A Guide to Funerals and Memorial Services at First United Methodist Church
San Marcos, Texas

Whether death comes as a sudden, unexpected shock, or following an extended illness, we are never completely prepared. You are not alone. God, who loves you more than you can imagine, who knows your grief intimately, who has made Himself known to us in Jesus Christ, to share our griefs, our suffering, even our death, so that we might share in His Resurrection and be one with Him, is with you – whether or not you feel His presence. This is God’s promise to you and your loved ones.

This guide is meant to help families, friends, and others coping with the decisions and demands created by a death. It will not answer every possible question, but it may answer most common questions. If you have a particular question which is not addressed here, please bring it to one of our pastors or other staff members. Above all, we are praying for you, and for the one dear to you who has died.

Does the Bible have any word of consolation for me in this time?
There are many passages in scripture that have been used by Christians for comfort and encouragement in times of grief. Here are some of the most frequently used:

- The Book of Psalms: 23; 42; 43; 46; 90; 91; 103; 116; 121; 130; 139; 145; 146;
- John 11: 1-44; John 12: 24-26; John 14: 1-7; John 14: 15-29
- Ephesians 1: 15-23; Ephesians 2: 1-10; 1 Peter 1: 3-9; 1 Peter 5:7; Revelation 7: 9-17; Revelation 21: 1-7

What do I say when people call or visit?
Thank them for their kindness. Don’t be reluctant to talk with them about the one who has died, and about your memories of that very special life. Try to keep in mind that very often people may not know just what to say, and sometimes they may say exactly the wrong thing – but they are almost always trying to express their care for you. Hopefully, God will be using their words and actions to bring you comfort and strength; listen for His Grace given through them to you.

Whom do I call?
During business hours please call the church office (512) 392-6001 and ask to speak to one of our pastors. After business hours or on weekends please contact one of our clergy at the following numbers:
- Rev. Jarrell V. Sharp – (361) 652-9481 (cell)
- Rev. Russell Bowlin – (214) 564-1603 (cell)

If the pastor is unable to answer, please be sure to leave a message, including a phone number where you can be reached. Your message is very important to us, and we will be certain to return it as quickly as possible.

What can I expect from First United Methodist Church?
As soon as a message is received, you can expect a telephone call or personal visit from one of our pastors, offering the services of First United Methodist Church. If you choose to have the funeral at the church, the pastor will guide you through the funeral process. He or she will:

- offer the consolation of our Christian faith
- help you complete the Funeral or Memorial Worksheet
- provide a printed Order of Service for the funeral, based on the choices made with the worksheet.

Does the church recommend a specific funeral home?
No, you are free to choose the company that best suits your needs; it is our desire to best serve your family as an extension of God’s love during this time of grief. Funeral homes often provide critical support in arranging with a local cemetery or cremation, helping notify family and friends, managing flowers and photos, welcoming guest during the funeral, and much more. Our primary focus is on pastoral care and conducting the funeral or memorial service.
Funeral / Memorial Service Planning

The funeral or memorial service will be planned from the Order of Worship found in The United Methodist Hymnal, pages 870-875. We have provided a basic outline in the worksheet section of this document.

Whose funeral or memorial service can be held at First UMC?
We serve the community of San Marcos and this area. As a general rule, the church is available to all. Funerals and memorial services of members must necessarily take precedence over those of non-members, but once a service is scheduled, it becomes the top priority of our church family.

What is the difference between a funeral and a memorial service?
Broadly speaking, a funeral is a service with the body of the deceased present. A memorial service is held with either the cremated ashes placed on a stand or table, or no physical remains present. For Christians, both the funeral and the memorial service are focused on our worship and praise of God, who gives us life, who acts in Christian Baptism to join us to the Son Jesus Christ, who strengthens us by the Holy Spirit, and who has reconciled us to Himself by the death, resurrection, and ascension of our Savior Jesus Christ.

When can a funeral or a memorial service be held at First UMC?
At any time during weekday business hours, or on Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. until 3:30 p.m., as long as an event in the sanctuary has not been previously scheduled. Please don’t assume that the space is available until checking with the church office. We do not schedule funerals or memorial services on Sundays, or on the following days during the church year: Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year’s Eve, New Year’s Day, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Ascension Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day, and All Saints’ Day.

What music is appropriate for funerals and memorial services?
Music appropriate for Christian worship shall be used in the sanctuary, including the family’s entrance and exit. Favorite dance tunes, school/university fight songs, etc. are best reserved for the visitation or reception. We encourage congregational hymns/worship songs – these may be selected with the pastor or music director during the service planning process. Some beloved hymns include:

- Amazing Grace
- How Great Thou Art
- Hymn of Promise
- It Is Well With My Soul
- A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
- Because He Lives
- For All the Saints
- Surely the Presence of the Lord Is In This Place
- He Leadeth Me

Can someone other than the clergy of First UMC be involved in a funeral or memorial service here?
Yes, though one of the pastors of First UMC will lead all funerals or memorial services held here, except in rare cases of absence or illness. In such exceptional cases, another United Methodist pastor from the area may be asked by our clergy to officiate in his or her place. Other clergy, at the discretion of our pastors, may be invited to take part in the funeral or memorial service, including the sermon. Family members and friends may be invited to share memories of the deceased during the service, as long as this is planned in consultation with the pastor. We strongly encourage families to invite no more than three persons, each speaking for a maximum of 5 minutes, so that the service will not be burdensomely long. The family should instruct the speakers to write out their witness and time it beforehand.

Who is responsible for the obituary?
The family of the one who has died is responsible for the obituary. The funeral home will assist in its publication and we request a copy be provided to the church office.

What flowers and decorations are appropriate?
Appropriate cloths for funerals/memorial services will be placed on the communion table and pulpit by Worship Committee members. All seasonal items that may be in the chancel area will remain. Floral arrangements and photos may be used. Flowers may not be placed on the communion table itself, but may be placed in front of it and to either or both sides of it, as well as on the chancel rail and on the floor around the casket, if present. A pall, a spray of flowers, or an American flag (when appropriate) may cover the casket. In accordance with the directions...
in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, the casket will be closed before the beginning of the service and not re-opened afterwards.

**Can Holy Communion be included in the service?**
If the family desires to include the sacrament of Holy Communion, please make arrangements for this with the pastor. As United Methodists, we believe that all are welcome at the Lord’s Table, therefore everyone present will be offered the opportunity to receive the sacrament. “All are welcome; no one must.” The sacrament will ordinarily be served by intinction – receiving the consecrated Body of Christ, then dipping it in the Cup containing the Blood of Christ before consuming it.

**Will the church provide musicians?**
First UMC's organist/pianist and sound/video technicians will make every effort to be available for the funeral or memorial service. Additional vocal solos, and in some cases, the choir can also be included in funeral services. Musicians and service participants must be engaged through the church office by the family and at the family’s expense. Payment of musicians and other service participants is the responsibility of the family and is in addition to the funeral home fees; payment in advance is requested. (Please, see the list of fees below.) If assistance is needed in identifying and/or contracting suitable persons for the service, the Director of Music is available to the family for recommendations; the music ministry, like all of First UMC, is committed to helping you in any way possible during this difficult time.

**Can we play a video or display photos set to music on a projector?**
Videos or still photo sequences may be shown before the seating of the family, or at the reception; you may bring these on a Flash drive or CD-ROM to the church office. Please make sure that any slide show is in PowerPoint format and that all movies are in a .MOV or MP4 format. We ask that all musical tracks provided be saved in MP3 format. First UMC will require this presentation 48 hours prior to the services so that we can verify there are no problems with the files provided. All technical questions can be directed to our Communications Leader, Justin Stephens, via phone (512) 623-0847 or email ijustinstephens@gmail.com.

**What rooms are available for funerals or memorial services?**
Funerals and memorial services can be held in the sanctuary, which seats approximately 400, or the Fellowship Hall, which seats around 200. There is a small prayer chapel, seating approximately 25, which may be used for memorial services only due to lack of space for a coffin. Todd Hall or the Fellowship Hall is used for receptions or meals after the service; Todd Hall can accommodate up to 40 people, and the Fellowship Hall can accommodate up to 250 people.

**Can we have a reception or meal before or after the service?**
Yes. The church will provide a cookie and punch reception or a light sandwich lunch during the week for church members at no charge. Todd Hall, or the Fellowship Hall, or other rooms as the building schedule allows can be used. Often Sunday School classes or other church groups will provide food or refreshments. If you wish to use your own caterer, you will still need to coordinate all food service through our Church Secretary.

**What are the costs?**

**Church Members**
As a church member who helps sustain the ongoing ministries of First UMC, there are no costs related to clergy, staff musicians, staff audio/visual technicians, and building use for a funeral / memorial service.

**Non-members**
First UMC opens its church as a community service and asks non-members to help defray expenses through the following fees:

- Sanctuary - $200
- Todd Hall - $100
- Fellowship Hall - $200
- Lowman Chapel - $100

A $75 administrative fee for producing the funeral/memorial service bulletins will be charged to non-members. Non-members are asked to provide an honorarium to the officiating pastor of $400.00.
Honoraria for other staff are requested for all funerals and memorial services:

- Organist/pianist - $250
- Vocalist/instrumentalist – varies
- Audio/video tech - $75.00
- Custodian (if necessary) - $75 per bldg.

Please make out checks for honoraria to the individuals, and not to the church. All fees for expenses and honoraria are due to the church office before the service begins.

CHECKLIST FOR FUNERAL AND MEMORIAL SERVICE PREPARATIONS

_____ The pastor is notified.

_____ The church office is notified.

_____ The service is scheduled through the church office, if it is to be held at the church.

_____ The family plans the service with the pastor.

_____ All fees and honoraria are delivered to the church office.
FUNERAL OR MEMORIAL SERVICE WORKSHEET

This form is to help you think through some of the possibilities available to you as you plan a funeral or memorial service. In times of grief and stress, a basic guide or outline can be very helpful, and we hope that this worksheet can provide some assistance to you and your family. It is designed to help you make the service personally meaningful to you and your family and friends, while clearly proclaiming our Christian faith. If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to bring those up with the pastor.

Basic outline of “A Service of Death and Resurrection”, The United Methodist Hymnal, p. 870-875

The Placement of the Pall (if available)
The Greeting
Hymn or Song optional
Prayer
Scripture Reading
Hymn or Song optional
Eulogy and/or Words of Witness (stories from family and friends) optional
Gospel Reading
Sermon
The Creed or a Service of Holy Communion Hymn
or Song optional
Prayer
The Lord’s Prayer Hymn
or Song optional
Benediction

Name of the deceased: ________________________________
(please use the name as you wish it printed in the worship bulletin)

Date of Birth: ____________________ Date of death: ____________________

Date of Service: ________________ Time: __________ Location: ________________

Primary family planning contact: ________________ Family Relationship: ________________

☐ Funeral or ☐ Memorial Service Pastor Officiating: ________________

Funeral Home used: ________________ Contact staff person: ________________

Name of Florist (if any): ________________ Phone: ________________

What is to be done with the flowers after the service? ________________________________

Will photos, albums, keepsakes, or other items be displayed on a memorial table? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Will the table be in the ☐ sanctuary ☐ Fellowship Hall ☐ Todd Hall?

Will there be a video or still photo sequence shown ☐ before the service in the sanctuary ☐ at the reception?

Number of Bulletins to be Printed: __________

Cover selected: ☐ Cross & Flame ☐ FUMC Steeple ☐ pre-printed cover
Scriptures selected:


Music selected: □ Organ/Piano □ Vocalist: __________ □ Other instrumentalist: __________

Hymns selected: ___________________________________________ Hymnal, #: ______

_________________________________________________________ Hymnal, #: ______

_________________________________________________________ Hymnal, #: ______

Family and friends to be invited to speak (limit of 3, five minutes each):

Name: ________________ Relationship: ________________

Name: ________________ Relationship: ________________

Name: ________________ Relationship: ________________

Name: ________________ Relationship: ________________

Reception: □ Yes □ No Estimated Number attending: __________

Do you wish memorial contributions in your loved one’s name to be made to the First UMC, San Marcos?

□ Yes □ No

Family Members and Relationship:

Name: ________________ Relationship: ________________

Name: ________________ Relationship: ________________

Name: ________________ Relationship: ________________

Name: ________________ Relationship: ________________

Will there be a burial service to follow the service? □ Yes □ No Time: ________________

Location: ________________________________ Name of cemetery: ________________________________

First UMC staff assisting with the funeral/memorial service:

Pastor: ________________

Organist/pianist: ________________ Audio/Visual Tech: ________________

Other: ________________