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## Funeral Policy For Summit Ridge Church

### Preamble

At Summit Ridge Church, we hold firm to the biblical truth that for the believer, death is a transition into the glorious presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently, funeral services for Believers are designed to be a profound witness to the resurrection hope found in Christ and a celebration of His sovereign grace in the life of His servant. Furthermore, recognizing our pastoral responsibility to extend comfort and the truth of God's Word to all, we also provide funeral services involving individuals who were not professing Believers. In these sensitive situations, our commitment is to offer compassionate care to the grieving, while uncompromisingly and lovingly proclaiming the Gospel message and the absolute necessity of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. This policy ensures that all funeral services held at or officiated by Summit Ridge Church personnel are Christ-centered, biblically faithful, and ultimately bring glory to God.

### I. Guiding Principles for Pastoral Funerals

- **Christ-Centered:** The central theme of the service shall be the Gospel of Jesus Christ—His atoning death, victorious resurrection, and the promise of eternal life for all who believe.
- **Biblically Faithful:** All elements of the service, including scripture readings, sermon, and music, shall be consistent with the inerrant Word of God and the Summit Ridge Church doctrinal statement.
- **Hope-Filled:** While acknowledging the sorrow of loss, the service will emphasize the joy and hope of the resurrection and the Believer's eternal rest in Christ.
- **God-Glorifying:** Every aspect of the funeral will be designed to bring honor and glory to God, rather than focusing solely on the accomplishments of the deceased.
- **Edifying:** The service should comfort the grieving, strengthen the faith of Believers, and present the Gospel clearly to all attendees.

### II. Funerals for Non-Believers

We recognize that our pastors may be asked to officiate or participate in funeral services for individuals who were not professing Believers, or who were not members of Summit Ridge Church. In such sensitive situations, the following principles and guidelines will apply:

- **Compassion and Grace:** We extend compassion and pastoral care to grieving families, regardless of the deceased's spiritual standing. Our desire is to minister to the living and offer comfort in their time of sorrow.
- **Truthfulness and Integrity of the Gospel:** The funeral service, even in this context, must remain faithful to the biblical truth regarding salvation, death, and

eternity. It is essential that the pastor does not compromise the Gospel or offer false hope of salvation where there is no biblical basis.

- **Focus on the Living and the Gospel Call:**
  - The primary aim of the service will be to minister to the grieving family and friends, offering comfort from God's Word and pointing them to the hope found in Jesus Christ.
  - The sermon or exhortation will clearly present the Gospel message – the reality of sin, the necessity of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, and the promise of eternal life for Believers. It will gently, yet clearly, articulate the biblical understanding of a person's eternal destiny based on their relationship with Christ.
  - Avoidance of Universalism: The pastor will refrain from any language that suggests all individuals automatically go to heaven, or that salvation is achieved apart from faith in Jesus Christ.
- **Respectful Acknowledgment of the Deceased (Contextual):**
  - While the service will not celebrate a life in a way that suggests spiritual commendation for a non-believer, the pastor may respectfully acknowledge aspects of the deceased's life (e.g., character traits, relationships, community contributions) as appropriate, ensuring these acknowledgments do not contradict or overshadow the Gospel message but give thanks to God for His giving the life of the deceased because of imago dei (being created in the image of God).
  - The emphasis will always be on God's sovereignty and the need for all to respond to His call.
- **Pastoral Discretion and Discernment:**
  - Requests for the church's pastor(s) to officiate a funeral for a non-believer will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
  - The officiating pastor will have the discretion to accept or decline such requests based on their pastoral judgment, the circumstances of the request, and their ability to uphold the integrity of the Gospel within the service.
  - Factors that may be considered include the pastor's relationship with the family, the family's understanding of the church's theological position, and the likelihood of being able to clearly articulate the Gospel without undue compromise.

### **III. Components of a Pastoral Funeral Service**

- **Scripture Readings:** Carefully selected passages that proclaim the hope of the resurrection, the sovereignty of God, and the comfort of the Holy Spirit (e.g., John 11:25-26, Romans 8:38-39, 1 Corinthians 15:50-58, Revelation 21:1-7).
- **Prayer:** Prayers of thanksgiving for the life; prayers for comfort for the grieving family; and prayers for God's continued work in the church and family.

- **Sermon/Exhortation:** A concise, Gospel-centered message delivered by a designated pastor or elder, focusing on the biblical understanding of death and resurrection, the faithfulness of God, and the hope found in Christ. While acknowledging the deceased's life and ministry, this should be presented within the framework of God's grace and not as a eulogy focused solely on human achievement.
- **Music:** Hymns and songs that are theologically sound, congregationally familiar, and uplift the name of Christ. Special music should also align with these principles.
- **Eulogy (Limited and Christ-Centered):** Brief testimonies (if desired by the family and approved by the officiating pastor) should be limited to 2-3 individuals and focused on how the deceased exemplified Christ, served the church faithfully, and impacted lives for the glory of God. These should be vetted in advance to ensure they remain Christ-centered and avoid excessive personal anecdote that detracts from the Gospel message.
  - Eulogies for non-believers will focus on the imago dei and ways we can thank God for His work.
- **Committal (if applicable):** A brief service at the graveside, focusing on the hope of the resurrection and the promise of Christ's return.

#### IV. Responsibilities

- **Officiating Pastor:** The senior pastor or a designated elder will oversee the planning and execution of the funeral service, ensuring adherence to this policy.
- **Pastoral Care Team:** Will provide spiritual and practical support to the grieving family.
- **Family Involvement:** The church will work closely with the family to understand their wishes, while gently guiding them to ensure the service remains Christ-centered and consistent with the churches doctrinal statement. The final decision regarding the content and flow of the service rests with the church leadership to ensure theological integrity.

#### V. Provisions for Retired or Former Pastors

This policy extends to pastors who are not part of Summit Ridge Church. The church leadership will prayerfully consider requests for facility use on a case-by-case basis, ensuring any service held within our facilities aligns with our theological distinctives.

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### Church Facility Use Policy

#### I. Expectations for Holding the Funeral in Our Sanctuary (and other Church Facilities)

1. **Sanctuary as a Place of Worship:**

- The sanctuary of Summit Ridge Church is set apart for the worship of God. All activities within the sanctuary, including funerals, must reflect reverence and respect for its sacred purpose.
  - The use of the sanctuary is at the discretion of the Elder team and the officiating pastor.
- 2. Scheduling:**
- All funeral dates and times for the sanctuary must be scheduled through the Church Administrator.
  - A funeral will only be confirmed after the initial meeting with the pastor and approval of the pastor.
  - Priority for scheduling will be given to members of Summit Ridge Church.
- 3. Music:**
- All music selections for the funeral must be approved by the officiating pastor.
  - Music should be sacred or classical in nature, reflecting the reverence of the occasion and appropriate for a worship setting.
  - Recorded music should be of high quality and played discreetly.
  - The church's audio-visual equipment use must be coordinated with the Church Administrator or designated AV volunteer.
- 4. Receptions:**
- If the family wishes to hold a reception at the church, this must be arranged separately with the Church Administrator and may involve additional fees and policies (e.g., cleanup) for non-members.
  - Alcoholic beverages are strictly prohibited anywhere on church property, including during receptions. Smoking/vaping is also prohibited inside all church buildings.
- 5. Custodial and Fees:**
- A fee of \$300 will be applied for custodial services, and sound/AV technician.
  - An honorarium will be applied for all non-members of \$200.00.
  - Additional fees may apply for special requests or extended use of facilities.
  - Payment of all fees is required in advance of the funeral date.
- 6. Compliance with Church Authority:**
- The officiating pastor and church staff have the final authority on all matters pertaining to the funeral service and the use of church facilities. All instructions and policies must be followed.
  - Any service held in our facility must not contradict the Statement of Faith of Summit Ridge Church.
  - Failure to adhere to this policy may result in the cancellation of the funeral at Summit Ridge Church.

## **II. Review and Approval**

This Funeral Policy will be reviewed periodically by the Elder team of Summit Ridge Church and may be amended as deemed necessary.

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**Effective Date:** [Date of Adoption]