

First Baptist Church  
Rome, Georgia  
**Funeral and Memorial Service Planning Guide and Policies**  
**(Revised May 12, 2014)**

Before you start planning a funeral, think for a moment what happens in worship at First Baptist Church on Sunday morning. An usher greets you. An arrangement of live flowers attests to the beauty of God's creation. The Bible on the Communion table is open to the passage of scripture for the day. Talented musicians offer their gifts to God through the notes played and songs that are sung. Everything that happens is done to the glory of God, who is the object of our worship.

At our church, a funeral (or memorial service) is a time of worship that serves as witness to the resurrection of Christ and His followers. Everything we do at a funeral is consistent with the way we worship on Sunday morning. Our planning for a funeral always keeps worship in mind. It will help you in your planning to remember this principle: we approach funeral plans with the dignity accorded worship.

With this guiding principle in mind, here are some things to consider in your planning.

**WHO AND WHERE:** Ordinarily, services held here are for families affiliated with our church family. Exceptions must be approved by the pastor. Services may be held in the Sanctuary (seating capacity of 800) or Chapel (seating capacity of 125). To make funeral arrangements, a representative designated by the family should contact the Pastor, and, if the Pastor is unavailable, the Minister of Worship. Members and affiliated families pay no fee for the use of the church for funerals and memorial services.

**SCHEDULING:** To insure there are no conflicts with previously planned church events, please consult with the Pastor or the Minister of Worship about scheduling before final plans are announced publically.

**WORSHIP LEADERSHIP:** Funerals or memorial services at the church shall be under the direction of one of our ministers. A member of the ministerial staff will visit with the family to share in prayer and to plan the service together. At the discretion of the minister leading the service, clergy from other congregations who are connected with the family, may participate in the service.

**THE ORDER OF WORSHIP:** A typical order of worship includes: prelude and postlude of sacred music; hymns and sacred music using the congregation and or soloists or ensembles; scripture readings from the Old and/or New Testaments; a message that expresses thanksgiving to God for the life of the deceased and reminds all of Christ's resurrection and promise of eternal life; a benediction. In consultation with the pastor, other elements, such as remarks from family members and friends, may be included in the service. Because it is not consistent with our approach to worship, "open mic" remembrances are not allowed.

**MUSIC:** Music used in the service should be in keeping with the spirit and dignity of a worship service. Therefore, all music should direct the thought toward God and be sacred in nature. As on Sunday morning, no recorded music or accompaniment track will be used in a worship space before, during or after the service without preapproval of a minister. The Sanctuary Choir is available only for services for choir members. The family should seek permission to utilize musicians other than from our church staff. Instruments other than organ and piano should only be chosen in consultation with a minister from First Baptist and, if utilized, is the responsibility of the family.

**ORDERS OF WORSHIP:** If requested by the family, a printed order of worship can be produced by the church at no charge. The design of the order of worship is simple and dignified. Families may choose to have one of two designs: 1) a folded 8.5 x 11 sheet on paper with a gloss finish with a pen-and-ink drawing of the Sanctuary on the cover and the service and obituary information on the inside; or 2) a half-sheet printed on heavy card stock with the service order on one side and, if desired, the obituary on the other side. In keeping with our desire to make this a worship service, it is preferred that photos, etc. of the deceased or other graphics not be used in the program.

**USHERS:** The church will provide volunteer ushers for the service. Funeral home staff may also be used, if desired.

**FLORAL DISPLAYS:** Floral displays in the Sanctuary and Chapel are appropriate. To avoid detracting from the worship experience, these are to be limited to two (2) free-standing arrangements. Floral displays may also be placed in the Narthex or the Foyer outside the Chapel. Additional flower arrangements sent directly to the church will be placed at appropriate locations determined by the church staff.

If candles are used, they must be of the dripless variety and must be supplied by the family. The floor must be thoroughly protected.

Funerals/memorial services are subject to activities at the church. Therefore, at times there may be decorations (i.e. Christmas greenery, Christmas trees, Lenten drapes on the baptistery cross, etc.) that may not be moved.

**AUDIO RECORDING:** Audio recording of a service held in the Sanctuary or Chapel is available without charge. This must be requested when planning the service with the minister.

**VISUALS:** Because worship is directed to God, personal photographs and memorabilia displays are not permitted in the Sanctuary or Chapel, but may be placed in the Narthex of the Sanctuary or Foyer of the Chapel. First Baptist Church does not have projection capabilities in the sanctuary or chapel and does not use projected images in worship. During the receiving of guests before or after the service, visual projection may only be used outside of the sanctuary or chapel, provided equipment is available. All displays used in these locations or DVD presentations must be produced by the family and should be consistent with the mission and purpose of our congregation. As on Sunday morning, photography – still or video – is not permitted in the Sanctuary or Chapel during a service.

**CASKET:** When a casket is present, it is to be closed by the funeral director prior to the service, in order that attention in the service may be directed to God. Upon request, the church pall is available without charge. The church pall may not leave the church, however, and cannot be used at the cemetery. The family may provide a United States flag for those who have served in the military, or a floral arrangement may be used as a pall.

**GREETING FRIENDS:** The family may greet family and friends in the sanctuary or chapel before or after the service without charge. Arrangements to use church space for this purpose must be made with the minister when planning the funeral/memorial service. Families who wish to provide a reception in other part of the church facilities should refer to our Building Use Policies for information regarding fees for custodial services and the use of the kitchen. Families who wish to serve food or beverages at receptions will need to secure the services of a caterer. Neither alcoholic beverages nor smoking are permitted on church property at any time.

**FAMILY MEAL:** If the deceased was a church member, the church will provide a light meal for family members and out-of-town guests in the church Dining Room on the day of a service held Monday through Friday. On Saturdays, a light meal may be possible at the church, pending availability of committee members to serve and space restrictions for church programs. If circumstances preclude a meal at the church, simple food fare may be delivered to the home. These meals are hosted by volunteers from our Bereavement Committee. Sunday meals are not possible due to schedule and space conflicts. Family members should give a final count of those who will be eating to the Pastor's secretary as soon as possible, so that the church will have time to make proper preparations.

**MILITARY/MASONIC HONORS:** Such honors are not considered part of Christian worship, and are therefore more appropriately carried out at the cemetery.

**GRAVESIDE SERVICE:** Graveside committal services may be held before or after the funeral/memorial service. This service typically includes: scripture, prayer, words of committal, and a benediction. The minister will discuss this service with the family.

**MEMORIALS:** Gifts given in memory of a loved one are appropriate and welcomed. First Baptist has a Foundation, or specific ministries of the church may be designated, or charitable organizations of the donor's choice are potential recipients of such gifts. Memorial gifts to the church are kept in a separate account from the church budget. Our financial secretary will see that the family is made aware of who has given gifts so that they will be able to acknowledge the contributions.

**PRE-PLANNING:** First Baptist members are strongly encouraged to pre-plan their funeral/memorial service. They may do so by picking up a form in the church office or by downloading the form from our website. Once completed and returned, the forms will be kept in the church's confidential files; where they will be available for revision. At the time of death, the information will be shared with family members, and the minister with whom the service is being planned.