



## THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AT LUNDS CORNER

2195 Acushnet Avenue, New Bedford MA 02745

[www.FirstCongNewBedford.org](http://www.FirstCongNewBedford.org)

Rev. Douglas Stivison, Pastor

Dear Friends,

In our Christian tradition memorial services are important worship services in which we proclaim the Christian promise of the Resurrection, and to give thanks to God for a life that has enriched our own lives. At the same time the service should provide an important opportunity to comfort one another in our shared loss.

The ordained and lay leadership of the First Congregational Church stand ready to help you plan an appropriate Christian memorial service in our sanctuary or in a local funeral home. We can arrange small, family memorials services or community events that fill our 125-seat sanctuary. Just as every life is unique, we are committed to helping you arrange a memorial service that genuinely honors the life of this individual. We do this within a framework of the rites, practices, and traditions of the Congregational way. All memorial services are conducted by the church's pastor. These guidelines combine the comfort of familiarity and tradition with opportunities to adapt the readings, prayers, and music to truly reflect both the life of the individual and the feelings of the family and friends.

We know that you may feel overwhelmed at this time. To ease the burden of planning the service, the pastor can suggest a complete order of worship combining an appropriate and traditional selection of prayers, Scripture, and music.

I sincerely hope that this guide will help you consider some of the traditions and options in planning an appropriate and beautiful memorial service. Because the church office is not normally staffed, please feel free to contact me directly by my personal telephone or email.

Grace and Peace to you,

Rev. Douglas Stivison, Pastor

personal cell: 973.951.4194

personal email: [stivison@earthlink.net](mailto:stivison@earthlink.net)

# The First Congregational Church at Lunds Corner

## Memorial Service Planning Guide

### General Background Information

**Facilities and Bulletin:** Our church dates to the Civil War with limited handicapped accessibility. If you wish a repast or reception following the service, we need to plan it. Our Fellowship Hall, located downstairs can accommodate 100 guests and has kitchen facilities. We can suggest several local caterers. Many families have been pleased with Riccardi's Italian Restaurant and Catering (508.992.6800).

Church policy prohibits serving alcohol in any form on church property. As with all public buildings in Massachusetts, smoking is prohibited anywhere in the church.

You don't have to be concerned with the logistics of producing a bulletin for the service. The church is fully prepared to produce it for you.

**Fees:** *All baptized Christians are entitled to a Christian funeral.* Our church has no fixed fees for memorial services. There is no fixed fee for the use of the church sanctuary or for the preparation of the service bulletin. If you can afford it, we suggest that \$100 be given to the church to help cover the extra custodial expenses in preparing for and cleaning up the church beyond normal Sunday-worship requirements, as well as utilities, and the office expenses of producing the bulletin. This is, however, a suggestion if you can afford it. All donations are gratefully received.

There is no formal set fee for the pastor's time and services in meeting with the family, planning the service, drafting an appropriate funeral sermon, leading the memorial service, and for traveling to and officiating at graveside or memorial garden interment. We know that many families wish to offer a tangible "thank you" to the pastor for this effort and support. The traditional honorarium for the pastor is \$200, but it is entirely what you wish to give. Such gifts are received and appreciated in the spirit of gratitude in which they are offered.

The organist is not a salaried church employee and gives up paid concert and teaching opportunities to prepare for and perform at the service. We request an honorarium for the organist at the service of \$200. If this is beyond the family's means, we fully understand, and the church can provide recorded music for the service.

**Essential Background Information:** The pastor needs to get all the names and facts straight and spelled correctly both for the bulletin as well as to help in preparing a more meaningful and relevant service. The pastor needs all the information in one place:

- (1) Full name (with middle name and maiden name where appropriate)
- (2) Date of birth and date of passing
- (3) Spouse's full name and date of marriage (and passing, if appropriate)
- (4) Complete names (and the names by which they are actually known) for all children, brothers, sisters, *other key relatives*.
- (5) ***Over the years the pastor has seen that it is the grandchildren and great grandchildren who often have the most difficulty with the loss. Please let him know all of the young people who might possibly be attending the service and if he needs to be sure to address part of the service to them.***

# MEMORIAL SERVICE COMPONENTS AND OPTIONS

Note on the music: ***bold italic*** indicates the most popular choices. If you have any favorites or any that are particularly important to any member of your family, we are happy to try to include them. They do not have to be “church” music if there is some other song that is particularly meaningful.

## Gathering music before the actual service

Some suggested music might be any of the following or we can simply ask the organist to assemble something appropriate. Normally this will be a medley of several songs:

***Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring***

Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee

***Variations on Amazing Grace***

This Is My Father’s World

O Love That Will Not Let Me Go

Morning Has Broken

## I. Words of welcome and blessing from the pastor

## II. Opening Hymn

The most frequently requested hymns include:

***How Great Thou Art***

***In the Garden***

***Blessed Assurance***

Just a Closer Walk with Thee

Our God Our Help in Ages Past

What A Friend We Have in Jesus

## III. Prayer (from the pastor)

## IV. Scripture and Poetry

There always needs to be at least one Scripture reading in a Christian memorial service. People expect to hear, at least, the Twenty-Third Psalm. In addition, there is normally at least one reading from the New Testament. We are always happy to incorporate personal favorite passages into the service. We also can include non-Scripture poems. For example, families of seafarers frequently request Tennyson’s *Crossing the Bar* or Masfield’s *Sea Fever*. Families of aviators often request *High Flight*.

Here are a few of the most popular readings from Scripture:

***The Twenty-Third Psalm***

(King James Version)

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;

He leadeth me beside still waters.

He restoreth my soul:

He guideth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.

Yea, thou I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for  
thou art with me;

Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:  
Thou hast anointed my head with oil;  
My cup runneth over.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;  
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

***Lamentations 3:22-26***

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,  
his mercies never come to an end.  
They are new every morning.  
Great is your faithfulness.  
“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul,  
“therefore I will hope in him”  
The Lord is good to those who wait for him,  
to the soul that seeks him.  
It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

***Micah 6:8***

What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

***Wisdom of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8***

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:  
A time to be born, and a time to die.  
A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted.  
A time to kill, and a time to heal.  
A time to break down, and a time to build up.  
A time to weep, and a time to laugh.  
A time to mourn, and a time to dance.  
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together.  
A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing.  
A time to get, and a time to lose.  
A time to keep, and a time to cast away.  
A time to rend, and a time to sew.  
A time to keep silence, and a time to speak.  
A time to love, and a time to hate.  
A time of war, and a time of peace.

***Psalms 121***

(King James Version)

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.  
Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.  
The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore

### ***The Gospel of John 14:1-6***

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.' Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

### ***The Gospel of John 14:27***

(Revised English Bible translation)

Peace is my parting gift to you, my own peace, such as the world cannot give. Set your troubled hearts at rest, and banish your fears.

### ***Paul's letter to the Romans 14:7-9***

We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves.  
If we live, we live to the Lord,  
and if we die, we die to the Lord;  
so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.  
For to this end Christ died and lived again,  
so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

## **V. Sermon (from the pastor)**

This is not a eulogy so much as a time to remind everybody to comfort one another and to thank God for the gifts of life, friends, and family. If there are special situations — such as family disharmony or a missed opportunity for reconciliation — it is a chance to use this special time to get past them. Just let the pastor know.

## **VI. Words of Remembrance (from family and friends)**

This is entirely *optional*, but many people find it helpful. Individuals can be asked to prepare a few words of remembrance ahead of time or people can be invited simply to come forward. If it is strained or awkward, we can simply move on. Some people like to read the formal newspaper obituary at this point. In any case, it helps the pastor to be prepared for this portion of the service if he has the “facts” lined up ahead of time. These include the items at the beginning of these notes along with such possible points as life highlights — career, military, family, community, church. Some of the larger families find it useful to ask one individual representing each generation to say something for [typically peers, children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren]

## **VII. Hymn or Solo**

### ***Amazing Grace***

Be Thou My Vision  
His Eye Is On the Sparrow  
Softly and Tenderly

### ***Great Is Thy Faithfulness***

It Is Well With My Soul  
Precious Lord Take My Hand

Special note for all sailors and seafarers: This is where we generally include the beautiful *Eternal Father Strong to Save*—a hymn that many seafarers know by two other names—*The Navy Hymn* or *For Those in Peril on the Sea*.

### **VIII. Prayer of Thanksgiving (delivered by the pastor)**

There can either be general in nature or a very personal and specific. This is where we specifically thank God for the person's particular gifts as spouse, parent, patriot, athlete, musician, teacher, host, scout leader, and so forth.

### **IX. The Lord's Prayer (in unison)**

Because people come to a memorial service from a range of different backgrounds, we invite people to join in the prayer *if they are comfortable doing so*. We also invite them to say it in whatever form or language has the most meaning for them.

### **X. Closing Hymn**

***On Eagle's Wings*** ("He Will Raise You Up...")

***Be Thou My Vision***

O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go

God Be With You Until We Meet Again

When We All Get to Heaven

The Wind Beneath My Wings

His Eye Is On the Sparrow

Softly and Tenderly

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

### **XI. Benediction (from the pastor)**

### **XII. Postlude**

***For All the Saints***

This is the traditional ending. It is a wonderfully triumphal way to end service. However, we can do something else if there was a particularly special hymn or piece of music. Again, for seafarers, we often reprise *Eternal Father Strong to Save*

## A Final Word about Memorial Giving

Beyond the memorial service itself, the church offers families and friends the opportunity to remember loved ones with gifts that will continue their legacy by supporting the church that was so important to them during their lifetime. Many families like to include an indication in the service bulletin and the newspaper obituary such as:

In lieu of flowers, friends may make memorial gifts to The First Congregational Church at Lunds Corner, 2195 Acushnet Avenue, New Bedford, MA 02745

The church also has several ongoing Memorial Funds that support specific ministries of the church such as music and Christian Education. These special funds offer particularly appropriate ways to honor individuals by directly supporting ministries that were especially meaningful to them.

The church always has a list of major initiatives that we would like to undertake but are “on hold” until we are able to find significant funding. For families looking to make larger memorial contributions, we are happy to present you with suggested projects that are part of the church’s long-range vision. Major gifts include the opportunity to be remembered on permanent plaques and to be recognized with special dedication worship services.



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