

Memorial Service Planning Guide



at Liberty Corner Presbyterian Church

We are here for you.

Our prayers are with you during this difficult time. We are here to support you as you grieve the loss of your loved one and celebrate their life with a memorial service.

In addition to planning a ceremony, we want to support you personally. Our pastors are available for conversation and prayer. We often offer GriefShare groups, and trained Stephen Ministers are glad to meet with you on an ongoing basis for counsel and prayer. In times of loss, we need one another, and we are here for you.



Scheduling

To hold a memorial service at the church, please contact one of our pastors at 908-647-0340, or by emailing barnabas@libertycorner.org.

Memorial services commonly occur in our classic sanctuary, and they may be scheduled any day of the week (except Sunday mornings). Smaller services can occur in our Memorial Garden.

If you would like one of our pastors to officiate a service at some other location, such as a funeral home, feel free to contact one of the pastors directly.

Reception

Most families choose to hold a memorial reception at a different location. However, if your service is at Liberty Corner, you may request to hold a reception in Douglas Hall. Since we will need to hire custodians for setup and clean up, there is a cost, and this requires several weeks' advance notice.

Interment Options

Liberty Corner has both a graveyard and a memorial garden (for ashes). Both have limited space. Please contact the church office to ask about availability at 908-647-0340.

Costs

It is our honor to walk with families during these difficult times, not to earn income from memorials. We do not charge for the use of the building. We do ask the family to cover costs for people. If you need financial assistance with these costs, please speak to a pastor.

Ceremony Costs

We ask you to pay each participant individually, either by bringing separate checks to the service or by using an online processing service (such as Venmo).

• Pastor	\$250	_____
• Facility Overseer (opening/closing, sound)	\$100	_____
• Video Tech (if you want to livestream)	\$100	_____
• Church Organist (optional)	\$250	_____
• Vocal Soloist (optional)	\$100	=====
	PEOPLE TOTAL:	=====

Reception Costs

Most families hold receptions at homes, restaurants, or other locations. If you are considering a reception at Liberty Corner, speak with the church office well in advance to discuss your needs. You will need a caterer to provide food, plates, and utensils. The church will need to charge to cover the cost for people to set up the room, open and close the building, clean up, and be available for any facility needs.

On Saturdays, the reception will need to be vacated in time for worship setup the next day. Alcohol is not permitted.

Flowers and Decorations

Flowers and other décor can add to the beauty and sanctity of a ceremony. You will need to contract with a florist directly. We have found Martinsville Florist to be excellent: (732) 469-8200.



The Service

A memorial service is a sacred opportunity to celebrate the life of the deceased, to grieve their loss, and to remember our hope in Jesus Christ. As Presbyterians, we often call this service a “Service of Witness to the Resurrection.”

The ceremony commonly follows a natural flow:

- Welcome & Opening Prayer
- Remembrances
- Scripture Reading(s)
- Pastor’s Message
- Prayer
- Committal (statement committing the deceased to God)
- Closing Blessing

There are several decisions you will need to make:

Music. Congregational singing, vocal solos, or instrumental music may be placed between any elements.

- Some services have no music, some have a hymn or two, and others are very musical. What would you like?
- Are there particular hymns, songs, or pieces you would like? It should be appropriate for a worship service. Some examples: Amazing Grace, Blessed Assurance, It is Well.
- Who will lead the music? We have an excellent pianist/organist, and can recommend soloists, or you may know musicians who would like to participate.

Remembrances. Often, family members or friends offer their memories to celebrate the life of the deceased. We find 1-3 remembrances work well.

Since memorial services can be deeply emotional, we strongly encourage people to write out and rehearse what they will say. This prevents either rambling or forgetting something important. For best length, remarks should fit on one piece of paper.

- Who would like to speak for your service?
- Are there others who might read a Bible verse, sing, or lead another service element?

Personal Touches. Sometimes, a personal touch can add meaning to this loved one's service.

- What Bible verse(s) or songs had meaning to them?
Examples: Psalm 23, Ecclesiastes 3:1-4, John 14:1-6, 1st Corinthians 15:50-58, Revelation 21:1-4.
- The service bulletin commonly includes a photo of the deceased on the front. The inside may include a poem, psalm, or obituary. Our office will be in touch to discuss.
- We invite you to purchase a guest book for visitors to record their condolences.
- Might specific décor items point to their personality or passions? (Also appropriate for a viewing or reception.)
- Will you want to include military honors?

Our pastors are available to walk with you through these decisions – and through the grief journey, too.

A Word about Grief

The price of love is loss. Grieving is hard. For some, losing a loved one is deeply painful. For others, it is a relief to see their misery has ended, and their life in eternity has begun. Both can be true at the same time.

It is natural to feel a variety of emotions: numb, sad, angry, and even unexpected laughter. Jesus himself wept at the grave of a friend (John 13:15).

Give grace to yourself and others. Rest. Exercise. Pray.

In the Bible, Paul speaks to friends who have lost loved ones. Calling the deceased “asleep,” he writes,

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. – 1 Thessalonians 4:13

We DO grieve...but we grieve with hope. He then identifies the source of our hope:

For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. – 1 Thessalonians 4:14

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, God is restoring the universe. Death is not the end of existence; it is merely the end of suffering. Even death itself cannot separate us from God’s love. In the midst of loss, let us also hold to our hope.





45 Church Street, PO Box 55
Liberty Corner, New Jersey 07938
908-647-0340 libertycorner.org