



Funeral Customary

Parish guidelines governing the burial of the dead

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

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A. Introduction

Firstly, let us seek comfort from the *Book of Common Prayer (BCP)* and Holy Scripture:

The liturgy for the dead is an Easter liturgy. It finds all its meaning in the resurrection. Because Jesus 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.

This joy, however, does not make human grief unchristian. The very love we have for each other in Christ brings deep sorrow when we are parted by death. Jesus himself wept at the grave of his friend. So, while we rejoice that one we love has entered into the nearer presence of our Lord, we sorrow in sympathy with those who mourn.

The above quote from the *Book of Common Prayer* (p. 507) stands at the core of the approach to planning a service of Burial of the Dead at St. Mark's. This customary has been designed to aid those planning such a service, in consultation with the clergy, to uphold the dignity and reverence of the Sacrament, as well as to provide a basis for a consistent and proper celebration of the life of a member of the Body of Christ. Further help can be found by reading the rubrics concerning the service found on page 468 (or 490) in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

B. Funeral Planning Guide

1. An individual should plan the details of his funeral in consultation with the parish priest. A form for this is available in the church office. The parish office will keep a copy of such plans on file for reference for the clergy and the family so that the wishes of the deceased may be kept.
2. Whenever possible, a priest should be called before a death occurs in order to be present to minister the Sacraments to the dying person. No matter what the hour of the death, the family should call the priest immediately.
3. **All funeral arrangements are to be made in consultation with the clergy before any such consultation with a funeral director.** In practical terms, the priest *is* funeral director for the service. At this time, any written directions the deceased may have made with the church prior to death will be taken into consideration.
4. The funeral or memorial service should be held, whenever possible, in the church. Only prayers, lessons, and hymns authorized by the church may be used. Any readings must meet with the approval of the clergy prior to the service. Only the Liturgy of the Church may be used at a funeral in the Episcopal Church. If possible, a Eucharist will be part of the Burial Office to give all present an opportunity to share in the celebration for the life of the deceased. If, however, this is not possible, it is urged that the Eucharist be offered at an earlier hour on the day of the burial for the immediate family and friends of the deceased.
5. The casket is closed before and during the Burial Office. **A white pall is provided by the parish, and will be used from the time the body enters the church until after the committal.** The pall may be used whether the body is taken to the home, or the funeral home, and will cover the casket from the time it is brought to the church until the conclusion of the service at the graveside. Similarly, a small pall is provided for use in the

case of cremation, and is to remain over any vessel containing the ashes of the deceased until after the committal. Also, the processional cross is provided for use by the parish to lead the body from the church, and thence to the gravesite. In the case of cremation, ashes of the deceased may either be placed in the chancel before the service, carried in the procession, or not present at all, depending on what is desired. Ashes can potentially be placed in any container. If they are to be housed in one of the columbarium niches in the churchyard, such a container should be small enough to fit into the niche.

6. Two simple bouquets may be placed on the altar. **No other flowers may be brought into the church for the funeral.** Artificial flowers are not to be used. The family will often provide flowers for the funeral, or it may be the wish of friends to provide flowers as a memorial gift. If neither family nor friends provide flowers, they will be provided by the altar guild.
7. In keeping with the Easter nature of the service, it is desirable that the altar be dressed in white hangings (regardless of the season of the church year) and that the Paschal Candle burn at the service, or even be carried at the head of the procession, if desired. Other candles should be lit from the fire drawn from the Paschal Candle; only the office candles if there is no Eucharist should be lit well in advance of the service before people begin to gather.
8. The Liturgy gives no authority for any form of eulogy at a funeral. However, a sermon or homily may be preached if desired.
9. **No photographs of the deceased, or any memorabilia, are to be displayed in the church proper, either before, during, or after the service. Such items are permitted at a reception following the service, if desired.**
10. Ushers should be active in helping people find seats and to see to it that all available seats are used in the pews.
11. **Music for all services must be in accord with the laws of the Episcopal Church** (see *BCP*, p. 14) and may be chosen by the family in consultation with the parish clergy and organist.
12. **If interment of the remains is planned for St. Mark's Cemetery, please request a copy of the Cemetery Guidelines from the church office immediately** so arrangements may be finalized before the Burial Office is offered.
13. There are **no fees** involved for the use of the church or for the clergy. A fee of **\$200.00** is to be paid to the organist prior to the funeral service. It is suggested that the family of the deceased urge friends to give donations to the Parish Memorial Fund.

C. Funeral Planning Form

Full Name of Deceased _____

Date of Birth _____ Date of Death _____ Date of Funeral _____

Name of Funeral Home _____ and phone _____

Obituary attached? Yes No Rite I or II? I II Communion? Yes No

Select One: Casket Urn Memorial Service

Interment Location _____

Floral Preference and Florist _____

Ushers/Pall Bearers: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____

Crucifer _____ Soloist _____

Funeral Choir _____ Lector _____

Chalice Bearers (Communion only) 1. _____ 2. _____

Officiates: Priest _____ Assisting _____

D. Reception

Will there be a reception in Founder’s Hall? Yes No (If *no*, please go to E.)

Estimate Number of Guests: _____

Select one: Funeral Committee Catered By _____

E. Readings

- Old Testament: Isaiah 25:6-9 Isaiah 61:1-3 Lamentations 3:22-26, 31-33
 Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-5, 9 Job 19:21-27a
 Other _____ Other _____
- New Testament Romans: 8:14-19, 34-35,37-39 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:9
 1 Corinthians 15:20-26,35-38,42-44,53-58 1 John 3:1-2
 Revelations 7:9-17 Revelations 21:2-7
 Other _____ Other _____
- Psalm After OT: 42:1-7 46 90:1-12 121 130 139:1-11
 Other _____ Other _____
Or After NT: 23 27 106:1-5 116
 Other _____ Other _____
- Gospel of John 5:24-27 6:37-40 10:11-16 11:21-27 14: 1-6
 Other _____ Other _____
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F. Funeral Hymns

- Opening/Processional 397 – Now Thank We 618 – Ye Watchers & Ye Holy Ones
 680 – O God Our Help 688 – A Mighty Fortress
- Sequence/Communion 335 – I Am the Bread of Life 620 – Jerusalem, My Happy Home
 645 – The King of Love 664 – My Shepherd Will
 671 – Amazing Grace
- Closing/Recessional 376 – Joyful, Joyful 657 – Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
 688 – A Mighty Fortress
- Additional/Offertory 636-637 – How Firm a Foundation
 208 – Alleluia, The strife is o'er the battle won
 690 – Guide me, O thou great Jehovah
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Please return the completed form to the church office,
 Or email it: life@stmarksnc.org.