



**MARYLAND**  
presbyterian church

# Planning A Service of Witness to the Resurrection

A guide for members and friends of Maryland Presbyterian Church  
Revised March 2023

*“The resurrection is a central doctrine of the Christian faith and shapes Christians’ attitudes and responses to the event of death. Death brings loss, sorrow and grief to all. In the face of death, Christians affirm with tears and joy the hope of the Gospel. Christians do not bear bereavement in isolation, but are sustained by the power of the Spirit and the community of faith. The church offers a ministry of love and hope to all who grieve” (Directory for Worship).*

This booklet is offered to friends and members of Maryland Presbyterian Church as an affirmation of faith in the resurrection to eternal life and as an encouragement to individuals and families to plan carefully for their own deaths and the deaths of family members and loved ones.

### **When Death Occurs**

The church office should be notified of the death of a church member. Our pastors, through early involvement with loved ones, can offer help in difficult transition decisions regarding funeral home selection, disposition of the body and arrangements for the Service of Witness to the Resurrection.

Church office: (410) 825-0719

Church email: [mpc@mpchurch.org](mailto:mpc@mpchurch.org)

### **Where and When the Services Are Held**

The church building itself is an appropriate place for a Christian Service of Witness to the Resurrection. In the Sanctuary or Chapel we are surrounded by symbols of the faith, which remind us of the promise of resurrection and of the “great cloud of witnesses” who have “kept the faith and finished the race” and now have inherited the “crown of glory.”

If a funeral home is chosen as the place for the service, such arrangements must be made with the funeral home director.

The pastors wish to be sensitive to the needs and desires of family members. It may be necessary to take into consideration travel schedules for family members, availability of the pastors and church musicians, and previously scheduled events on the church calendar.

### **Disposition of the Body**

Burial, cremation, or donation of the body for medical purposes are all appropriate options within the Christian tradition. A casket or urn need not be present at the Service of Witness to the Resurrection. The body or ashes may be interred prior to the service or following the service. If the body has been donated for medical purposes, a service may be held at the time of death. Later, when the cremains are available, an inurnment can be scheduled.

Maryland Presbyterian Church has a Memorial Garden, located behind the church looking out at the woods, which is available for the disposition of ashes. Information about the Memorial Garden is available from the church office.

## **The Service of Witness to the Resurrection**

*“The service, which should be conducted with dignity and with simplicity, is a witness to God’s love given to all people, a love which strengthens and supports, even in the midst of grief. It is a witness to God’s promises in Jesus Christ as attested by Christ’s resurrection from the dead and to the sure and certain hope that Christ has gone to prepare a place for the children of God” (Directory for Worship).*

The funeral/memorial service is called a Service of Witness to the Resurrection because it is a liturgical service of worship to remember God’s promises of new life and to console the living. The service is a standard service for the Lord’s Day (regular worship service). It is, therefore, appropriate that it include all or many of the following elements:

### *Scripture Readings*

The scriptures are a rich resource for the funeral service. After consultation with the pastor, passages which have special meaning to the family or which were special to the deceased may be chosen.

### *Music*

The church musician may be available for the service, and will be glad to consult with the family. Instrumentalists may also be employed and can be contacted by the church musician. The family is expected to cover the cost of any musicians.

### *Homily*

If the family so chooses, the pastor will give a brief homily offering words of thanksgiving for the particular gifts of the deceased.

Below is the suggested order of service. The church provides a service bulletin.

Prelude

Scriptural Call to Worship

Hymn

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture and Other Readings

Homily

Reflection by Friends and Family

Hymn

Prayer and Commendation

Hymn

Benediction

## SCRIPTURE SUGGESTIONS

### HEBREW BIBLE

Job 19:23–27

Isa. 25:6–9

Isa. 26:1–4, 19

Isa. 40:1–11, 28–31

Isa. 40:28–31

Isa. 43:1–3a, 18–19, 25

Isa. 44:6–8

Isa. 55:1–3, 6–13

Isa. 61:1–4, 10–11

Isa. 65:17–25

Lam. 3:19–26, 31b–32

Dan. 12:1–3

Joel 2:12–13, 23–24, 26–29

I know that my redeemer lives

God will swallow up death forever

God will keep them in peace

Comfort my people

The Lord shall renew their strength

When you pass through the waters, I will

be with you I am the first and the last

Ho, everyone who thirsts

The spirit of the Lord is upon me

New heavens and a new earth

The Lord's steadfast love

Many of those who sleep in dust awake

Return to the Lord with all your heart

### PSALMS

Ps. 16:5–11

Ps. 23

Ps. 27:1, 4–9a, 13–14

Ps. 39: 4–5, 12

Ps. 42:1–6a

Ps. 43

Ps. 46:1–5, 10–11

Ps. 90:1–10, 12

Ps. 91

Ps. 103

Ps. 106:1–5

Ps. 116:1–9, 15

Ps. 118

Ps. 121

Ps. 130

Ps. 139:1–12

Ps. 145

Ps. 146

The Lord is my chosen portion

The Lord is my shepherd

The Lord is my light and my salvation

Lord, let me know my end

As a deer longs for flowing streams

Give judgment for me, O God

A very present help in trouble

Teach us to number our days

Dwells in the shelter of the Most High

Bless the Lord, O my soul

O give thanks to the Lord

The Lord has heard my voice

Open the gates of righteousness

I lift up my eyes to the hills

Out of the depths I cry to the Lord

Where shall I go from your spirit?

I will extol you, O God my King

Hallelujah! praise the Lord, O my soul

## EPISTLES

Rom. 5:1–11

Rom. 6:3–9

Rom. 8:14–23, 31–39

Rom. 14:7–9, 10b–12

1 Cor. 15:3–8, 12–20a

1 Cor. 15:20–24a

1 Cor. 15:20–26, 35–38, 42–44, 50, 53–58

1 Cor. 15:35–44

1 Cor. 15:50–57

2 Cor. 4:16–5:1

2 Cor. 5:1–10

Eph. 1:11–2:1,4–10

Phil. 3:7–11

Phil. 3:20–21

Col. 3:1–17

1 Thess. 4:13–18

2 Tim. 2:8–13

Heb. 11:1–3, 13–16; 12:1–2

1 Peter 1:3–9

1 Peter 3:18–22; 4:6

1 John 3:1–3

Rev. 7:2–3, 9–17

Rev. 14:1–3, 6–7, 12–13

Rev. 21:1–4, 22–25; 22:3–5

Rev. 22:1–5

## GOSPELS

Matt. 5:1–12a

Matt. 11:25–30

Matt. 25:1–13

Matt. 25:31–46

Luke 7:11–17

Luke 18:15–17

Luke 23:33, 39–43

John 3:16–21

John 5:24–29

John 6:37–40

John 6:47–58

John 11:17–27

John 11:38–44

John 14:1–6, 25–27

Hope does not disappoint

Baptized into Christ's death, raised to live with him

Nothing can separate us from the love of God

Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's

Christ raised from the dead

In Christ shall all be made alive

Death is swallowed in victory

The natural body and the spiritual body

We shall all be changed

Visible things are temporary, invisible things eternal

A house not made with hands

Saved by grace through faith

The power of resurrection

Our citizenship is in heaven

Set your minds on the things above

The comfort of Christ's coming

If we died with him, we will live with him

Faith, the pilgrimage, cloud of witnesses

Without seeing Christ, you love him

Christ's ministry to the spirits in prison

We are children of God

They who have come out of great tribulation

Rest for the saints

A new heaven and a new earth

The Lord God will be their light

The Beatitudes

Hidden from the wise, revealed to infants

Wise and foolish bridesmaids

The Last Judgment

Jesus raises the son of the widow of Nain

We enter the kingdom only as children

Today you will be with me in Paradise

God so loved the world

Whoever hears and believes has eternal life

Who comes to me I will never drive away

Whoever believes in me has eternal life

I am the resurrection and the life

Lazarus raised from the dead

Let not your hearts be troubled

At the loss of a child:

Matt. 18:1–5, 10

Mark 10:13–16

Zech. 8:1–8

Isa. 65:17–25

The greatest in the kingdom of heaven

Let the children come to me

Children playing in the streets of the city

I create new heavens and a new earth

## **HYMN SUGGESTIONS**

*All hymn suggestions are from the Glory to God hymnal.*

275, A Mighty Fortress is Our God

836, Abide with Me

649, Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound

450, Be Thou My Vision

8, Eternal Father, Strong to Save

326, For All the Saints

787, God Weeps with Us Who Weep and Mourn

65, Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

488, I Was There to Hear Your Morning Cry

611, Joyful Joyful We Adore Thee

366, Love Dive, All Loves Excelling

829, My Faith Looks Up to Thee

803, My Shepherd Will Supply My Need

643, Now Thank We All Our God

687, Our God, Our Help in Ages Past

834, Precious Lord, Take My Hand

375, Shall We Gather at the River

824, There is a Place of Quiet Rest

378, We Wait the Peaceful Kingdom

817, We Walk by Faith and Not By Sight

## **PLANNING AHEAD**

We encourage everyone to participate in personal funeral planning as much as possible. Not only is this information likely to be of great help to the ministers and to families, but also it allows members the opportunity of making crucial decisions about funeral plans prior to the crisis of a death.

Such pre-planning can relieve the burden of family members at the time of the death of a loved one. Pre-planning can also afford members the option of leaving clear instructions for family members regarding one's own preferences of scriptures, hymns, organ music, disposition of the body, etc.

A planning form is included here for your convenience. After completing the form, two copies should be kept: one for your personal files and one for the church's files in the pastor's office.

## PRE-PLANNING A SERVICE OF WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION

*Please keep the original of this form in a safe place (but not in your safety-deposit box). Return a copy to the church to be stored in a fire-proofed safe. The instructions contained on these sheets are not legally binding, and may be altered at your request. Please notify the church if you make any changes.*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

BIRTHDATE \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE OF PERSON PROVIDING INFORMATION

\_\_\_\_\_

DATE THE FORM IS COMPLETED \_\_\_\_\_

- I. If there are any questions about the service, please contact these trusted family or friends.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

- II. Disposition of the Body.

\_\_\_\_ Burial \_\_\_\_ Cremation \_\_\_\_ Donation \_\_\_\_ Other

- III. Resting Place:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- IV. Wishes Regarding the Service.

A. Have you planned your own funeral or memorial service? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No  
*If yes, please attach a copy to this form, indicate where it might be found, and note the funeral home you have chosen. If you want obituary information filed at church, please attach a copy.*

B. I would like a pastor to have a visitation with my family and/or close friends.  
\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

C. I would like a (check all that apply).  
 Funeral (body is present)  Graveside Service  
 Memorial Service (body is not present)

D. I would like to have the service at (check all that apply):  
 Maryland Presbyterian Church Sanctuary  
 Maryland Presbyterian Church Memorial Garden  
 Home  
 Funeral Home  
 Another Church  
 Graveside Service

E. Music Requests  
1. Prelude \_\_\_\_\_  
2. Postlude \_\_\_\_\_  
3. Hymns \_\_\_\_\_  
4. Other \_\_\_\_\_

F. Scripture and Other Reading Requests  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

G. Wishes Regarding Pallbearers  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

H. Wishes Regarding Flowers  
 Place on Grave  
 Give to Shut-ins  
 Memorial Contributions instead of flowers.

I. Wishes Regarding Memorial Contributions  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_