

Funerals and Memorial Services: Policies and Information

First United Church of Christ
300 Union Street, Northfield, Minnesota 55057

The death of a family member or friend touches the lives of many people. In response to the loss of a loved one, the community gathers for a Service of Thanksgiving for the person who has died. Traditionally those services have been called "funerals" if the casket or urn is present and "memorial services" if it is not.

About First UCC

First UCC is a spirited and diverse community where we worship God, pass along the faith, care for each other, and work at changing the world. Our 450 members come from a variety of religious backgrounds, and some have had no previous church experience at all.

The sanctuary in our historic building seats 300 people, with the possibility of an additional 50 folding chairs if needed. The pews are arranged in a semi-circle with a center aisle and several side aisles. We have a magnificent pipe organ and a state-of-the-art sound system.

An elevator serves all levels of the building, and the main floor rest rooms are handicapped accessible. Our cheerful, well-equipped nursery is available for child care if needed.

Planning the Service

Family members and/or friends are invited to meet with the minister to plan the service. While some arrangements are typically made through a funeral director, the memorial service or funeral itself is a worship

service, under the direction of the minister.

It is helpful if you bring along the following information to the planning conference.

- § Important facts about the decedent, including dates and places of birth and death, names of spouse, children, and other survivors, and information about career and hobbies.
- § Suggestions for hymns and/or other music.
- § Suggestions for scripture readings or other passages meaningful to the decedent or to family members. The minister will be glad to provide suggestions.
- § Names of family members and/or friends who might be included as readers, speakers, or musicians.
- § The names of charities to which memorial gifts might be directed.
- § Other preferences or ideas about the service.

We invite you to consider celebrating communion as part of the service, and we will be glad to discuss with you what that means and how it might be done.

If there are young children in the family, or otherwise especially touched by this death, the minister may suggest a "Children's Time" as part of the service.

The church has a beautiful funeral pall available for use. This is a large ivory cloth, adorned with a simple cross, which covers the casket during the service. It may be used by itself or with a small spray of

flowers on it. Please let the minister know if you would like to use it.

Pictures and Mementos

We are glad to provide tables on which you can display pictures or other mementos. Generally these are placed in the Assembly Room where people can enjoy them during the fellowship time after the service. If you have any large or unusual items, please let us know ahead of time.

Graveside Services

If the casket or urn is present, the service at the church is usually followed by a brief graveside service of committal. If you prefer, the graveside service can precede the church service, or it can be held privately at another time.

The Memorial Garden

The church maintains a small courtyard memorial garden in which the cremated remains of members and friends may be interred. Individual graves are not marked, but a memorial plaque in the church names all those who are buried in the garden. Further information is available from the church office.

Other Arrangements

There is normally a printed bulletin for the service. If you have any favorite pictures, scripture verses, or prayers that you would like to have included, please let us know.

We generally make an audio tape of the service, which we give to the family.

If you expect flowers to be delivered to the church, please make arrangements for the church to be open when they are delivered. If you would like some of the flowers to be taken to our housebound members after the service, please let us know.

For memorial services held without the assistance of a funeral director, a church volunteer will be responsible for the guest book, will help arrange flowers and/or pictures for the service, and will gather cards and other mementos to present to the family after the service. There is a small charge if you want us to provide the guest book. We do not have the resources to provide other services (parking signs, newspaper notices, etc.)

Refreshments

Most families appreciate an opportunity to greet those who have attended the service during a time of refreshment and fellowship. The church's Special Functions Committee is pleased to provide and serve food for this gathering.

Typically, cakes, bars, and/or cookies accompanied by hot and cold beverages are made available in our Assembly Room.

If you would like to have more substantial fare (sandwiches, fruit or vegetable trays, salads, etc.), the committee is very willing to prepare and serve this but asks that the family cover the actual cost of these additional items. The minister will help you make the necessary arrangements.

Financial Matters

There is no charge for the use of the church for a funeral or memorial service. While gifts are always welcome, they are certainly not expected.

The Special Functions Committee and the church community offer beverages and cookies as part of our ministry to you, your family, and friends. Again, donations are not expected, but would be very welcome for supplies and kitchen equipment.

If you have requested sandwiches or other refreshments, please reimburse the Committee for the actual cost of the groceries. The church office can provide you with the correct amount shortly after the service. You may leave a check in the church office (clearly marked) or ask the funeral director to take care of this for you.

The funeral director generally arranges for the musicians and the minister to receive honoraria for their participation. If no funeral director is involved, or if you have any questions or concerns, please ask the minister.

A Final Word

We consider it an honor to conduct funerals and memorial services, and we will do our best to be sensitive to a variety of theological beliefs and customs. Please let us know of any special circumstances that require our attention.

The minister is available for grief counseling with those who are affected by the death and will make referrals to other helping professionals as appropriate.

We also extend our invitation to worship with us at 10:00 a.m. Sunday mornings.

Other Notes