



St. John the Evangelist

Episcopal Church

Guide for Burial and Funeral Planning

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Preparing for the End-of-Life:

Being well-prepared for death is one of the most compassionate pastoral gifts we can provide for our loved ones. The Church is here to provide spiritual and practical resources to help us face the realities of death and dying together. Resource packets are available on our website and from the parish office, and our clergy are ready to walk with you as you document your wishes concerning your burial service.

When Someone Dies:

The Church is here to help you with decisions, obligations, and the Christian services that are so important in navigating any grief we might experience and celebrating the life of the person who has died. The Church is a community of hope, not in spite of, but because of death. Because Jesus died on the Cross and rose from the dead, we believe that we, too, shall live with him despite our death. When someone you love dies, the Church is present to reaffirm that resurrection hope, to offer you confidence in the midst of mourning, and to provide practical help in burial arrangements.

Help and Hope:

When someone you love is near death, please contact one of the clergy as soon as possible. We are happy to gather with you, and any family and friends you would like, to offer prayers as death nears, often called the “Last Rites” of the Church and to commend your loved one to God. The Clergy will also offer you practical counsel and support. This includes making arrangements for the liturgy and determining the details for burial or cremation.

Planning the Service:

The liturgy is appropriately held in the Church where the parish family regularly gathers for worship. A visitation can also be held at the Church before the liturgy or at a funeral home. The coffin or urn may be present for this time. After the liturgy, a reception can be held in one of our gathering spaces. The parish office will work with you on all the practical funeral arrangements.

The Liturgy of the Resurrection:

In the Church, the burial liturgy is rightly called the "Liturgy of the Resurrection." It is an Easter liturgy, regardless of the season of the Church year. The liturgy contains prayers, psalms, scripture readings, and hymns. One of the parish clergy will help you shape the liturgy, reflecting the life of the one mourned and the hope of the Christian faith. All burial rites used at St. John's conform to the rites found in the Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopal Church. A selection of appropriate readings and psalms is available from the parish office.

Music is an important part of the liturgy. St. John's Music Director provides support and direction for choosing hymns and other music that emphasize the resurrection to eternal life. A homily based on the scripture chosen is preached by one of the parish clergy at the liturgy. The homily emphasizes the promises of Christ. It is not the practice of the Episcopal Church to have eulogies at the liturgy. It is appropriate for family members or friends of the deceased person to offer a remembrance, reflection, poem or reading during the liturgy.

The Holy Eucharist is central to our understanding of the Christian hope and promise of God. It is therefore a most appropriate part of any Liturgy of the Resurrection. If the Body is present for the liturgy, the coffin is closed throughout and covered with a pall symbolizing the hope all Christians are given when they are clothed in baptism and marked as Christ's own forever.

What about Cremation?

The Episcopal Church approves of cremation as well as the burial of the body. Ashes may be interred in our Parish Columbarium or elsewhere depending on the desire of the deceased person and her or his family. More information about our columbarium is available from the parish office.

What is a Memorial Service?

Since families are often great distances apart, sometimes it is necessary to delay the liturgy until after the body has been cremated or buried. These are known as "Memorial Services." This is simply another term for the "Liturgy of the Resurrection," which is to remember a loved one and commend that person to God's eternal presence. It usually refers to a delayed liturgy, or one at which the body is not present.

What about the costs?

St. John's does not charge for funerals, including the preparation and printing of the service bulletin; however, we do believe in reimbursing individuals for their time and attention. The fee(s) for music include the parish organist at \$300, for one consultation and the service. Any additional musicians must be approved by St. John's Music Director; any payments are to be arranged with and paid directly to the musician or group. If the funeral is to take place outside their normal working hours, sexton services will be charged at \$40 per hour (the office can advise regarding

normal working hours). If you wish to hold a reception at the church the cost is \$100 for the Gathering Space or Fireside room and \$200 for the gym. Other costs associated with any special requests you have will be advised. While it is always appropriate to make a gift to the parish in honor and memory of the deceased, and while you may, if you wish, offer an honorarium to the clergy, neither is necessary nor expected.

Pre-arrangement:

You can arrange for the services of a funeral home by paying the fees in advance. Also, there are "memorial societies" that can help you make low-cost arrangements. Funeral homes and memorial societies will provide you with information about procedures and costs for such pre-arrangements. A pre-arranged burial can lessen stress on one's family. In addition, we encourage you to have your wishes on record with St. John's. The Parish Office has a form that you can complete and return that will clearly describe your wishes and instructions for your service. The clergy are happy to help you complete this form, if you would like.