

Oakwood Community Church
Use of Facilities for Funeral/Memorial Services

*Philosophy and Policy of Christian Funeral/Memorial Services at Oakwood
Community Church*

I. The Christian Funeral/Memorial Service

The Christian Funeral/Memorial Service is a worship service in which God's people witness to their faith in the hope of the Gospel, the communion of saints, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Further, it is a service in which a comforting assurance of God's love and salvation in Christ is ministered, especially to the Christian bereaved. The ministry staff stands ready to assist the family with funerary details.

II. Toward an Understanding of the Christian Funeral/Memorial Service

A Funeral/Memorial Service at Oakwood Community Church is worship of the true and living God. The Funeral/Memorial Service is God's way of bringing comfort to the hearts of those who mourn as Scripture is read and preached, prayer is offered, praises are sung, grief is expressed, remembrance is cherished; and it is an occasion in which we, by the grace of God, bless the name of the One who gives and takes away.

The presence of family and friends around at this time serves to support and strengthen those who sorrow. The Funeral/Memorial Service gives thanks for life and lifts meaningful memories of lost loved ones helping us learn vital lessons from it.

Thus, in the Funeral/Memorial Service, we gather primarily to worship God and confess our faith in a living Savior. Though we mourn our loss and remember our loved one, our focus is fixed on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

III. Pre-planning (A planning form is available)

Planning ahead is a very wise idea and it is encouraged. It is wise to set a budget prior to visiting the funeral establishment. Pre-planning makes it possible to make the precise arrangements desired by a person and avoids making costly decisions in an emotionally charged atmosphere. We are able to refer interested parties to reputable funeral directors.

We encourage families, when necessary, to seek legal counsel. Also, before finalizing pre-need arrangements, we recommend that a request be made for the funeral home's policy on payment and obtain everything in writing.

IV. Logistics

At no time should Funeral/Memorial Services be planned without first consulting an Oakwood leader. The pastor's schedule and church commitments should be respectfully considered at all times in making eulogistic arrangements.

1. While many choose the chapel at a funeral home for the Funeral/Memorial Service, others prefer the church building where faith is nourished.

2. Some families practice "viewing of the remains." However, we at Oakwood believe the

attention in a service should be on God. Therefore, when the casket is in the worship center, it will be closed at all times and will be covered by a white pall provided by Oakwood. The covering symbolizes the protective love of God and the absence of distinction between persons at death. If the casket has been open prior to the service, it will be discretely closed prior to the family entering the Worship area.

2. A. In deference to individual family concerns, flowers or the U.S. Flag may be placed on the casket. However, since fraternal or civil rites (Masons, etc.) are not part of the worship service, these organizations should pay tribute to the deceased at another hour and place. If cleared with Oakwood’s officiating pastor or an elder, organizations like the Fraternal Order of Police or Fire Fighters may pay tribute at the Church, but not during the Worship Service itself (potentially at the end of the service).

2. B. Floral arrangements placed in the worship center are to be removed by the family or Funeral Service Provider (Mortuary) following the service. Oakwood is not responsible for disbursement of flowers and will potentially not use any that are left for the Worship Service on Sunday.

3. Some families choose to have a Funeral (the body is present at the service) and some choose to have a Memorial Service (the body is not present at the service). A Memorial Service can take place before or after the burial or cremation. Some choose to have an all-inclusive service at the graveside. On the matter of cremation, this is a personal choice for the individual or family. Pastor Phair has written a paper on Burial versus Cremation (Appendix 1).

4. For Funeral/Memorial Services that Oakwood Community Church conducts or gives leadership to at a Funeral Home, our staff ministers will conduct the eulogistic services in their entirety. Oakwood’s leadership has sole responsibility and discretion in carrying out church Funeral/Memorial Services. The officiating pastor is receptive to special requests from the family for the service. All elements of the service, including music, readings (poems, etc.) need to be distinctly Christian unless approved by the officiating pastor.

The following fees apply:	<u>Member/Attender</u>	<u>Non-Attender</u>
Use of Worship Center	No fee	\$200
Pastor	None requested or expected	\$75 - \$250 at the discretion of the family
Pianist*	\$40	\$60
Soloist (if used)	\$40	\$60
Sound System Operator**	\$40/hour	\$60/hour
Director of Funeral Ceremonies	\$40	\$100
Use of facility for refreshments/meal	No fee	\$100

*Due to most Funeral/Memorial Services being held during the day, we don’t guarantee that someone from Oakwood will be available. If they are, the above fees apply.

**If the service is during regular work hours and pending vocational staff availability that is trained on the Sound Board, this fee is waived.

5. Music performed at a service of Christian burial is understood as an act of worship, offered to God in devotion, thanksgiving and praise. Therefore, all music used during the Funeral/Memorial Service (including prelude and postlude) must be sacred in nature and approved by Oakwood leadership.

6. Child care

Oakwood does not provide childcare for Funeral/Memorial Services.

7. Programs

It is not necessary to have a service program for the Funeral/Memorial Service. Those who wish to have one are welcome to do so. It is the responsibility of the family to produce these programs. We have sample templates available.

8. Video Montage and Pre-recorded Music

Many families are producing a video montage to be shown during the family visitation, at the funeral home, or during the service. If used during the Funeral/Memorial Service, it must be under 4 minutes in length. To assure compatibility with our equipment, this must be received in the Church Office 24 hours in advance of the service. Any pre-recorded music requested by the family must also be received in the Church Office 24 hours in advance.

9. Eulogy

A eulogy is an expression of words of thanksgiving to God for the life of the deceased. It should be a total of 10 minutes. There are a number of **options** for a eulogy during the service.

- 9. A. No eulogy.
- 9. B. Family member(s) write with input from other family members. This can be read by a family member, friend, or the officiating pastor. If the officiating pastor is to read the eulogy, it would be helpful to have it to him at least 2 hours prior to the service.
- 9. C. Ask 1-3 people from the family to speak.
- 9. D. Upon request, the officiating pastor could meet with the family and give a composite summary of some of the highlights of their comments.

10. Food

Often families have refreshments or a meal following the Funeral/Memorial Service.

Oakwood regular attenders/members:

The family may request use of the facility for the refreshments/meal. The provision of the food and preparation (set-up, serving, and resetting) for the refreshments/meal is the responsibility of the family.

If the family is part of a Community Group, the family could request that this group be contacted by the Director of Funeral Ceremonies to assist the family with the details of this gathering.

Non-Oakwood attender

Rental of facility for refreshments/meal is available for \$100. Family or friends provides food and servers.

**PERSONAL FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS
Pre-planning Form***

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

NEXT OF KIN:

(1) _____

(2) _____

I PREFER: (check one)

_____ A Funeral/Memorial Service (a time of worship held with the body present, prior to the disposition of the body)

_____ A memorial service (a time of worship held with the body present, usually held after the disposition of the body)

I PREFER A SERVICE BE HELD (check one)

_____ At the church sanctuary _____ At the funeral home

_____ At the graveside _____ Other

I PREFER THE DISPOSITION OF MY BODY BE IN THIS MANNER: (check one)

_____ Burial _____ Cremation _____ Medical science

IF YOU HAVE WILLED YOUR BODY OR ORGANS TO MEDICAL SCIENCE, WHERE MAY THAT DOCUMENT BE LOCATED?

VISITATION

I would like visitation:

_____ Night before service _____ Before service _____ After service _____ At church

_____ At funeral home _____ At my home _____ Other _____

I WOULD LIKE THE OPTION FOR MY BODY TO BE VIEWED BEFORE THE SERVICE

_____ Yes _____ No

* This form is not a legal document; it is intended to assist with funeral planning, and is subject to change.

I HAVE THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS FOR WORSHIP:

Worship Songs or Hymns:

(1) _____

(2) _____

Soloists: _____

Organist: _____

Special Religious Music:

(1) _____

(2) _____

Scripture Readings:

(1) _____

(2) _____

On Casket: _____ Oakwood's Christian Covering (Pall)

 _____ Flowers

 _____ U.S. Flag

Pall Bearers:

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

(4) _____

(5) _____

(6) _____

Alternates:

(1) _____

(2) _____

WHAT FAMILY MEMBER(S) OR FRIEND(S) SHOULD BE CONTACTED CONCERNING THE SERVICE?

(1) NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

(2) NAME _____ PHONE: _____

FUNERAL DIRECTOR:

_____ I prefer _____

_____ I do not have a preference

LOCATION OF FAMILY BURIAL PLOT, IF ANY:

MEMORIAL GIFTS: (you may choose more than one)

_____ Oakwood Community Church (for more information on Wills & Bequests, please refer to
<http://www.efca.org/give-serve/efca-foundation/wills-bequest>)

_____ Designated: _____

_____ Undesignated

_____ A specific charitable cause (please specify): _____

OTHER COMMENTS:

Received by: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 1

Pastor Phair's Commendation of Burial Versus Cremation

9-28-09

Oakwood and its leadership respect the choices of individuals and its members regarding burial or cremation (Romans 14:5, 22). However, Pastor Phair earnestly commends burial, when possible, as the most faithful and honoring mode of disposal of the body of one who has physically died. If cremation is practiced for economical or practical reasons, Pastor Phair encourages that the cremains be respectfully placed in an urn and buried in the ground or placed in a burial structure (such as a community mausoleum). Phair discourages the practice of scattering the ashes or keeping them at home. [See the endnote to read Pastor Phair's brief biblical basis for his earnest recommendation].

The mode of disposition of a body has nothing to do with God's power to raise dead bodies. Clearly, Scripture teaches that God will raise totally decomposed bodies (1 Corinthians 15), and He will even raise the bodies of those who are "lost at sea" (Revelation 20:13)! And surely God is faithful and mighty to raise the bodies of martyrs who have been burned at the stake or beheaded (1 Corinthians 13:3; Matthew 14:10-12). No Christ-follower need be troubled about the future for a Christian loved one's body that has been cremated.

The manner of burial, when an option is available, is a question for the living as to which mode is most honoring to the body (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) and best expresses and declares the joyful expectation of the body's resurrection for those who trust in Jesus (John 11:38-39; Romans 8:23-25; 1 Corinthians 15:42-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Within the Bible, God does not explicitly command burial or condemn cremation for all cultures and times. Therefore, Oakwood leaves it up to the personal convictions of those who are responsible to make this decision. However, Pastor Phair believes the Biblical evidence is very strong for the case that when a choice is available, a Christ-follower would make the far more honorable choice by selecting burial.

Where cremation is described in the Hebrew Scriptures it is never recorded with approval, and many instances speak of it in reference to the practice of those who did not know the one true God (2 Chronicles 33:5-6) and as a figure of God's judgment (Leviticus 20:14; 21:9; Deuteronomy 7:25, Joshua 7:15, 25; 2 Kings 23:19-20; Amos 2:1-2). Therefore, choosing to burn one's body is not a fitting symbol for Christ-followers to practice.

In contrast, burial or entombment of the body is the practice of the faithful in the Hebrew Scriptures (Genesis 23:19-20; 25:9-10; 35:19-20, 29; 49:30-32, 47:29-31; 50:2, 13; 50:26; Joshua 24:32; Numbers 20:1; Joshua 24:30; 1 Samuel 25:1; 1 Kings 2:10; 11:43; 15:8; 2 Kings 15:38; 2 Chronicles 32:33). Burial was specifically prescribed by God for those put to death for capital offenses; this was in contrast to cremation that was practiced by the cultures around them (Deuteronomy 21:23).

Burial was the practice of first century believers as recorded in the New Testament and throughout most of Christendom through the centuries. In fact, they purposefully choose to refrain from following the predominate practice of their Roman culture and chose burial instead as a distinct symbol of their faith. Furthermore, Jesus' followers used burial as the mode to express reverence for Jesus' body (John 19:40). It was even the mode God directly chose to

respectfully dispose of Moses' body (Deuteronomy 34:5-6). Jewish and especially Christian burial is more than biblical custom or Christian tradition. Rather, it is a special symbol of respect for the body that God created to house a person's soul and, for the body of a Christ-follower, as the temporary dwelling place of God's Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Even more for us who are Christ-followers, burial is a joyful message that the body is in a temporary state (John 11:11; 1 Corinthians 15:51) while we confidently await Jesus' resurrecting and transforming it¹ when He triumphantly returns (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

¹ As there was a measure of continuity between Jesus' earthly body and His resurrected body, so there is for the bodies of believers in Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:42, 53).