

Grace Episcopal Church



Burial Planning Guide



Foreword

“The liturgy for the dead is an Easter liturgy. It finds all 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.”

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.”
Book of Common Prayer, pg. 507

When someone dies, it is important for family and the church community to gather, pray for the soul of the one who has died, and give thanks to God for the gift of that life. We also gather to comfort others who share our feelings of loss and sorrow. At a funeral, grief and gratitude mix together and are held up in prayer to God. But it is important to recognize that funerals are to a great extent for the benefit of the living. Through faith we trust that the one who has died rests now with God. Through faith we believe that the love we feel for the one who has died will never die. It is the loss of their regular presence in our daily lives that makes us sad.

When we gather for a funeral we face death and confront our own mortality. The loss of someone close offers us an opportunity to reflect on their example and consider how we live our own lives. At a time of loss, through God's grace and self-reflection, we pray that we might be transformed, just as we know our loved one already has been.

Planning

While it is the responsibility of the Rector to finalize the service plan for a funeral, it is always a great gift when the person who has died has left instructions for their funeral. It is a comfort to know that our loved one has thought about death and has taken the time to write down how she would like to be remembered. Helping to plan a funeral for someone we love can be cathartic and healing. Helping to plan for your own funeral can be equally beneficial.

Planning for Yourself - When expressing your wishes for your own funeral, be sure to include information that will be helpful to both the Rector and your survivors. Include things that your survivors might not know. Do you want to be cremated? Where do you want to be buried? What kind of music do you like? Who should be notified? What are your favorite scripture passages? Do you have a favorite poem or author? Indicate what is most important to you.

You should make your wishes known but also understand that some decisions will be left to your survivors. When someone you love dies, you become painfully aware that much is beyond your control. Planning a funeral is one of the family's and church's final expressions of love and care for the one who has died.

Planning for Someone Else - As you work with the Rector to prepare for someone else's funeral, keep in mind that you may need to balance the needs of several people. If you are part of a large family, there will be others who would like to be consulted about the service. Begin by listing the people who will be most affected by this death and then reach out to them as soon as possible. Resist the urge to make all the decisions yourself. Even though there are often time constraints in the planning process, the sooner you have contacted the interested parties the smoother that process will be. If there are tensions in the family, don't avoid them, deal with them directly. Sometimes a death can bring out the worst in a family, but it

more often brings out the best. Planning for a funeral can be a profound act of healing for a family if you open lines of communication rather than close them down.

The first person to consult for a church service (and for that matter, any service) is the Rector, not the funeral home. One of the first decisions you will need to make is when and where the service will take place. Although most often conducted at the church, circumstances may mean the service is held elsewhere. Have two or three options in mind when speaking with the Rector.

In the past, a funeral would always take place within a few days of the death, but, in reality, this is no longer the norm. Leave enough time to make travel arrangements but not so much time that people are left alone with their feelings of grief. Typically, one to two weeks from the death is a good time frame. Have a firm commitment from the Rector and the funeral/burial site coordinator concerning the date and time before you share the information with the public.¹

¹Portions taken from Bob Boulter and Kenneth Koehler (2013), “Preparing for an Episcopal Funeral,” (New York: Morehouse).

Frequently Asked Questions

Where is the best location for the Service?

People who have been active participants in the worship life of Grace Episcopal Church are properly buried from the church, with a burial service in the church. For those who have been absent from the church for a long period of time or for those who might expect a very small service, conducting only a grave side service may be an option. However, it is usually preferable to conduct the service in the church. Funeral home chapels are certainly capable of accommodating an Episcopal Burial Service. However, because a funeral home chapel was not where the deceased worshiped within the context of the Christian community, the church is still the preferable choice.

In most situations, following the worship service the ashes or casket are buried or interred. If you are interested in being interred at the Columbarium here at Grace Episcopal Church, please let the church office know and you will receive information on purchasing a niche.

Burial/interment is a very brief service. If the deceased is to be buried or interred somewhere other than in our Columbarium, arrangements for a graveside committal are often made by the funeral home of your choice and the Rector can officiate.

Does the Body or Cremated Remains have to be present?

The Book of Common Prayer uses the term 'The Burial of the Dead' for all services. When the bodily remains are present, the term 'Funeral' is often used. The remains may be in a coffin or cremated and in an urn. If the remains are not present, often the term 'Memorial Service' or 'Celebration of Life' is used. All terms are interchangeable.

1. If the remains are in a casket, it is placed at the foot of the sanctuary steps during the service and covered in a white pall. The casket is closed at all times. The body is usually brought into the church at the start and removed at the end of the service using appointed pall bearers.
2. Cremated remains are in an urn or box, which is placed on a small table at the top of the sanctuary step, and covered in a small, white pall. The cremains are usually placed before the service and removed by the family after. Another option is to process with the cremains just as one would do with a casket.
3. If there are no remains present, often a photo is placed at the front of the Sanctuary used to represent the one who has died. The order of the service remains the same as if bodily remains were present but the Commendation at the end is omitted.

Should there be Communion at the church service?

If a person has been an active communicant at Grace, receiving Communion regularly as a part of our communal life, then Communion should be a part of the burial liturgy. At the burial service, the priest always issues a warm, verbal invitation welcoming all to God's Table to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. Communion is a way that we, as Episcopalians, express hospitality and welcome, to those of many denominations and stages of faith and belief.

What about Music at the service?

Traditional and contemporary, ancient to modern, music is welcome as long as it is oriented towards the praise of God. If there is a song or songs that you would like to have played, but are not sure if they are appropriate, the Rector will help you decide. There are generally five different times during the service when music is appropriate:

1. Opening Hymn - After the entrance procession
2. Sequence Hymn - before and after the reading of the Gospel

3. Offertory Hymn or Anthem - as the table is prepared for Communion
4. Communion Music - during the administration of the Sacrament
5. Closing Hymn.

Hymns that reflect our Christian faith and life, our hope and our Easter joy are all appropriate during the burial service. However, unless a congregation is mainly made up of Episcopalians, communion music of congregational hymns can be difficult. Organ or other instrumental music, or an offering by a soloist, may be a better choice during Communion. Pre-recorded music is not preferred but can be used if that is important.

What kinds of Readings are used during the service?

One to four readings are recommended. Typically, there is a Hebrew Scripture reading, a Psalm, an Epistle reading, and the Gospel. You are not required to have any more than one (the Gospel is always read by a clergy member) and it is not recommended to exceed four. An excellent way to include family members or friends in the service is to have them read these lessons. Remembrances, secular songs, poems, and any customs, prayers, or rites from outside the Book of Common Prayer are acceptable if approved by the Rector beforehand. You may also consider using those during the reception after the service.

Should we have a reception after the service?

While the service in the Church Sanctuary is paramount, it is also important to provide a reception or social gathering afterward. People often come a long distance to pay their respects. Give everyone a chance to share their own memories and let the family know how much that person will be missed.

What kind of fees are expected for a service at Grace Church?

There is a fee of \$150 for those who are not pledging members of Grace Church. This covers administrative costs such as heat, bulletin printing and cleaning.

The organist's ministry for services includes a 15 minute organ prelude, service music & hymns, and closing music as people exit the church. Although each musician sets their own fee, an honorarium of about \$200 is paid directly to the organist before the service commences. Any soloist or instrumentalist is paid separately, based on their individual fees, which average \$100 to \$200.

If no other events are scheduled, you are welcome to use Grace's Parish Hall (maximum occupancy - 150) for a catered or family member sponsored potluck reception. For non-pledging members of the Parish, there is a fee of \$150. The kitchen facilities are available for an additional fee of \$25. You will need to commit to the Church's 'facility use agreement'.

The clergy honorarium is paid directly to the Rector for use in the Rector's Discretionary Fund to help those in need. It is the family's discretion; however, and \$250 is suggested.

Who will prepare the worship bulletin?

The Parish Administrator will prepare a Service Bulletin based on your choices and your discussions with the Rector. Email the church office a copy of the obituary if you wish it to be included in the bulletin. info@gracechurchmtz.org.

What is the practice for flowers at Grace?

One larger flower arrangement and pictures are welcome to be placed in the Narthex of the Church (the lobby). Only one floral display is appropriate for placement in the Sanctuary by the pulpit. Two vases may

be placed behind the Altar if there is to be Communion (unless the Altar is already decorated for another service, then it is not changed). We prefer altar flowers be ordered through the church's florist as they are aware of size and height restrictions. The Altar Guild can help you with the order. Other flowers may be placed in the Parish Hall to help decorate for the reception.

Is there a way to remember the deceased with a memorial gift?

Consider stating in the obituary an option that in lieu of flowers, your friends and family can make a donation to the Grace Church Memorial Fund.

And ahead of time, consider planned giving of worldly goods to benefit the Church. There are various vehicles that offer parishioners unique ways to support their congregation, receive tax advantage savings and provide the Church with guaranteed funds for the future. The Diocese has many resources available to assist in this planning, just contact the Rector for more information.

PLANNING YOUR WORSHIP SERVICE

You should leave a copy of the Worship Planning Pages with the Church and let loved ones know that you have made these choices by sharing this information with them.

Full Name of the deceased as you would like it to appear in the bulletin:

What term do you wish to use for this Service:

- ☐ Burial of the Dead
- ☐ Funeral Service
- ☐ Memorial Service
- ☐ Celebration of Life

Date of Birth for the Bulletin: _____

Date of Death for the Bulletin: _____

Date of Service confirmed with the Rector: _____

Will there be military or other honors? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you like a picture of the deceased on the bulletin cover?

☐ Yes ☐ No (If so, please send an electronic copy of the picture to the office. If an electronic copy is not available, please bring one into the office so we may scan it.)

Will the body be present at the service? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Will ashes be present at the service? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Will there be a procession of the bodily remains at the start and end of the service? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you like the organist to play for the service? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Soloists and Other music. A great way to include your musically inclined family and friends would be to allow them to play at your service. They must provide their own instrument or may use the piano. Is there someone you would like to play? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, Who: _____

What instrument: _____

If you do not have anyone specific in mind, but still have a special request, such as a flautist or guitar player, our music leader may be able to help you. What are your requests?

If there is to be a body or cremains present, pall bearers can assist in the procession and recession. The funeral home personnel will handle any lifting, so this is a ceremonial position which can be an honor close friends and family.

Pall Bearers: _____

You may also choose someone to serve as crucifer, acolyte, and chalice bearer; however, the person or persons selected must be trained in the Episcopal Church. If you do not know anyone who is trained or if no one is available, please remember that Grace Parish members consider it a privilege to serve.

Crucifer: _____

Acolyte(s): _____

Chalice Bearer(s): _____

WORSHIP ORDER

Here you will find the order of service. In each section of this planning guide, you will see a listing of suggested readings. Suggested hymns are at the end. These are by no means the only scriptures or hymns you may use. They are listed to help you if you are unsure what you would like. There are two “Rites” in the Book of Common Prayer but at Grace Parish we use Rite II which uses contemporary language. (You may request Rite 1 if you wish.) The order of service begins on the Book of Common Prayer page 491.

Opening Prelude and Entrance

The prelude is a series of songs that are played while guests are arriving and being seated. The organist begins playing approximately 15 minutes before the service starts. You may also choose to have a silent entrance and go without a prelude.

The Officiant along with Service personnel and the deceased’s remains enter the church while the Officiant reads from the Burial Office.

Then, an Opening Hymn may be sung by the congregation and may have the words printed in the bulletin. Please select a hymn that you would like at this time. _____ (Suggested hymns are listed on the last page.) Or, you may just proceed with the opening prayers read by the celebrant.

Liturgy of the Word - Readings

The First Lesson is traditionally a Hebrew Scripture reading and may be read by a family member or friend. You may use one of the suggestions or choose your own.

Hebrew Scripture and Apocrypha Readings

- ☐ Isaiah 25:6-9 (He will swallow up death in victory)
- ☐ Isaiah 61:1-3 (To comfort all that mourn)
- ☐ Lamentations 3:22-26, 31-33 (The Lord is good unto them that wait for him)
- ☐ Wisdom 3:1-5, 9 (The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God)
- ☐ Job 19:21-27a (I know that my Redeemer liveth)

Or other reading: _____

First Lesson Reader: _____

Here is an opportunity for a Psalm, Canticle, or Hymn. The Psalm may be sung or spoken, read by an individual or spoken together by all. The words may be printed in the bulletin.

Do you wish to have a Psalm Reading? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Or Other _____

Psalm

- ☐ Psalm 23 (The Lord is my shepherd) King James Version
- ☐ Psalm 23 (The Lord is my shepherd) Contemporary Version
- ☐ Psalm 27 (The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear?)
- ☐ Psalm 42 (As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God)
- ☐ Psalm 90 (Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations)
- ☐ Psalm 116 (I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my supplications)
- ☐ Psalm 121 (I lift up my eyes to the hills – from where will my help come?)
- ☐ Psalm 130 (Out of the depths I cry to you. O Lord)
- ☐ Psalm 139 (O Lord, you have searched me and known me)

Or other Psalm, Canticle, or Hymn _____

The Second Lesson is traditionally a New Testament reading, and may also be read by a family member or friend. You may use one of the suggestions or choose your own.

New Testament Readings

- ☐ Romans 8:14-19, 34-35, 37-39 (Neither death, nor life...will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord)
- ☐ 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 35-38 42-48. 53-58 (Christ has been raised from the dead)
- ☐ 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:9 (So we do not lose heart)
- ☐ 1 John 3:1-2 (See what the father has given us)
- ☐ Revelation 7:9-17 (there was a great multitude)
- ☐ Revelation 21:2-7 (And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem)

Or other reading: _____

Second Lesson Reader: _____

Typically there is a hymn between the Second reading and the reading of the gospel. It is called the Sequence Hymn. Suggested hymns are at the end of this document. You may also request a song, such as the ‘Wind beneath my Wings’, or ‘In Christ Alone.’ Special requests are at the organist’s discretion with the Rector’s approval. Sequence hymn or song: _____

The Gospel lesson is the final reading. It is required at all burial services at Grace and is always read by the Rector. You may use one of the suggestions or choose your own from the 4 gospels.

Gospel Readings

- ☐ John 5:24-27 (anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life)
- ☐ John 6:37-40 (Everything that the father gives me will come to me)
- ☐ John 10:11-16 (I am the good shepherd)
- ☐ John 11:21-27 (Martha said to Jesus, ‘.. if you had been here, my brother would not have died’)
- ☐ John 14:1-6 (I am the way, and the truth, and the life.)

Or other Gospel reading: _____

Eulogy and Reflections

A Eulogy, or remembrance of the deceased has long been considered a necessary part of a funeral, but as the Episcopal liturgy is an Easter celebration that is focused on the resurrected life, we consider this optional. Traditionally, a single eulogy was offered by a person who was a close friend or relative. This is still an option, but we also welcome several shorter reflections by different people. Poems, songs, or readings that were special to the deceased are also acceptable as remembrances.

Eulogist(s) and relation to the deceased: _____

Homily

The homily is a short sermon, delivered by the Rector. The purpose of the homily is to share the Good News of the risen Christ and to celebrate the resurrected life of the deceased; thus, achieving the balance between the worship of God and the setting forth of the example of the resurrected life of one of God’s saints.

The Creed

The Apostle’s Creed follows the homily. See page 496 in the Prayer Book

For a Service without Eucharistic, the Lord’s Prayer is recited here. Otherwise it is recited as a part of the Eucharist.

Prayers of the People.

There is a prescribed set of prayers starting on page 497 of the Prayer Book. At this time that you may request any special prayers, such as the serenity prayer, the Al-Anon prayer, Prayers of St. Francis, etc. You may have a family member or friend read the prayers, if you choose.

Who would you like to read the prayers? _____

What are your special prayer requests? _____

The Peace

After a prayer by the Priest, the people greet each other in the name of the Lord.

To continue for a non-Eucharistic service, please skip the next section and go to *the Commendation*.

The Eucharist

Eucharist: ☐ Yes ☐ No

If a Eucharistic service is desired, please select your preference:

- ☐ Rite I, Eucharistic Prayer 1, p. 333
- ☐ Rite II, Eucharistic Prayer A, p. 361
- ☐ Rite II, Eucharistic Prayer D, p. 372

If there is music, an offertory anthem is played while the Rector is setting the table. The offertory consists of friends or family bring forward the bread and the wine to be used at the Communion. Please select an anthem that you would like at this time. (Suggested hymns are listed on the last page.)

Offertory Anthem or Hymn: _____

Who would you like to present the bread and wine? _____

You may select that the Organist play devotional music during communion or you may choose a Hymn.

Devotional Music: ☐ Yes ☐ No

or Communion Hymn _____

At Grace Parish, all are welcome at the Lord's table. This will be noted in the bulletin and the priest will extend that invitation prior to distributing the Communion.

The Commendation

If the remains are present in the church, there are prayers which require a response from the congregation. These will be printed in the Bulletin. If not, this section is skipped and proceed to the Blessing.

The Blessing and Dismissal

The Blessing is followed by the Closing Hymn, which is sung by the congregation at the end of the service. Closing Hymn of your choice: _____

If the casket is present, they will be taken from the Sanctuary at this time, with the immediate family following. Remains can remain or be taken out as a casket would. Any palls are removed once the remains are outside the Sanctuary.

After the Hymn, the Dismissal will read as follows from the entrance to the Sanctuary:

Celebrant: Let us go forth in the Name of Christ. The People respond: Thanks be to God.

The Family then should lead the exit from the Church with friends and family following. They may greet each other in the atrium or in the Parish Hall.

As with the Prelude, the Postlude, is played for about 10 minutes after the service, while the guests are exiting the church. You may also choose to have a silent exit:

Postlude: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Or Closing of your choice: _____

The Committal

The committal is a very short service as the remains are placed in their final resting place. This typically takes place shortly after the service and may require some coordination with the funeral directors. It can also take place later and the Rector can be involved again at that time.

Additional requests _____

You should leave a copy of the Worship Planning Pages with the Church and let loved ones know that you have made these choices by sharing this information with them.

Hymn Suggestions

From the 1982 Hymnal

Any of the Hymns Related to Burial (#354–#358), particularly familiar ones are:

#355, Give rest, O Christ,

#358, Christ the Victorious

Any of the Hymns related to Easter (#174–#213), particularly familiar ones are:

#180, He is risen

#182, Christ is alive!

#188, Love's redeeming work is done

#199. Come, ye faithful, raise the strain

#204, Now the green blade riseth

#207, Jesus Christ is risen today

#208, Alleluia! The Strife Is O'er The Battle Done

Other particularly familiar Hymns common to several denominations:

#362, Holy, Holy, Holy

#390, Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

#423, Immortal, invisible

#488, Be thou my vision

#558, Faith of our fathers!

#608, Eternal Father, strong to save (the Navy hymn)

#662, Abide with me

#671, Amazing Grace

#711, Seek ye first

Wonder, Love, and Praise

#760, O Wheat Whose Crushing Was For Bread

#762, I Am The Bread Of Life

#765, O Blessed Spring, Where Word And Sign Embrace Us

#770/771 O God Of Gentle Strength

#775, Give Thanks For Life, The Measure Of Our Days

#776, No Saint On Earth Lives Life To Self Alone

#791, Peace Before Us

#793, Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather

#799, Abide With Me: Fast Falls The Eventide

#801, God Be With You Till We Meet Again

#810, You Who Dwell In The Shelter Of The Lord

#811, You Shall Cross The Barren Desert

#816/817 Christ Is Risen From The Dead

#828, Beati In Domo Domini

Lift Every Voice and Sing

#60, How Great Thou Art

#103, Steal Away, Steal Away To Jesus

#106, Precious Lord, Take My Hand

#180, Ain-A' That Good News

#188, When Peace Like A River

#190, If When You Give The Best Of Your Service

#204, When Waves Of Affliction Sweep Over The Soul

#207, We Are Often Tossed And Driv'n

#213, Children Of The Heav'nly Father