

Covid-19 Pandemic Funeral and Memorial Policy for First Presbyterian Church, Ann Arbor, Michigan

April 2020

Gathering to mourn for someone who has died, celebrate their life, and proclaim the hope of Resurrection are essential practices of the Christian faith.

During the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID19 outbreak, our usual grieving rituals have been interrupted. We are unable bring our church community together as we would wish to honor, grieve, and celebrate the lives of our members and friends who lived faithfully. We cannot join our voices together to sing the hymns and songs that bring us comfort. We cannot gather in person as a group to find comfort in the presence of one another. We cannot hug and hold one another as we entrust our loved ones to God's eternal care. We're waiting to feel the hope of resurrection.

In times of trial like the death of a loved one, we turn to the familiar practices and rituals of our faith and ancestors. And so we know that this disruption for a grieving community is doubly hard. We grieve this disruption with you.

During the COVID19 outbreak, on March 10, 2020 Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer declared a State of Emergency. She later ordered all Michiganders, in Executive Order 2020-21 to "stay home and stay safe." The Centers for Disease Control has recommended no gatherings larger than 10 people. We are all, unless we are employed in an essential service, engaged in social distancing from friends, family, work colleagues, and loved ones. It is unclear how long these guidelines will be in place.

Until the State of Emergency is lifted for Michigan, we will be limited in our funeral practices in the following ways:

Funerals, Memorial Services and Graveside Services

- a) A request may be made to hold a funeral or memorial service in the sanctuary or Monteith Hall, limited to 10 people (including the officiating pastor and organist) socially-distanced by at least 6 feet apart, with one pastor and one organist or pianist present. It if possible for this service to occur, masks should be worn by those attending. If this service occurs in the sanctuary, it may be recorded on a CD

by a First Pres soundboard volunteer, (at the sound board, not counted as one of the 10) or on a hand-held digital device provided by the family, at no additional cost. If the family would like to professionally video or audio record that gathering, the church will offer referrals to those in our community who may be hired for that purpose. (Those recording, if at a distance, are not counted in the 10.)

- b) Using the *zoom* online meeting platform, we are able to host a funeral or memorial service online, limited to 16 people including the pastor. That service can be recorded, and participants will be present from their homes via computer. Pre-recorded music is available to digitally insert afterwards, and then the zoom recording can be made available to the family on a link that can be distributed. (Selections are limited and are listed in the appendix.) Keeping the number relatively small will allow a reasonable service and recording with multiple people online and talking together.
- c) We are able to gather for a short service at a graveside or in the Memorial Garden limited to 10 people, including the officiating pastor, with social distancing guidelines in place. Masks should be worn by those attending. Any music included would be a cappella.

Note: We recommend graveside memorial services outdoors where possible as a preferred venue, so as to limit the possible surfaces and spaces as sources of contamination. Using phones and tablets, via FaceTime and other sources, others can be present in a virtual way. The service can be taped and distributed using a tablet or laptop computer.

Additional recommendation:

If the memorial service or funeral will be delayed and scheduled in the future, we recommend that the service be put together more immediately with the pastor — and those who will give words of remembrance and the pastor providing the words of faith be put together in written form.

Our publications staff may be able to put together a pamphlet or brochure that could be shared with family and friends as a PDF — that might contain the following: Selected scripture readings, a homily or sermon by the officiating pastor, and eulogies and tributes submitted. A select number of pictures can be included in this pamphlet, who may be distributed digitally by the family to those who desire it. All materials must be

given to the presiding pastor in final form at least one week before desired publication in order to meet the deadline for this publication.

Printed Materials

During this time of pandemic, printed bulletins and pamphlets are not possible, but a memorial service bulletin that would accompany a zoom service or graveside may be put together with at least one week's lead time.

Receptions:

We advise against families gathering. Family should limit the size of any home gathering to avoid spreading the virus and consider postponing a memorial meal to a time when the crisis is past. The logistical and safety considerations are too great.

First Presbyterian is not able to host a meal or reception following any memorial, funeral, or graveside service at this time.

While we are limited in what we are able to host at this time, we are able to plan for memorials after the pandemic has passed. We would welcome the opportunity to host a memorial service for your loved one at a later date when we can all safely gather and celebrate their life.

Appendix

Select hymns pre-recorded by our organist and soloist:

Amazing Grace

How Great Thou Art

Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee

For the Beauty of the Earth

Healer of Our Every Ill

On Eagle's Wings

Here I Am, Lord

It Is Well With My Soul

Abide with Me

Preludes/Postludes:

Prelude (pour Madame)	Gregory Hamilton
Chorale Prelude on "Eventide"	C. Hubert H. Parry
When Love Is Found	Charles Callahan
Dix	T. Tertius Noble
Cwm Rhondda	Colin Mawby
Sine nomine	David N. Johnson
Slane	Colin Mawby
Hymn to Joy	Hal H. Hopson
Amazing grace	Hal H. Hopson
St. Anne	Kevin Norris
St. Columba	Eric H. Thiman
Eventide	Colin Mawby
Amazing Grace - Prelude	Adolphus Hailstork