



LAST ACTS OF LOVE

PREPARING AND PLANNING FOR DEATH



The Promise of Our Faith

Nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. There is nothing – not life, death, sickness or tragedy – that can pull us from God. That is the foundation of our faith and the truth of the Gospel.

What is also true is that all of us will die. As the Bible says, we are dust and to dust we will return. Most people don't like to talk about this reality; for it feels scary and even gruesome. Mostly, it just feels sad. It is important, however, that we talk about dying. We need to discuss it for the sake of our families who love us and want to know our final wishes. Talking about our death, making decisions about the end of life, and planning our memorial service are our last acts of love.

As Christians, we believe that God broke the power of death in raising Jesus Christ from the dead on Easter morning. That is why we call the memorial service a Witness to the Resurrection. Together in worship, we proclaim that death does not have the last word: life does, love does, God does.

In life, and in death,
we belong to God.
That is the promise of our faith.

Simply put, we are Easter people. We live in the hope of the resurrection, in the hope of new life, and in the hope of God's unstoppable love.

The Apostle Paul says it like this:

*"Death has been swallowed up in victory.
Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?"*

(1 Corinthians 15: 54-57).

The Gospel of John offers the church a comforting image in the face of death. Jesus says,

*"In my Father's house there are many rooms. If it were
not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?
And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again
and take you to myself so that where I am, there you will be also."*

(John 14: 2-3).

We will have a place and it will be a place where God is. We call that place heaven. What heaven looks like, we do not know; but heaven is a place of rest from all the burdens and pain of earthly life. God promises an eternal place of life abundant with the "great cloud of witnesses" that have gone before us. This understanding of death does not erase the sadness of losing someone that we love, but it allows us to grieve with hope in God who will never let us go.

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that have gone before us.

When Death Occurs

The church should be second only to family to learn of the death of a church member. Our pastors, through early involvement, can offer comfort to family, support in difficult transition decisions, and guidance in arranging for the memorial service.

The church's main phone number is answered 24 hours a day and should be used for death notification. A pastor will be immediately contacted.

The main number of the church is 913-262-4200.

Planning a Memorial Service

The pastors of Village Presbyterian Church are available to help you plan a service to celebrate the life of your loved one and to proclaim the promises of our faith. It is vital to contact the church prior to setting a time for a service. The church's schedule and the personal schedules of necessary staff may necessitate adjustments to the time and place of the service.

Consider being pro-active and having an early planning conversation with a pastor to lessen last minute decisions left to your family. At a time of emotional difficulty, a record of your requests are kept on file in the Pastoral Care office.

It is a service of worship to glorify God

and to console the living,

and is conducted with dignity and simplicity.

THE SERVICE

The Service of Witness to the Resurrection provides a way to celebrate the life of your loved one and proclaims the hope of the gospel. The pastor normally conducts the service. Close family members or friends may be invited to participate in coordination with the pastor. An "open microphone" is not permitted. The officiating pastor must approve participation of guest pastors in advance. Fraternal, civic, or military rites should be conducted separate from the memorial service. At Village Church, it is understood that the Christian funeral service is a service of worship and should be approached as such. The Pastoral Care Department will prepare a bulletin for the service.

Village's main-level sanctuary seats approximately 850 people comfortably. The Chapel seating capacity is approximately 100. Please notify the officiating pastor if handicap access is needed for family or friends who plan to attend the service. (See Accessibility.)

The Village Church Memorial Guild provides volunteers to assist the day of the service. At least one day's notice is needed to arrange for these volunteers. Please let us know if funeral home staff will be present to assist.

List of Suggested Readings

Funeral/Memorial Services

OLD TESTAMENT

Job 19:23-27 I know that my redeemer lives
 Isa. 25:6-9 God will swallow up death forever
 Isa. 26:1-4, 19 God will keep them in peace
 Isa. 40:1-11, 28-31 Comfort my people
 Isa. 40:28-31 Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength
 Isa. 43:1-3a, 18-19, 25 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you
 Isa. 44:6-8 I am the first and the last
 Isa. 55:1-3, 6-13 Ho, everyone who thirsts
 Isa. 61:1-4, 10-11 The spirit of the Lord is upon me
 Isa. 65:17-25 I create new heavens and a new earth
 Lam. 3:19-26, 31b-32 The Lord's steadfast love
 Dan. 12:1-3 Many of those who sleep in the dust shall awake
 Joel 2:12-13, 23-24, 26-29 Return to the Lord with all your heart

PSALMS

Ps. 16:5-11 The Lord is my chosen portion
 Ps. 23 The Lord is my shepherd
 Ps. 27:1, 4-9a, 13-14 The Lord is my light and my salvation
 Ps. 39: 4-5, 12 Lord, let me know my end
 Ps. 42:1-6a As a deer longs for flowing streams
 Ps. 43 Give judgment for me, O God
 Ps. 46:1-5, 10-11 A very present help in trouble
 Ps. 90:1-10, 12 Teach us to number our days

Ps. 91 The one who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
 Ps. 103 Bless the Lord, O my soul
 Ps. 106:1-5 O give thanks to the Lord
 Ps. 116:1-9, 15 The Lord has heard my voice
 Ps. 118 Open the gates of righteousness
 Ps. 121 I lift up my eyes to the hills
 Ps. 130 Out of the depths I cry to the Lord
 Ps. 139:1-12 Where shall I go from your spirit?
 Ps. 145 I will extol you, O God my King
 Ps. 146 Hallelujah! praise the Lord, O my soul

EPISTLES

Rom. 5:1-11 Hope does not disappoint
 Rom. 6:3-9 Baptized into Christ's death, raised to live with him
 Rom. 8:14-23, 31-39 Nothing can separate us from the love of God
 Rom. 14:7-9, 10b-12 Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's
 1 Cor. 15:3-8, 12-20a Christ raised from the dead
 1 Cor. 15:20-24a In Christ shall all be made alive
 1 Cor. 15:20-26, 35-38, 42-44, 50, 53-58 Death swallowed in victory
 1 Cor. 15:35-44 The natural body and the spiritual body
 1 Cor. 15:50-57 We shall all be changed
 2 Cor. 4:16-5:1 Visible things are temporary, invisible things eternal
 2 Cor. 5:1-10 From God we have a house not made with hands
 Eph. 1:11-2:1, 4-10 Saved by grace through faith
 Phil. 3:7-11 Knowing him and the power of his resurrection
 Phil. 3:20-21 Our citizenship is in heaven
 Col. 3:1-17 Set your minds on the things that are above
 1 Thess. 4:13-18 The comfort of Christ's coming

2 Tim. 2:8-13 If we died with him, we shall also live with him
 Heb. 2:14-18 Christ was tested in every way
 Heb. 11:1-3, 13-16; 12:1-2 Faith, the pilgrimage, cloud of witnesses
 1 Peter 1:3-9 Without seeing Christ, you love him
 1 Peter 3:18-22; 4:6 Christ's ministry to the spirits in prison
 1 John 3:1-3 We are children of God
 Rev. 7:2-3, 9-17 They who have come out of the great tribulation
 Rev. 14:1-3, 6-7, 12-13 Rest for the saints
 Rev. 21:1-4, 22-25; 22:3-5 A new heaven and a new earth
 Rev. 22:1-5 The Lord God will be their light

GOSPELS

Matt. 5:1-12a The Beatitudes
 Matt. 11:25-30 Hidden from the wise, revealed to infants
 Matt. 25:1-13 Wise and foolish bridesmaids
 Matt. 25:31-46 The Last Judgment
 Luke 7:11-17 Jesus raises the son of the widow of Nain
 Luke 18:15-17 We enter the kingdom only as children
 Luke 23:33, 39-43 Today you will be with me in Paradise
 John 3:16-21 God so loved the world
 John 5:24-29 Whoever hears and believes has eternal life
 John 6:37-40 Anyone who comes to me I will never drive away
 John 6:47-58 Whoever believes in me has eternal life
 John 11:17-27 I am the resurrection and the life
 John 11:38-44 Lazarus raised from the dead
 John 14:1-6, 25-27 Let not your hearts be troubled

A Time to Sing

For everything there is a season... a time to mourn, and a time to dance...

—Ecclesiastes 3

There are many reasons why Christian communities sing. At no time does singing seem more appropriate than when faithful people gather to grieve a death, to give thanks for a life, to remember God's faithfulness, to question God's timing, to affirm the strength of community.

The singing tradition is long in our faith; the ancient Hebrew Psalms contain many songs of lament which give voice to the loneliness, confusion, and feeling of abandonment characteristic of grief. Psalm 13 is an obvious example: *How long, O Lord! Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long?* Our singing also celebrates the goodness of life and the faithfulness of God. Psalm 46 declares *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea...* and Psalm 90 affirms *Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.*

Here are five reasons why congregational song is central to the worship of God as the community gathers for *A Service of Witness to the Resurrection*:

1. Singing is an affirmation of community. As the congregation sings they are reminded that we live our life of faith together, sharing both joy and sorrow.

2. Singing allows those who gather to be active in worship, rather than passive observers.
3. Singing allows the community to “do something” in support of those most deeply grieving; the congregation’s song is a loving gift to those most affected by loss.
4. Singing can put us in touch with timeless texts, from scripture and poetry, differently from spoken words. Singing *Our God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come* is a vastly different experience from simply reading the words of Psalm 90 upon which it is based. Singing the words *O blest communion, fellowship divine! We feebly struggle, they in glory shine; Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine*, celebrates the Communion of Saints with persuasiveness beyond mere words. Singing has the power to give life and breath to what we believe; singing embodies our theology.
5. It is natural to sing when we are happy and confident. Singing when we are afraid or unsure perhaps is even more important. In Acts 16: 25-31 we read of Paul and Silas in prison, in chains, in the dark of midnight – *praying and singing hymns to God*. There is no better witness than this story to the power of singing to steady us in faith, to connect us to each other, to open us to God’s healing presence, to assure us that in life and in death we belong to God.

HYMNS

Psalms and Psalm Paraphrases

Psalm 23

The Lord’s My Shepherd, I’ll Not Want	no. 170
The King of Love My Shepherd Is	no. 171
My Shepherd Will Supply My Need	no. 172

Psalm 30

Come Sing to God, O Living Saints	no. 181
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Psalm 46

God Is Our Refuge and Our Strength	no. 191
A Mighty Fortress Is Our God	no. 260

Psalm 84

How Lovely, Lord	no. 207
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Psalm 90

Our God, Our Help in Ages Past	no. 210
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Psalm 100

All People That on Earth Do Dwell	no. 220
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Psalm 103

O My Soul, Bless Your Redeemer	no. 223
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Psalm 121

I to the Hills Will Lift My Eyes	no. 234
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Psalm 145

Your Faithfulness, O Lord, Is Sure	no. 251
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Psalm 146

I’ll Praise My Maker	no. 253
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HYMNS

Appropriate for Beginning or Ending of Worship

Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!	no. 138
Jesus Christ Is Risen Today	no. 123
God of Compassion, in Mercy Befriend Us	no. 261
Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise	no. 263
O God of Bethel, by Whose Hand	no. 269
God of Our Life	no. 275
Great Is Thy Faithfulness	no. 276
If Thou but Trust in God to Guide Thee	no. 282
Give to the Winds Thy Fears	no. 286
Fairest Lord Jesus	no. 306
Jesus, Thy Boundless Love to Me	no. 366
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling	no. 376
Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee	no. 464
For the Beauty of the Earth	no. 473
Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty	no. 482
For All the Saints	no. 526
I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art	no. 457
Abide With Me, Fast Falls the Eventide	no. 543
Day Is Done	no. 544

HYMNS

Appropriate during worship – reflection or lament

Precious Lord, Take My Hand	no. 404
Why Has God Forsaken Me?	no. 406
Blest Be the Tie That Binds	no. 438
There Is a Balm in Gilead	no. 394
O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go	no. 384
My Faith Looks up to Thee	no. 383
I Love the Lord, Who Heard My Cry	no. 362
Loving Spirit	no. 323
When I Survey the Wondrous Cross	no. 100/101
What Wondrous Love is This	no. 85
By the Babylonian Rivers (Ps. 137)	no. 246

CHORAL MUSIC AND SOLO VOCAL MUSIC

Solo vocal:

My Shepherd Will Supply My Need	arr. Virgil Thomson
Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound	numerous arrangements available
His Eye Is On the Sparrow	arr. Luigi Zaninelli
Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us	arr. Luigi Zaninelli
Rock of Ages, Cleft For Me	arr. Luigi Zaninelli
Children of the Heavenly Father	arr. John Ferguson
Thy Holy Wings	arr. John Ferguson
Pie Jesu (Blessed Jesus)	Faure, Durufle, or Lloyd-Weber
Come, Ye Disconsolate (Melodious Accord)	arr. Alice Parker
On Eagles Wings (Psalm 91)	Michael Joncas
There is a Balm in Gilead	numerous arrangements available
For the Mountains Shall Depart (Elijah)	Felix Mendelssohn
He Shall Feed His Flock — Come Unto Him (Messiah)	G. F. Handel
I Know That My Redeemer Liveth (Messiah)	G. F. Handel

Choral Music (for a choir of mixed voices, or vocal quartet):

See What Love	Felix Mendelssohn
My Shepherd Will Supply My Need	arr. Wilberg or Thomson
Wondrous Love	arr. Alice Parker
Beautiful Savior	arr. David Cherwien
O For the Wings of a Dove	Felix Mendelssohn
Jesu, Joy of Our Desiring	J. S. Bach
He, Watching Over Israel (Elijah)	Felix Mendelssohn
Let Nothing Ever Grieve Thee	Johannes Brahms
When I Survey the Wondrous Cross	arr. Gilbert Martin
God So Loved the World	John Stainer
The Lord My Faithful Shepherd Is	J. S. Bach
My Eternal King	Jane Marshall
Deep River, My Home is Over Jordan	spiritual – numerous arrangers

Final Resting Place

As long as there have been churches and buildings used for religious purposes, there have been people wishing for their remains to be interred within or nearby. At Village Presbyterian Church, an outdoor Memorial Garden and an indoor Columbarium are available for disposition of the cremains.

Both the Memorial Garden and the Columbarium provide a final resting place in a sacred space.

They are places of quiet solace where family and friends can come and give God gratitude.

The Memorial Garden and Columbarium are open to current members of Village Church, their children and their parents. Current pricing and further information is available through the Village Church Business Office at 913.671.2363. Extended payment terms are available. Both areas are professionally cared for by church staff.



THE MEMORIAL GARDEN

The Memorial Garden offers a serene final resting place outdoors. Bronze markers with name, birth and death years may be ordered through the Village Church Business Office at 913.671.2363.

The opportunity to select a site is open to current members of Village Church, their children and parents. Site selection is made at the time of need and not earlier. Burial is for cremains only, which may be buried with or without a marker. Arrangements can be made with a pastor to have a graveside service at the time of burial or the staff can perform the service for you if you are unable to attend. Family members (usually spouses) can be placed together and a new marker can be ordered with both names engraved.



THE COLUMBARIUM

The Columbarium at Village Church is a room furnished with recesses or niches into which small urns or appropriate containers are placed (inurnment). Niches are significantly less expensive than those offered through funeral homes and cemeteries. Families may reserve and select niches in advance.

There are two niche sizes available: 1) 8 inches by 12 inches by 12 inches, which will accommodate the cremains of one or two persons; and 2) 12 inches by 12 inches by 12 inches, which will accommodate the cremains for as many as four persons. Urns or containers are furnished by the family, not the church.

Service Considerations

ACCESSIBILITY

The north parking lot entrance marked with an automatic door provides the easiest access to an elevator that goes to the Sanctuary level. The south entrance also has an elevator going to each level of the church building. The second floor is where the Chapel and Friendship Hall are located. There is a wheelchair lift over the stairs going from the Chapel to the Sanctuary. Please notify the officiating pastor if handicap access is needed for family or friends who plan to attend the service.

Designated handicapped parking spaces are available in both the North and the South parking lots and their use requires the appropriate hanging tags or license plates provided by the State.

AFTER SERVICE RECEPTION

The church will host a reception in Friendship Hall or another room following the service. Memorial Guild volunteers will serve the refreshments so the family is available to greet visitors. Coffee, lemonade and cookies are offered by the church at no charge. Please inform the church if you choose to have outside catering for the reception. Recorded music and PowerPoint slide shows are appropriate in the reception setting.

AUDIO/VIDEO

Audio and video recording for the service is available for a nominal fee.

CASKET

Many people hold a private burial prior to their loved one's memorial service. However, if a casket is brought to the church, it will be closed at all times while in the Sanctuary or Chapel. Funeral home staff will be responsible for assisting the pallbearers in placing and removing the casket. Funeral home staff must remain on the premises when a casket is in the church facility.

DISPOSITION OF THE BODY

Burial, cremation or donation of the body for medical purposes are all appropriate options within the Christian tradition. The body or remains may be interred prior to the service or following the service. If the body has been donated for medical purposes, a service may still be held immediately. And later, when the remains are available, an interment can be scheduled.

THE PALL

The word "pall" comes from the Latin *pallium*, meaning cloak. The Pall is a cloak or cover for the casket or urn. Simply, it is a piece of cloth. Village Church has two beautiful palls for families to use: one sized for a casket, a smaller one for an urn. The pall is white, which is the color of Easter and Baptism. Families may choose to place a white pall over the casket during the funeral to remind themselves and the congregation of the promise of Easter: that death has no power to pull us from God. The pall also reminds us of baptism. In the early church and in our churches today, baptismal garments and gowns are white. At the time of death, the white pall also recalls the promise of our baptism: that we belong to God—that in life and in death we are God's children.

FLOWERS

As the funeral or memorial service is a worship service, the Sanctuary or Chapel should appear much the same as it would for any service of worship. It is suggested that flowers in the Sanctuary or Chapel be limited to a few arrangements. The Memorial Guild volunteers who serve as ushers will help bring these to the reception area if the arrangements are not too large.

If funeral home staff is not present, the volunteers will do their best to collect the flower cards and write a description of the arrangement on the card. These will be left with the guest book. It is the responsibility of the family to dispose of the flowers following the service. If you anticipate a large number of flowers it is helpful to have the funeral home personnel present during the service to help facilitate the movement of all the arrangements.

MEMORIAL GIFTS

Frequently families express the desire that flowers not be sent and that contributions be made to organizations or charities in which the family has a special interest. The newspaper will include such a desire in the paid obituary.

MEMORIAL GIFTS TO THE CHURCH

Memorial gifts, if desired, may be directed to Village Presbyterian Church, the Village Church Memorial Fund, or the Village Church Endowment Trust. Memorial gifts are placed in the fund designated. If no fund is designated, the contributions are placed in the Memorial Fund. Contributions totaling \$500 or more to the Memorial Fund will be recognized with a Memorial plaque. Envelopes will be provided for church gifts. Acknowledgments will be sent to the family and to the donor of the gift. Contact the Village Church Business Office at 913.671.2363 for more information.

PHOTOS/GUEST BOOK

Families are welcome to bring photos to display either on an easel or on a picture table during the reception following the service. Some families choose to create a digital slideshow. This kind of tribute may be played during the reception. A computer, DVD player, and LCD projector and screen are all available on site. Families may bring a PowerPoint slide show on a jump-drive, laptop or a CD.

Guest books allow overwhelmed families to keep a record of those worshipping. The guest book is provided by the family and should be at the church one hour prior to the service.

Grief Support: Picking Up the Pieces

Every grief is unique, for every person is unique. Death can come suddenly and tragically with no way to prepare. And death can come as a friend, bringing release to the person who is suffering and to their care-giving families. In any event, death leaves a void, a hole in the world. It is important to remember that while life will never be the same again, life can be good again. People do not “get over grief,” but they do learn to live with it and work through it.

Grief takes work. Find people who will listen to your stories, your fears, your aches and your hopes. Go easy on yourself and give yourself permission to feel. Don't rush your grief too quickly. After the loss of a loved one, you may feel compelled to “get on with your life.” Try not to make any major decision concerning money, disposition of property, job change, etc. for at least six months and preferably one year. You may wish to seek the help of a financial advisor for deciding what to do with insurance money or other assets.

STEPHEN MINISTRY

Stephen Ministry at Village Church equips lay people to provide confidential, one-to-one Christian care to individuals in our congregation and community who are experiencing grief. They are ready to provide the emotional and spiritual care needed when we are faced with life's difficulties. If you or someone you know would like to visit with a Stephen Minister, contact the Pastoral Care Office at 913.671.2327.

It is important to remember that,
while life will never be the same again,
life can be good again.

GROWING THROUGH GRIEF

Growing Through Grief is a five-week support group. The purpose of the group is both to support the bereaved and to educate them about the process of grieving. To register for this series, contact the Pastoral Care Office at 913.671.2327.

RESOURCES ON GRIEF

The following recommended books may offer nuggets of advice and wisdom to help you along the journey of grief.

Lament for a Son, Nicholas Wolterstorff

Psalms of Lament, Ann Weems

A Grief Observed, C.S. Lewis

Understanding Grief: Helping Yourself Heal, Alan Wolfelt

Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart: How to Relate to Those Who are Suffering,
Kenneth Haugk

Healing After Loss: Daily Meditations for Working Through Grief, Martha Hickman

Tracks of Fellow Struggler, John Claypool

Grieving: A Beginner's Guide, Jerusha Hull McCormack

Companion Through the Darkness: Inner Dialogues of Grief, Stephanie Ericsson

How to Survive the Loss of a Love, Harold Bloomfeld, Melba Colgrove,
and Peter McWilliams

It is wise to alert your family to where you have kept vital information (see below for the types of information your family will need). These statistics and documents will be needed at the time of your death, the writing of an obituary, and the settling of your estate.

On the Village Church website: www.villagepres.org under “Memorial Services” you can find a downloadable PDF document that will help guide you in collecting this legal and financial information.

Also on our website is a link to a very helpful conversation tool produced by the Center for Practical Bioethics, *Caring Conversations: Making Your Wishes Known for End-of-Life Care*. This workbook includes in it a Healthcare Directive and a Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare Decisions.

VITAL STATISTICS

Full name, address and telephone number, how long you have lived at current address, occupation and employer, workplace address and telephone number, Social Security number, Armed Services number, birth date and birthplace, Mother’s and Father’s names and birthplaces, full and maiden names/contact information of all immediate family members, memberships to clubs and organizations will be needed.

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

Will, Birth Certificate, Social Security Card, Marriage License, Pre-written Obituary, Insurance Policies, Bank Account Passbooks, Property Deeds, Vehicle Titles, Income Tax Returns, Military Discharge Papers, Disability Claims, Burial Property Certificate of Ownership, Prearranged Funeral agreements, Caring Conversations Document, Living Will

OTHER MATTERS

Computer pass codes, outstanding bills and debts, credit card numbers, name and address of executor, safety deposit box location/instructions, labeled keys, special keepsake locations.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Village Presbyterian Church

6641 Mission Road • Prairie Village, KS 66208

913.262.4200

villagepres.org

** The church’s main phone number is answered 24 hours a day and should be used for death notification. A pastor will be immediately contacted. A complete list of Village Church staff members is available at www.villagepres.org.*