

A Celebration of Life

Planning Guide for Presbyterians



Provided by Rev. Dr. Mark E. Parsons II

Dear friend,

In life and in death, we belong to God. Those nine words are the beginning of “A Brief Statement of Faith,” a creed that affirms our faith as members of The Presbyterian Church (USA). More than that, these words sum up our Presbyterian theology in a deep and profound way. Knowing that we belong to God gives us the assurance that we are never alone. God goes with us and guides us with the Spirit to live in the way of Jesus Christ. Part of living is dying, but we don’t often talk about death in the church. This document is being provided as a tool to help you think about you own death and dying and to consider how you would like your life to be celebrated.

You are invited to read through this guide thoroughly prior to completing the planning sheets. The completed planning sheets will not only be helpful to your family and pastor at the time of your death, but it will also be helpful as you process how you wish to be remembered and celebrated. Ideally, you will put this guide with other important paperwork (i.e. medical power of attorney, will, etc.). You are also encouraged to submit a copy to me for safekeeping in the pastoral office. Because this is a deeply personal and intimate matter, making these decisions should be done prayerfully and intentionally. I am available if you wish to talk about your plans or if you have questions or concerns.

May God bless you and keep reminding you always that in life and in death, you truly belong to God!

Yours,

Pastor Mark +

Planning Form

Full Name _____

Date of Birth _____ **Place of Birth** _____

Primary family contact responsible for your service arrangements

Name _____ **Relation** _____

Phone _____ **Email** _____

Address _____

Please select Traditional Burial Cremation Other (explain below)

If body or ashes are to be buried, where? _____

Service wishes (please select) Public service Private/family only service

Service in Funeral Home Service in Church

Other service location _____

Graveside service only

Funeral Home Selection _____

Scripture Readings (usually at least two, please see suggestions on following pages)

Hymns (usually at least two, please see suggestions on following pages)

Special Music or Solo _____

Speakers Other Than Pastor _____

Flowers ___ Yes, I would like flowers. ___ No, I would not like flowers.

Memorial Contributions may be made to _____

Have you included the church in your estate planning/will? _____

Are there any stories of your life and faith that you would like shared at your service? If so, please attach additional pages as needed.

Please make any other notes pertaining to your celebration of life service here:

Scripture Readings for Your Consideration

Old Testament Scripture Readings

- Job 19:23–27 I know that my redeemer lives
- Isa. 25:6–9 God will swallow up death forever
- Isa. 26:1–4, 19 God will keep them in peace
- Isa. 40:1–11, 28–31 Comfort my people
- Isa. 40:28–31 Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength
- Isa. 43:1–3a, 18–19, 25 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you
- Isa. 44:6–8 I am the first and the last
- Isa. 55:1–3, 6–13 Ho, everyone who thirsts
- Isa. 61:1–4, 10–11 The spirit of the Lord is upon me
- Isa. 65:17–25 I create new heavens and a new earth
- Lam. 3:19–26, 31b–32 The Lord’s steadfast love
- Dan. 12:1–3 Many of those who sleep in the dust shall awake
- Joel 2:12–13, 23–24, 26–29 Return to the Lord with all your heart

Psalm Scripture Readings

- Ps. 16:5–11 The Lord is my chosen portion
- Ps. 23 The Lord is my shepherd
- Ps. 27:1, 4–9a, 13–14 The Lord is my light and my salvation
- Ps. 39: 4–5, 12 Lord, let me know my end
- Ps. 42:1–6a As a deer longs for flowing streams
- Ps. 43 Give judgment for me, O God
- Ps. 46:1–5, 10–11 A very present help in trouble
- Ps. 90:1–10, 12 Teach us to number our days
- Ps. 91 The one who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
- Ps. 103 Bless the Lord, O my soul
- Ps. 106:1–5 O give thanks to the Lord
- Ps. 116:1–9, 15 The Lord has heard my voice
- Ps. 118 Open the gates of righteousness
- Ps. 121 I lift up my eyes to the hills
- Ps. 130 Out of the depths I cry to the Lord
- Ps. 139:1–12 Where shall I go from your spirit?
- Ps. 145 I will extol you, O God my King
- Ps. 146 Hallelujah! praise the Lord, O my soul

Epistle Scripture Readings

- Rom. 5:1–11 Hope does not disappoint
- Rom. 6:3–9 Baptized into Christ's death, raised to live with him
- Rom. 8:14–23, 31–39 Nothing can separate us from the love of God
- Rom. 14:7–9, 10b–12 Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's
- 1 Cor. 15:3–8, 12–20a Christ raised from the dead
- 1 Cor. 15:20–24a In Christ shall all be made alive
- 1 Cor. 15:20–26, 35–38, 42–44, 50, 53–58 Death is swallowed in victory
- 1 Cor. 15:35–44 The natural body and the spiritual body
- 1 Cor. 15:50–57 We shall all be changed
- 2 Cor. 4:16–5:1 Visible things are temporary, invisible things eternal
- 2 Cor. 5:1–10 From God we have a house not made with hands
- Eph. 1:11–2:1, 4–10 Saved by grace through faith
- Phil. 3:7–11 Knowing him and the power of his resurrection
- Phil. 3:20–21 Our citizenship is in heaven
- Col. 3:1–17 Set your minds on the things that are above
- 1 Thess. 4:13–18 The comfort of Christ's coming
- 2 Tim. 2:8–13 If we died with him, we shall also live with him
- Heb. 2:14–18 Christ was tested in every way
- Heb. 11:1–3, 13–16; 12:1–2 Faith, the pilgrimage, the cloud of witnesses
- 1 Peter 1:3–9 Without seeing Christ, you love him
- 1 Peter 3:18–22; 4:6 Christ's ministry to the spirits in prison
- 1 John 3:1–3 We are children of God
- Rev. 7:2–3, 9–17 These have come out of the great tribulation
- Rev. 14:1–3, 6–7, 12–13 Rest for the saints
- Rev. 21:1–4, 22–25; 22:3–5 A new heaven and a new earth
- Rev. 22:1–5 The Lord God will be their light

Gospel Scripture Readings

- Matt. 5:1–12a The Beatitudes
- Matt. 11:25–30 Hidden from the wise, revealed to infants
- Matt. 25:1–13 Wise and foolish bridesmaids
- Matt. 25:31–46 The Last Judgment
- Luke 7:11–17 Jesus raises the son of the widow of Nain
- Luke 18:15–17 We enter the kingdom only as children
- Luke 23:33, 39–43 Today you will be with me in Paradise

- John 3:16–21 God so loved the world
- John 5:24–29 Whoever hears and believes has eternal life
- John 6:37–40 Anyone who comes to me I will never drive away
- John 6:47–58 Whoever believes in me has eternal life
- John 11:17–27 I am the resurrection and the life
- John 11:38–44 Lazarus raised from the dead
- John 14:1–6, 25–27 Let not your hearts be troubled

Suggested Hymns from *Glory to God Hymnal*

- 14 For the Beauty of the Earth
- 15 All Creatures of Our God and King
- 39 Great Is Thy Faithfulness
- 65 Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah
- 81 Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken
- 250 In the Bulb There Is a Flower
- 275 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
- 306 Blest Be the Tie That Binds
- 326 For All the Saints
- 366 Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
- 367 Come, Ye Thankful People, Come
- 375 Shall We Gather at the River
- 438 Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me
- 450 Be Thou My Vision
- 488 I Was There to Hear Your Borne Cry
- 611 Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee
- 625 How Great Thou Art
- 649 Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound
- 687 Our God, Our Help in Ages Past
- 817 We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight
- 824 Near to the Heart of God
- 825 Swing Low, Sweet Chariot
- 833 O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go
- 834 Precious Lord, Take My Hand
- 836 Abide with Me