



FUNERAL GUIDE

PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

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BRIDGE STREET FUNERAL GUIDE
TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I

Dealing with the Loss of a Loved One..... Page 3
What to Do When Your Loved One Dies..... Page 3
Date and Time of Funeral..... Page 3
Who Will Officiate..... Page 3
Funerals for Non-Members & Inactive Members..... Page 3

SECTION II

Funeral Bulletin // Order of Worship..... Page 4
Structure of the Service..... Page 4
Sample Order of Service..... Page 4
Music for Funeral Service..... Page 4
PowerPoint Presentation..... Page 5
Audio // Video Taping of Service..... Page 5

SECTION III

Decorations // Displays..... Page 5
Flowers..... Page 5
Closed Casket..... Page 5
Parking // Traffic Assistance..... Page 5
Family Meal..... Page 5

SECTION IV

What Role Does the Funeral Home Play in Planning the Service..... Page 6
Before Going to the Funeral Home..... Page 6
Can Memorial Gifts be Made to the Church..... Page 6
Memorials..... Page 6
What Do I Say When Friends Come or Call?..... Page 6
Where to Find Help with Your Grief..... Page 6

SECTION V

Fee Structure..... Page 7

BRIDGE STREET FUNERAL GUIDE

SECTION I

DEALING WITH THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

Even for Christians, the death of a loved one is a difficult experience. We grieve the loss of one who has been close, but we do not sorrow as those who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4: 13). It is our desire and privilege to minister to the families of our congregation in their time of need. It is through the Word of God that we have hope at the time of the death of a loved one (Romans 15: 4). This funeral guide is provided to families to facilitate planning of the homegoing service for their loved one.

Although funeral services may be held in funeral homes, the best place for conducting a funeral service upon the death of a Christian is in the sanctuary of the church to which he or she belonged. By having the service at the church, all who attend will be reminded of our hope and assurance in Jesus Christ. Therefore, all members of Bridge Street are encouraged to use the church facilities for funeral services. On a case-by-case basis, the sanctuary may be made available for persons whose membership is in another church. Funeral services for non-members are solely at the discretion of the pastor.

There can be alternative methods for the conducting of services at the time of death. These could include a private graveside service for family members as soon after death as possible and/or a public service of worship (a memorial service) conducted at the church later. However, funeral worship services will only be conducted in the sanctuary of the church. The pastor or his designee is available to meet with the family to plan funeral arrangements.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR LOVED ONE DIES

- Contact other family members and close friends of the deceased
- Contact the deceased family member's church, if they belonged to one
- Notify the employer of the deceased and your own employer
- If children are in school, notify the school
- Choose a Funeral Home

DATE AND TIME OF FUNERAL

Most funeral services are conducted three to five days after a death occurs. While services are typically conducted late-morning or early evening, dates and times for funeral services at Bridge Street are to be arranged in consultation with the pastor based on availability of the church and the preferences of the deceased's family. Weekdays are flexible with the exception of Friday; however, if Friday is the preferred day of the family, the pastor will make every effort to accommodate their request. If the pastor is not available to perform the funeral, a member of Bridge Street's ministerial staff will be assigned. Because of the heavy demand upon facilities, Sunday church funerals are not encouraged.

All funeral arrangements must be approved by the pastor prior to them being finalized with the funeral home. Please keep in mind that all funeral services will need to be planned around already scheduled events such as weddings, conferences, workshops, etc. The church will not cancel any major planned events to accommodate funeral services.

WHO WILL OFFICIATE

The pastor or his/her designee will conduct all funeral services held at Bridge Street, unless by agreement with another pastor, he/she is invited to share in the funeral or act on behalf of the pastor of Bridge Street. Any requests for another pastor or lay person to officiate or assist in the service must be approved by the pastor prior to the service.

FUNERALS FOR NON-MEMBERS & INACTIVE MEMBERS

Conducting funerals for people who have no connection with the church is at the discretion of the pastor. The family of inactive or non-members of Bridge Street must contact the church's executive assistant to schedule an appointment to meet with the pastor should they desire to use Bridge Street's facilities for the funeral services of a loved one.

SECTION II

FUNERAL BULLETIN // ORDER OF WORSHIP

The church office staff will ordinarily produce the funeral bulletin (or printed order of worship) for members of Bridge Street. A fee is charged for inactive or non-members of Bridge Street. In some cases, the funeral home may be contracted by the family to print the funeral bulletin. However, the order of worship must be approved by the pastor prior to printing the order of worship.

When planning your loved one's funeral, please keep in mind that a Christian's funeral should be a testimony to Our Lord Jesus Christ, which may bring comfort to the family and draw non-Christians to Christ through God's grace. A Christian funeral can be a great climax to an earthly life that has been lived in trust and service to Jesus Christ.

The order of service should thus reflect and affirm the deceased person's faith and hope in Christ, and their belief in Christ's victory over death. Such affirmation can be enacted through the rituals of prayer, scripture reading, class leader witness, family proclamations, and music selected.

The Word of God is central, and everything that takes place must be consistent with biblical principles of worship (Matthew 4:4; Romans 15:4; John 6:63). Prayer in funerals normally includes thanksgiving for the memory of the dead, one's triumph in the resurrection of Christ, and intercession for the family and friends who remain. Worshipers are participants in the service; therefore, the singing of hymns, confession of faith, prayer, and hearing God's word are appropriate means of worship (John 4:23-24).

STRUCTURE OF THE SERVICE

A funeral service held in the church is a service of worship, celebrating the deceased's life and the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ. Consequently, all parts of the service are to be consistent with the present worship practices of the church. Generally, the outline for the funeral and burial service will be structured from traditional Methodist liturgy. The family may suggest other items to be included in the order of service, contingent upon the approval of the pastor.

SAMPLE ORDER OF SERVICE:

- Procession
- Hymn
- Prayer of Comfort
 - Scripture Reading: Old Testament: Psalm 23 // New Testament: John 14:1 – 7: 27
- Acknowledgements (of cards and resolutions)
- Witness of Class Leader
- Tributes (Optional)
- Solo
- Eulogy
- Closing Prayer & Hymn
- Recessional

MUSIC FOR FUNERAL SERVICE

Musicians from Bridge Street's music staff will provide music for all funeral services held at Bridge Street; however, the fee for musicians is the responsibility of the family. Upon request, and for a paid fee, professional vocalists can be arranged to provide music for funeral services. In cases where an outside organist/pianist is desired, permission must be secured from the pastor.

As with regular Sunday morning worship services, a funeral is a service of Christian worship. Therefore, sacred or Christian music should be selected for services. Song tracks or taped instrumental music must be approved by the pastor and arranged with the media ministry at least 48 hours prior to the funeral service.

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

If a video or PowerPoint presentation is to be used during the service, it must be submitted to the church office at least 48 hours (2 days) prior to the funeral service for review. All presentations should be five minutes or less in length.

AUDIO // VIDEO TAPING OF SERVICE

While Bridge Street has audio equipment to record worship services, staff who normally record services are not available to record services during the week. Upon request, the church can recommend a videographer to video record the service; however, payment must be paid directly to the videographer.

SECTION III

DECORATIONS // DISPLAYS

Families may wish to display the deceased's remains, as well as certain mementos or photographs of the deceased and his/her family. The following guidelines would be applicable in these situations:

- Any displays or pictures must be appropriate to a worship setting.
- No nails, tacks, staples or screws shall be put in the walls or attached to the pews.
- All decorations must be removed at the conclusion of the service.
- No furniture shall be removed from the church building.

FLOWERS

Flowers will be placed at the altar by the pallbearers or members of the funeral home staff.

CLOSED CASKET

All caskets remain open during the viewing (or preceding the viewing, for the family only, if desired); however, the casket will be closed during the worship and burial services. When closed, the flower blanket, flag or coverlet covers the casket. The funeral director in concert with the pastor will have direction over such matters as timing, closed caskets, music, flowers, etc.

PARKING // TRAFFIC ASSISTANCE

Parking assistance is generally provided by the funeral home. The church does not have any resources to assist in traffic control. In rare circumstances, such as the funeral of a high profile member of the church or community, traffic assistance may be provided by the 81st precinct.

FAMILY MEAL

The church will do everything reasonably possible to accommodate a member's request for a family meal before or after a funeral service. The meal is prepared under the direction of the church's culinary team. While meal accommodations may be provided to active members* by clubs or ministries affiliated with Bridge Street, inactive or non-members may, upon approval of the pastor, be allowed use of the church's facilities for the purpose of a catered meal. Although Bridge Street can provide the family with a list of caterers to contact for meal accommodations, the cost of the meal and fees for use of the Church's facilities are solely the responsibility of the family of the deceased.

Please note that while clubs or ministries may volunteer to assist the family of the deceased with organizing a meal after the funeral, such meals are good faith gestures to the family, and not an obligation or responsibility of Bridge Street AME Church or any of its clubs or ministries.

SECTION IV

WHAT ROLE DOES THE FUNERAL HOME PLAY IN PLANNING THE SERVICE

The funeral director meets with the family to discuss the burial options available to them, but leaves the actual funeral/memorial service for the pastor to organize along with the family. Please note: it is very important for the funeral director and pastor to work closely together to deliver the most professional service possible to the grieving family so please remember to include the pastor in the planning of the service.

BEFORE GOING TO THE FUNERAL HOME...

It will save you considerable time and phone calls if you have the following information available about the deceased:

- Full name of deceased (include nickname or other names the person may have used).
- Date and Place of Birth of the deceased.
- Father's Name & Mother's Maiden Name of the deceased.
- List of relatives and relationship to the deceased.
- List of church, professional organizations, clubs and other organizations in which membership was held.
- If you wish, indicate memorial to be designated in obituary in memory of the deceased.
- Compile a list of individuals who might be available to serve as pallbearers.
- If a memorial or funeral service is announced in the newspapers, take extra precaution for security at the home of the deceased during the indicated time of the service.
- Name and location of facility where funeral or memorial service will be held.
- Day/time you prefer to have the wake, funeral or memorial service.

CAN MEMORIAL GIFTS BE MADE TO THE CHURCH?

Memorial gifts can be made to the church in honor of the deceased. Checks should be made payable to Bridge Street AME Church and given to the pastor who will forward the same to the finance committee. A letter of acknowledgement will be mailed to the donor once the contribution has cleared the bank.

MEMORIALS

In certain circumstances, the family might request that contributions be made to the church or a charitable organization in lieu of flowers. Please note that the church will not receive, distribute or manage funds designated for an outside institution.

WHAT DO I SAY WHEN FRIENDS COME OR CALL?

Usually people don't know just what to say to someone who has lost a loved one. The best thing to do is to receive their words of encouragement gracefully and thank them for calling. Don't be afraid to talk with friends and family about your deceased family member's life including favorite or funny memories you hold dear. The more you are able to share about your deceased family member's life, the more at ease you will make visitors and friends.

What passages of Scripture will help me as I go through the grieving process? The word of God is the only source of true comfort and strength to you, especially the Psalms. Psalm 1; Psalm 23; Psalm 24; Psalm 27 (particularly in the death of a parent); Psalm 34; John 14:1-6; Romans 8:35-39; II Corinthians 5; I Peter 1; Revelation 22.

WHERE TO FIND HELP WITH YOUR GRIEF

Bridge Street provides ministerial support through the BridgeCare Ministry to those who have lost a loved one. The BridgeCare Ministry is the pastoral arm of the Class Leader Ministry, so please contact the deceased family member's class leader should you desire visitation, communion, encouragement or support before or after the funeral service. Rev. Michele Grimes is the minister to the class leaders and can be reached via email at revmgrimes@gmail.com. You may also contact the church at 718.452.3936 and speak with Ms. Deloris Canty, church receptionist and class leader.

V. FEE STRUCTURE

If the deceased or a member of their immediate family (spouse, parents, children, siblings) is an **active member*** of Bridge Street there is no fee for the use of the facilities. For all other individuals, additional fees will be assessed. Those who have been members of Bridge Street but now are considered **inactive members** will pay the same fees as **non-members**. Fees are payable on or prior to the day of the funeral. Normally, honorariums for the pastor, pianist, or musicians are paid prior to the service or through the funeral director.

*An **Active Member** is defined as those members of Bridge Street Church who **regularly attend worship services** and **financially contribute on a consistent basis** to the work of the church.