

Pastoral Guidelines for Deaths/Funerals at Bethany

As a pastoral staff at Bethany, we understand that the death of a loved one is one of the most difficult times a member can walk through. Our utmost desire is to provide direction and comfort for the grieving family. It is with this goal in mind that we set the following guidelines to help us as a pastoral staff understand our role and responsibilities.

When you receive a call concerning a death:

Time is of the essence when you receive a call/text/word from a Bethany member concerning a death. Although they may at first tell you it is not necessary, do your best to go immediately to them. They will remember the time you took or your delay in ministering to them for years to come. ***Understand that it is not your responsibility to make them feel better about what has happened but to just be there for them.*** Your presence with them will bring great comfort and help them be strong. (Romans 12:15) Share scripture about the comfort of the Lord and the assurance that He is with them. Be pleasant. They will draw strength from the peace that you have in your spirit. Your desire on the initial visit is to bring quiet and peace to their spirit. Be sensitive as to how long you should stay but before you leave make sure that they have contact info from you concerning any questions they may have.

If they do not know what to do:

In the event of a sudden, unexpected death, the family may not be aware of what needs to happen next. Your familiarity with the procedure will help set them at ease. A funeral home will need to be notified to pick up the body. Often the family will have a funeral home in mind. If the body is present while you are with the family, remain with them until the body has been removed. This is often a very difficult time and your presence is important. If possible, try to move them to another part of the home/facility for prayer while the body is moved. Normally, the family will set an appointment for the next day or day after with the funeral home to discuss arrangements. Offer to be at the appointment with the funeral director. Be sensitive to the wishes of the family. Although the deceased may have attended Bethany, family members may attend another church and desire that funeral services be performed there. Be available to them for whatever they may need. Once again, be sure they have your contact info.

**** Be sure to send a PC email as soon as possible and fill out the "Info on Deaths" form in google docs. CLICK LINK BELOW**

BETHANY INFO ON DEATHS

Meeting with the family the following day:

A phone call the following day to the family is a good time to find out what their plans might be for the funeral service. A good way to preface your inquiry is that we would like to keep our church family aware of the arrangements. If the family chooses to use Bethany facilities or a Bethany pastor for the services, set up a time within the next 24 hours to meet with them to discuss the arrangements for the funeral service. *(Refer to the bottom of doc for the order of service suggestions)*

IV. Making Arrangements:

Before committing to holding a service at Bethany's facilities, let them know you will need to check on the availability of the facilities. Depending on availability, you may need to discuss options.

To check availability of facilities contact the events department or check google calendars or Planning Center. There are 3 calendar titles to check for accuracy, North Campus, South Campus, and Ministry Calendar.

Funerals at Bethany can be performed at the following locations:

1. Baker Legacy Chapel (Capacity - 300)
2. Baker Sanctuary (Capacity - 1,500) (Last option - not preferred for funerals)
3. South Main Sanctuary (Capacity - 1,800)

*Loved ones can sometimes overestimate how many people will be attending the funeral service. Try to be as realistic as possible in determining the venue. A large venue with a small attendance can be discouraging to family members.

- If you will be the presiding pastor for a funeral at a Bethany facility you will need to contact Events so they can assist with requesting the opening of the building as well as Production to coordinate audio/video for the funeral service.
- Sending flowers/plants:
 - If the deceased is a longtime Bethany member, leader, Kingdom Builder, or staff member, or the immediate relative of those, a plant or flowers may be sent either to the funeral home (Church) or to the home of the bereaved a few days later.
 - Repast/Reception: We try to avoid using the facilities for a Repast/Reception but if the family insists, there is a charge and

Bethany provides the space, tables, tablecloths, runners, and chairs only. The charge for members is \$150.00 & \$300.00 for non-members.

**** SPECIAL NOTE:** The Bethany Cemetery is at capacity and **no longer available** for burials.

V. Cremation - Although we do not prohibit the practice of cremation, we do encourage believers to follow the biblical standard and president for burial. One example is, God Himself buried Moses after his death (Duet. 34:5-6). There are many examples of burial as the standard. If cremation is performed, it is our policy that a memorial service may be held at the church without the presence of the remains.

VI. Service Options:

Off-Campus Service:

If the service is not to be performed at a Bethany facility, be sure to send a PC email with the arrangements so that pastoral staff can be aware. If possible, include a photo of the deceased.

* Note: You can often search a Facebook account to retrieve photos if you do not already have one.

Bethany Service:

If the service will be performed at Bethany, contact the Events department as soon as possible and they will assist you in scheduling the venue. Please include as many details as possible.

VII. Planning the Service:

Funeral services can be as diverse as the individuals being remembered. It is a time for family members to come together and bring closure. Be sensitive to their needs while also staying within the heart and spirit of Bethany Church and our leadership.

Traditional Service:

The outline of a traditional service is as follows:

- Funeral Home Director gives the announcement that the service is about to begin and for everyone to take their seats.
 - In some services, the family may want to march in together. In this instance they will gather in a room or the lobby of the funeral home.

You will read the scripture aloud while the family marches in. They may have a selection they would like to have read or you may choose Psalm 23-24.

- If a bulletin is printed by the family, a brief announcement should be made after the opening prayer stating that the service will proceed as printed in the bulletin.
- In services where the deceased and family are strong believers, they may want to give an opportunity for those in attendance to respond to an invitation to salvation. A good way to give an altar call at a funeral is to have heads bowed and ask people to “look up at you” if they want to be included in a prayer of salvation.

- The casket is closed during service
- Funeral Home Director signals minister to begin
- Open in prayer
- Reading of the Clergy record
- Music
- Words of Comfort
- Music
- Words from a friend - encourage those sharing to limit their time to 3-5 minutes
- Message from pastor
- Closing prayer
- Director comes to open the casket and gives instruction for final viewing
- Final viewing takes place
- Director comes to perform the final closing of the casket
- Pallbearers come and escort the casket to the hearse. The officiating pastor should lead the casket to the hearse
- Travel to gravesite
- You may drive your own vehicle or they may have a car provided for you. Usually, the pastor's car follows the hearse, but the funeral director will inform
- Arrive at the gravesite
- Stand near the hearse and wait for the Pallbearers to come and take their place behind the hearse. You will lead the casket to the graveside
- Stand at the head of the casket when delivering your message. (Ask the director if you are not sure which end is the head) This is a short closing word from scripture such as 1Thessalonians 4:13-18, Matthew 25:23, 34, Romans 8:35-39, John 14:1-4
- After your closing prayer, give the family a last word of comfort and assure them that you will be praying for them. Philippians 4:7, Psalm 46:1-10, 2Corinthians 1:3-5

- Turn the service over to the Director and he/she will close

VIII. Non-Traditional Service:

In a traditional service, the funeral is followed by the burial. A non-traditional approach is becoming more popular. The family may choose to have a private graveside service followed by a memorial service directly following. The advantages are as follows:

The graveside service allows the family private time to bring closure to this chapter of the life of their loved one. The service following leaves the family with a sense of hope in the resurrection. That same hope is carried on to the repast.

IX. After the service:

If you are invited to a repast/reception, it is at your discretion to attend.

As a follow up, it is recommended that you try to visit with the family two weeks after the funeral. You may request a gift bag for the family (encouraging books and a note from Pastors Jonathan and Angie) from Bethany Pastoral Support Administration to bring with you on your visit.