

Funeral Customary



ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
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Priest-in-Collaboration

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*We hope this booklet will guide you through the planning of a funeral at St. John's Church.
Episcopal funeral liturgies intend to give honor to God for the life of the deceased
and encouragement to the bereaved.*

Worship Details Concerning the Service

The liturgy for the dead is an Easter liturgy. It finds all its meaning in the resurrection. Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we, too, shall be raised. The liturgy, therefore, is characterized by joy, in the certainty that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Book of Common Prayer (p. 507)

Reserved Seating

Pews may be reserved for family members and pallbearers. Please let the priest know ahead of time how many pallbearers there will be and how many family members will be seated in the reserved area.

St. John's "Good Neighbor" Policy

On occasion, arrangements may be made for someone to be buried from St. John's who was not a member of the parish.

The Procession

Before the service, the priest will visit with your family for prayer and then will walk you into the church. Clergy and members of the family of the deceased enter from the back of the church.

During the Service Itself

The congregation stands at the beginning of the procession and sits down after the opening prayer. The congregation will be invited to stand, sit, and kneel as full participants in the service following the rubrics of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer and will be invited to receive Communion at the appropriate time and place.

The Liturgy

The emphasis of the funeral service is a celebration of the life of the deceased and the hope of a resurrected life with Christ. The order of service for funerals is according to the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, which has two funeral liturgies. Rite I service uses traditional Elizabethan English, while Rite II service uses contemporary English language. The Parish Administrator will prepare a short bulletin for the service to be used as a companion with the Book of Common Prayer and hymnal so that the congregation may easily follow the order of service.

Homily

The priest will preach the good news of God's love and our salvation, referring to the life of the deceased. One or two family members or friends may each speak before the homily. The reception is a fitting time for friends and family to share their stories of the deceased.

Scripture Lessons and Readers

Lessons from Holy Scripture are read at funeral services, and a list of suggested passages will be provided from which you may choose two or three. These readings are read by a friend or family member or a member of St. John's. The Gospel lesson is read by the priest.

Hymns

Hymns are normally drawn from the *1982 Hymnal or Wonder, Love and Praise*. Hymns not found in these hymnals may on occasion be used if the music can be secured and copyright permission is

granted. The music director at St. John's will play the organ and/or the piano at all funerals unless the music director and the priest give permission for another organist to play. Vocal and instrumental solos must be approved by the music director. Recorded music is discouraged.

Altar

The liturgical color for funerals is white. White is the color used for many of the great feasts of the church and symbolizes the joy of the resurrection. The frontal on the altar, the hangings on the lectern, the pall on the casket, and the minister's vestments are all white. The paschal candle—which is lit at Easter, baptisms, and funerals—is placed by the body to symbolize the presence of Christ and the victory of light over darkness.

Altar Flowers

Two arrangements of live flowers that fit containers used at St. John's and the space at the altar are needed for the celebration of the life of the deceased. Additional flowers in the service are not necessary. Flowers are not placed on the casket in the church service. Additional flowers may be used for a reception or at the graveside.

The Holy Eucharist

In the Episcopal Church, the Holy Eucharist—also called the Mass, Holy Communion, or the Lord's Supper—is frequently celebrated as part of funeral and memorial services. The Holy Eucharist is our central sacrament, celebrating Christ's death and resurrection. A celebration of the Holy Eucharist as part of a funeral or memorial service reminds us that we also share with Christ his death and resurrection. All Christians, regardless of denominational affiliation, are invited to share in the Lord's Supper. The Prayer Book Service of The Burial of the Dead takes approximately forty-five minutes to an hour, depending on the number of people receiving Communion.

Ushers

Ushers will assist the congregation, pew by pew, in proceeding to and from the altar rail. Our church assistant will train people the family appoints to be ushers.

The Body

The body of the deceased is always treated with dignity and respect. When the casket is present for the burial service, it is closed prior to the funeral and covered with a white cloth called a pall. The pall reminds us of the white garment of baptism and that the promises of baptism are fulfilled at our death. The cross and clergy lead the casket into the church and family members may follow it, if they wish, or they may be seated prior to the beginning of the service. At the conclusion of the service, prayers of commendation are offered around the casket and the pall bearers lead the casket out of the church with the family following. A funeral service without a body is properly called a Memorial Service. It is conducted in the same way as a burial service with the exception that the prayers of commendation over the body are not used.

Cremation

This is an acceptable and dignified way of treating the deceased's body. In a sense, cremation merely hastens the natural process of returning a body to ashes and dust. When the ashes, sometimes called "cremains," are present during the service, they are treated the same way as a body in a casket. They are placed on a table at the front of the church. They may be processed in and out of the church, or they may be placed on a table before the service begins. The ashes may be interred before or after the funeral service or at a later date.

Reception

Following the funeral service, a reception may be arranged in the Parish Hall, but the family or friends must provide the refreshments or contract with a caterer.

Guestbook

St. John's Church does not provide a guestbook for congregation members to sign. In most cases, this is provided by the funeral home.

Things to Keep in Mind

Communion: It is appropriate and encouraged, though not required, to include Communion in the burial liturgy, as recognition that we share in the resurrection of our Lord. Whether you choose Rite I or Rite II, the Great Thanksgiving from the appropriate rite is added to the Liturgy of the Word.

Hymns: Singing is often helpful to the bereaved and adds warmth to the service. All hymns must be coordinated with the music director. You may choose up to five hymns. If your family or those attending are not likely to sing, we encourage you to choose to have the music director play the hymns as an instrumental.

Readings: The Book of Common Prayer offers a selection of readings from the Old Testament, the book of Psalms, the New Testament, and the Gospels. You may also want to include special poems or writings and include these in the funeral liturgy.

Committal: It is recommended (though not required) that the committal at a cemetery occur prior to the burial service in the church. This allows the committal to serve as an intimate service for family and closest friends, and it enables the family to receive guests at a reception after the service in the church rather than then proceeding to the committal.

FEES

For contributing members of St. John's:

There are no fees for the use of the church for funerals or the Parish Hall for a reception.

For noncontributing members:

- Use of the church \$200
- Use of the Parish Hall \$150
- Clergy \$350 (check made out made out to The Rev. Marya DeCarlen with "Rector's Discretionary Fund" written in the memo line for the care of those in special circumstances)
- Music Director \$200
- Parish Administrator \$150