

Suggested Guidelines

for

CONGREGATION RESPONSE AT TIME OF DEATH Montreat Presbyterian Church USA

Following the October 2009 study of “End of Life Matters”, an ad hoc committee consisting of Sally Thomas, Gill Campbell, Jim Layman, Gordon Neville, Elizabeth Shaw, Sally Richardson, Judy Shuford and Jack Sadler met to consider an action plan for ministering at the time of death of a resident member of our congregation. The following recommendations represent the synergy of that discussion.

- A. That member families be encouraged from time to time to file with MPCUSA a copy of their “Funeral/Memorial Service Pre-Planning” from the study book, **MATTERS OF LIFE AND DEATH**. Files are confidential and are to be used only by the Pastor (Clerk of Session) at times of death. Said files are to be accessible at all times.
- B. The “point person” to be notified at times of death will be the Pastor (Stated Supply), with the back-up being the Clerk of Session. This person notifies designated persons who respond on behalf of the Church. It is suggested that a list of Pastors who have training and/or are comfortable ministering in grief situations be compiled as a resource to add Pastor,
- C. The Pastor or designated on-call Pastor responds immediately with family of deceased.
- D. That the Pastor (or designated on-call Pastor) provide information for the family of the deceased related to Funeral/cremation services available in the area.
- E. The Fellowship and Congregation Care Committee responds on behalf of the Church by providing the following services **as needed**.
 - Designate a “hostess” at the home of the deceased to be a “presence” and to assist with visitors, etc. until family members arrive, and thereafter as needed.
 - Organize food for family – records who brings what, dishes to be returned, etc.
 - Arrange necessary housing and transportation for out of town guests.
 - Arrange/assist family with reception following the Memorial Service, including the “place” of reception: home, Assembly Inn, Upper Anderson, Walkup Building, local church fellowship hall, other.
 - Provide list of catering services for family.
 - Provide assistance during and following the reception and during meals and arrivals of family members at the home.

F. The Worship Committee assists the family on behalf of the Church (**as needed**) by

- Providing a list of places in which a Memorial Service may be held – availability of each location, contact person for reservations, etc.
 - Walkup Building
 - Upper Anderson
 - Convocation Hall
 - Gaither Chapel
 - Chapel of the Prodigal
 - PCUSA Churches
 - Black Mountain
 - Swannanoa
 - Warren Wilson
 - Highland Farms
 - Memorial Garden (Montreat – weather sensitive)
 - Other
- Providing a bulletin, as needed – Family’s Pastor provides content
- Preparing site for Memorial Service when other than a church sanctuary will be used. (Elements of Reformed worship are: Bible (pulpit), Communion Table and Baptismal Font. If a Montreat facility is used, the Church’s Cross will be appropriate to display). Arrange seating and provide hymnbooks
- Providing transportation and parking assistance.
- Providing ushers and pall bearers (**as needed**. When casket is used, all doors should be adequate for passage entrance).
- Providing music and musicians when as requested

G. Follow-up Pastoral Care*

- Care of families during weeks following a death.
 - Telephone calls, visits, outings, lunches, etc.
- Session presents family with appropriate book:
 - LIVING WHEN A LOVED ONE HAS DIED Grollman
 - HEALING AFTER LOSS Hickman
 - “Journeying Through Grief” Haugk
 - (Stephen Ministries’ four booklets)

*Our Planning Committee REQUESTS the Session to consider adopting an Under-Shepherd Plan for our Congregation. Such a plan would assign individual families to current Session members oversight. Each Elder will make certain she/he knows those assigned and would informally monitor their attendance, needs, fellowship, etc. Therefore, at the time of a death, the Shepherd Elder would be more intimately acquainted with members of the deceased’s family. It would also be appropriate for this Elder to assume leadership in follow-up care.