

Funeral Guidelines for Rivers United Church (revised 2025)

- 1. Purpose:** A funeral service is an affirmation of our faith in God and our hope in Christ's Resurrection. It is also a service of thanksgiving for a life that has been lived. A funeral provides an opportunity to console the bereaved and to commend the deceased into God's care. Because the participation and support of the faith community is most important, private funerals are normally discouraged.
- 2. Minister:** If the minister of this church is away for a prolonged period, he/she will have previously arranged for another United Church minister to be on call. If the family wishes to bring in another minister to conduct or take part in the service, this must be done in consultation and agreement with the minister of this church and the Spiritual Leadership Committee. Any visiting minister is expected to act within the guidelines established by the Board of Rivers United Church.
- 3. Location:** Funerals conducted by the minister of Rivers United Church will normally be held in Rivers United Church, although exceptions may be made. Graveside services are acceptable, but the family is urged to have an alternate site available in case of inclement weather.
- 4. Content of Service:**
 - a.** The minister usually prepares the entire service and guides the family in the choice of hymns and other music.
 - b.** Because a funeral should emphasize our faith in God and our belief in one's equality in death, and because a long service is harder on the family, lengthy eulogies are discouraged.
 - c.** If the family asks someone to do a eulogy, the minister would appreciate knowing the content by at least the day before the service so there is not a lot of repetition or any contradictions in the part of the service the minister does.
 - d.** Other changes or insertions in the order of service (e.g. poems) must be acceptable to the minister and must be given to him/her the day before the service.
 - e.** The family is encouraged to choose hymns which focus on our faith and hope in the Resurrection.
 - f.** A creed will be part of the service, and everyone is encouraged to say it together.
 - g.** Funerals in Rivers United Church normally do not include powerpoint or video presentations of the deceased. These are more appropriate to be part of the fellowship time after the service.
- 5. Ushers:** Ushers for the service may be supplied by the church if that is the wish of the family. Please tell the minister or the funeral home representative if you want to use ushers provided by the church.
- 6. Organist:** Normally, a choir will be present for a funeral service. Unless the family requests a particular organist, the minister or funeral home representative will ask our **regular** church organist to play for the service.

7. **The Family:** The family is encouraged to join the congregation in reciting the creed or other readings and is invited to stand for the singing of the hymns. This will make the family feel more part of the community of faith that has gathered for the service; however, if the family is not comfortable with this, they may remain seated throughout the service.
8. **Pall Bearers:** It is appropriate for active pall bearers to stand with the congregation for the singing of hymns and to join in the reciting of the creed.
9. **The Casket:** We ask that the casket remain closed throughout the service.
10. **Suggested donations:**
 - a. The organist should receive \$35 and the inside caretaker \$20 (May 2018). This applies to all funerals in this church.
 - b. In the case of funerals or graveside services for people who are not members of Rivers United Church and are not regular contributors to the church, a \$100 donation to Rivers United Church is appropriate.
 - c. If the church is asked to prepare and/or serve a funeral lunch, there is a suggested donation of \$6.50 per person (2025). This is for fruit bread, pickles, cookies, coffee, tea, and juice. If there will likely be more than 100 people at the lunch, we cannot accommodate them in Friendship Hall, and the family would need to find another space (e.g. Legion Hall) and possibly a different caterer.
 - d. If the officiating minister is not a paid accountable minister of Rivers United, the minister should be offered an honourarium.
11. **Donations in memory:** When donations are made to the Rivers United Church in memory of a loved one, the name of the deceased will be recorded in the church's Memorial Book.

It is important that grief be felt and expressed after the death of a loved one. The general tone at a funeral, however, should be one of hope in Christ's Resurrection. As Christians, we are not without hope in the face of death. We are comforted by God's gracious love. Keeping this in mind, then, it is possible and even desirable that a funeral may be better thought of as a "Celebration of Life".

The Board of Rivers United Church

November 8, 2022