be displayed in another room if the family desires a reception at the church.
- No nails, tacks, staples or screws shall be put in the walls or furniture.
- All decorations must be removed within 3 hours of the conclusion of the service.
- No furniture shall be removed from the church building.
- No furniture should be moved without consent from a church minister or administrator.
- For a memorial service, one picture of the deceased person may be placed on the Communion Table, along with a container with the remains of the person who has died.

The paschal candle, which symbolizes Christ's triumph over the powers of death, and the presence of the Holy Spirit in worship will be placed to the officiating pastor's right on the lower step. Flowers should not block or be too close to the candle, which shall be lighted before the service begins.

### **Flowers**

Fresh cut flowers and plants are preferred in the sanctuary and narthex. Flowers may be left for Sunday worship services only if the flower calendar is vacant for that Sunday. Contact the church secretary for help in contacting the flower team.

### **Closed Casket**

All caskets must be closed for the funeral service. If the family requests the casket to be open prior to the service, the funeral director in consultation with the officiating pastor will coordinate the closing of the casket before the service begins.

### **Nursery**

The church does not provide any childcare for funeral or memorial services.

### **Bulletins**

The funeral home normally prepares worship bulletins distributed at the service. The officiating pastor will provide an order of worship to the funeral home for the service.

### **Family Fellowship Meal**

The church will do everything reasonably possible to accommodate a member's request for a family meal before or after a funeral service. If the deceased or family is involved in a Sunday

school class, and that class is both physically and financially capable of providing the meal, they will be in charge of feeding the family. The Bereavement Meals Team is available to answer questions and make suggestions if needed. If there is no Sunday School class, the Bereavement Meals Team will be responsible for the meal.

The lunch may be served no more than two hours prior to or following the funeral services. When the family meets with the officiating pastor, the decision should be made about the meal or reception. If the family desires a meal, they will give the officiating pastor an estimated number for the meal. By noon of the next day, families should provide a more exact number to the officiating pastor if it varies from the estimate. Generally meals can be provided for up to 50 people. Meals will be served in the Fellowship Hall of the church. If it is a small family, for example 6-10 people, and the family requests to have the meal at their home, then those serving will make every effort to accommodate them. Meals normally consist of ham and/or fried chicken, vegetables, deviled eggs, salad, and dessert. The church will pay for the meat. There is no fee charged for this meal ministry, or any cost for preparation and serving; however, free will donations are accepted. Members of the church provide this service as a ministry in the spirit of Christian love.

Non-members may utilize the Fellowship Hall for a meal, but are responsible for providing the meal. Cost for using the fellowship hall for a meal would be calculated per the regular Facilities Use schedule of fees. Non-members who regularly attend Oakmont Baptist Church and participate in the church's ministries and programs may be treated as members for the purpose of this policy at the officiating pastor's discretion.

## **Receptions**

If the family requests a reception instead of a family meal, it will be held immediately following the service at the church. Sunday School classes of the deceased will provide light refreshments. If there is not a Sunday School class to assist, the Bereavement Meal Team will be enlisted to set up and host the reception. The set menu for refreshments includes cookies or bars or mini-cupcakes, nuts, cheese, and tea and water. The family will provide any other specialty food items.

Receptions may be held in the multi-purpose room or fellowship hall. Chairs will be set up around the perimeter of the room. Generally there will not be tables set up around which people might sit.

The church and its classes and members will not serve both a meal and host a reception.

## **Memorials**

The family may designate memorial gifts to be given to Oakmont Baptist Church. Such gifts will go into the Oakmont Memorial Fund unless designated to a particular ministry of the church. The church will not manage, receive, or distribute funds for an outside institution.

## Services Offered by Fraternal Organization, Lodges, Etc.

Services offered by fraternal orders, lodges, or other organizations are not generally held at the church. If the family requests such a service, it should be held at the funeral home or the graveside. It must be coordinated with the officiating pastor prior to the day of the service. The pastors are pleased to work with the funeral home in the flag service for veterans at the graveside. The funeral home director can help in making those arrangements with the proper branch of the military.

## Fees

If the deceased or a member of their immediate family (spouse, parents, children, siblings) is a member or regular attender of Oakmont Baptist Church, there is no fee for the use of the facilities. If a non-member requests the use of the church for a funeral, fees will be calculated per the regular Facilities Use Schedule of Fees.

The pastors of Oakmont Baptist Church believe that funerals are a part of their pastoral call to ministry. They count it both a great responsibility and a great privilege to be with families in their moment of need, offering through their words, work, and witness, the life and love of Jesus Christ. Thus, there is no fee charged by the pastoral staff.

**However, families often want to honor the officiating pastor(s) and others who assist in funerals with an honorarium. As many families are uncertain about an appropriate amount and often contact the church office to ask what is customary, the following ranges are suggested as general guidelines for those wishing to provide an honorarium. The ranges should not be interpreted as a fee-for-service arrangement, and are only provided as suggestions to what may be customary if one wishes to give an honorarium.**

- Officiating Pastor     \$150-\$250     Depending on the extent to which the pastor is involved in the planning, preparation, and participation in the service.
- Additional Pastors     \$75-\$100     Depending on the extent to which the pastor is involved in the planning, preparation, and participation in the service.
- Musicians                 \$50-\$100
- Technicians               \$50-\$100

Honoraria may be handled through the funeral home or given directly to the individual(s).

## Questions to Consider

1. Do you want a brief service (approximately 30 minutes) or something longer?
2. Who will officiate the funeral or memorial service for you or a loved one? How many ministers do you want to participate? Are there other speakers you wish to include?
3. Do you want hymns and music sung or played, or both? Do you have favorite hymns or other music? Is the music appropriate for the occasion, and is it something easily sung by the congregation?
4. Do you have any favorite Old and New Testament scripture you would like read?
5. Are there other acts of worship that would be meaningful to you and your family?
6. If you were asked to speak at your loved one's service, what stories or memories would you choose to share?
7. Where do you wish to have the funeral or memorial service? Will you hold the service at the church, funeral home, a graveside service, Oakmont Prayer Garden, or some other location?
8. Will you elect burial, cremation, or donation to science (which may determine whether it is a funeral or memorial service)?
9. If desired, when will you greet friends and at what location? At the church or funeral home? On the night prior to the service, or prior to or immediately following the service? If at the church, would you like to stand in the Gallery area or in another room?
10. Do you prefer a morning or afternoon service?
11. Would you welcome the church providing your family a meal prior to or following the service?
12. What is your preference for flowers?
13. What is your preference for memorial gifts in memory to the deceased person?
14. If you are electing only a memorial service, do you prefer that the funeral home provide assistance or that the officiating pastor coordinate the details?
15. If needed, what persons would you like to ask to serve as pallbearers?
16. Who will write the obituary? What information do you need to begin collecting now?
17. What about any small children? What are you telling them about your loved one's death?

Will you bring them to the visitation or funeral or memorial service?

18. Do you want a worship bulletin with a printed order of worship and other information about your loved one?

19. If you desire to make any additional changes to the service following your meeting with the officiating minister, have you discussed those changes with that minister prior to making that decision?

20. How will the family move into the place of worship to begin the service?

21. Other questions or issues that arise in your mind?

### ***A Service Template***

Call To Worship

Invocation and Lord's Prayer

\*Hymn of Praise No.

Old Testament Lesson

Special Music

New Testament Lesson

Meditation

Closing Prayer

\*Hymn of Affirmation No.

\*Benediction

\* *The congregation will stand as able.*

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