



ST. LUKE'S

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

FUNERAL GUIDELINES

Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord; and may light perpetual shine upon them.

revised 2018

INTRODUCTION

This guide is intended to be of assistance to you when you are preparing for a funeral, whether you are planning well in advance or the death has already occurred. If you are using it after the death of a loved one, grace and peace to you during this time of loss. **The clergy and people of St. Luke's extend you our condolences and prayers.**

The purpose of the Christian funeral is to gather as the people of God to participate in our sacred story. Though death is real and painful, we gather to sing, to give thanks, and to put our hope in the power of the Resurrection to make all things new. The funeral, therefore, is intended to proclaim the Gospel and console those who mourn.

Please contact the clergy of the church immediately following a death, or in anticipation of the death of a member or loved one. The clergy want to accompany you in your grief and can also assist in making preparations for burial.

The guidelines listed here are in no way intended to restrict the role of the family in providing one final means of caring for their loved by in preparing to bury them. Rather, these guidelines have been put in place to ensure that the burial aligns as fully as possible with the grace and hope of God. As the steward of his holy story and tradition, the Church seeks to offer a liturgy which is a means of grace and healing to the community, and these guidelines offer direction towards that purpose.

From the Book of Common Prayer:

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, not 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.

ST. LUKE'S FUNERAL GUIDELINES

1. ELIGIBILITY

Believing that all children of God deserve a good and decent burial, we will provide a funeral for anyone, regardless of their church membership status or religious affiliation. We have specific rites for burials for the unbaptized and stillborn infants as well.

2. FUNERAL LITURGY

All funerals held at St. Luke's must conform to the rubrics and expectations of the *Book of Common Prayer*. After funerals, it is quite common to hear how beautiful, helpful, and meaningful the Episcopal burial liturgy is. This is true because our liturgy is rooted in the Christian faith and our *Prayer Book* liturgy has existed for nearly 500 years. It has stood the test of time and is a grace-filled vehicle for our sorrow, grief, and pain while also providing a sense of solace, hope, and love. The liturgy works best if we simply allow it to function as it is composed and intended – communicating the grace of God.

All liturgical decisions are to be made by the Rector of the parish. Sometimes, the deceased may have left instructions for their funeral. Other times the family may have particular desires for the liturgy. This input will be considered respectfully by the clergy. However, please do not assume that all requests will be able to be honored.

It is important to note that funerals come under the heading of “Burial of the Dead” in the *Prayer Book*; they are not “memorial services.” The focus of a funeral liturgy is on God’s abiding love and presence with us, both during life and after our death. Funerals are proclamations of the Resurrection and are not to be “customized” to fit the personality or preferences of individuals. The funeral liturgy is rooted in our Baptismal theology which names us all as the beloved children of God, which is our truest and deepest identity. All funerals at St. Luke’s will speak personally to the deceased, but funerals are not to be personalized.

There is a democratizing effect when funerals are held to a standard, reminding us that in death we are all equal. Certainly, individual aspects of a person’s life will be conveyed through the choices of readings and music. Additionally, the clergy will speak of the deceased in a personal way in a homily. The liturgy is not to be devoid of the particularities of the grace of God that we saw in the deceased, but the focus must remain on Jesus Christ.

Funerals are not seen as a sacrament of the Church, meaning that no grace is imparted to the deceased through the funeral. This should alleviate any stress about making sure that the funeral is “perfect.” We come together to thank God for the life that we knew in the deceased, to proclaim the Resurrection, to bread break together in a sacred meal which transcends space and time and even life and death, and to show our love for the deceased by providing for them a peaceful place of rest and an honorable funeral.

The clergy will work with you on determining the time for the funeral liturgy. Please do not confirm this detail with guests or an undertaker (funeral home) before speaking with the clergy. **You should speak with the clergy of the parish before working with the undertaker.**

There are some liturgical decisions that the family is invited to consult with the clergy on:

Rite I or Rite II – In The Episcopal Church, there are two styles of language found in our *Prayer Book*. One is Rite I, which uses “older” language (thee, thou, giveth, etc.). The words of this liturgy are deep and rich in meaning. Rite II uses more contemporary language (you, your, gives, etc.)

Readings – All readings at funerals must come from the Bible. Generally, there are four readings: Old Testament, Psalm, New Testament, and Gospel. The first and third readings may be read by a family member or friend. The Psalm is recited by the entire congregation. The Gospel is read by the Deacon (if there is not deacon, by a priest). It is important to consult with the clergy before deciding on any particular readings, as they will serve as the foundation for the funeral homily. Some suggested texts are:

From the Old Testament:

Isaiah 25:6-9 (He will swallow up death for ever)

Isaiah 61:1-3 (To comfort those who mourn)

Lamentations 3:22-26,31-33 (The Lord is good to those who wait for him)

Wisdom 3:1-5,9 (The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God)

Job 19:21-27a (I know that my Redeemer lives)

Suitable Psalms:

23, 42:1-7, 46, 90:1-12, 121, 130, 139:1-11

From the New Testament:

Romans 8:14-19,34-35,37-39 (The glory that shall be revealed)

1 Corinthians 15:20-26,35-38,42-44,53-58 (The imperishable body)

2 Corinthians 4:16-5:9 (Things that are unseen are eternal)

1 John 3:1-2 (We shall be like him)

Revelation 7:9-17 (God will wipe away every tear)

Revelation 21:2-7 (Behold, I make all things new)

From the Gospel:

John 5:24-27 (He who believes has everlasting life)

John 6:37-40 (All that the Father gives me will come to you)

John 10:11-16 (I am the good shepherd)

John 11:21-27 (I am the resurrection and the life)

John 14:1-6 (In my Father's house are many rooms)

*Non-biblical readings cannot be substituted for the Word of God. If there is a particular poem or text that would be meaningful for the family, please let the clergy know and it can be considered in preparation of the homily.

Music – While music is not required at funerals, it often provides comfort and richness to the liturgy. Secular music is not to be used for the rite of Christian burial. It is appropriate to suggest three to five hymns in consultation with the clergy. At St. Luke's, hymns are accompanied by the organ. The list below contains hymns that are especially fitting for funerals, but this list is not exhaustive; any hymn from the *Hymnal 1982* (or other approved Episcopal resources) can be considered. **Hymns not found in *Hymnal 1982* cannot be used.**

174 At the Lamb's high feast we sing

178 Alleluia, alleluia! Give thanks to the risen Lord

182 Christ is alive! Let Christians sing

180 He is risen, he is risen!

207 Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!

210 The day of Resurrection

335 I am the bread of life

343 Shepherd of souls, refresh and bless

354 Into paradise may the angels lead you

355 Give rest, O Christ

356 May choirs of angels lead you

376 Joyful, joyful, we adore thee

417 This is the feast of victory

448 O love, how deep, how broad, how high

461 Alleluia! Sing to Jesus!

469 There's a wideness in God's mercy

490 I want to walk as a child of the light

499 Lord God, you now have set your servant free

517 How lovely is thy dwelling place

618 Ye watchers and ye holy ones

620 Jerusalem, my happy home

625 Ye holy angels bright

637 How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord

645 The King of love my shepherd is

663 The Lord my God my shepherd is

664 My Shepherd will supply my need

665 All my hope on God is founded

671 Amazing grace! How sweet the sound

676 There is a balm in Gilead

679 Surely it is God who saves me

680 O God, our help in ages past

688 A mighty fortress is our God

3. FUNERAL LITURGY

Family – The family will gather before the liturgy in a room near the Parish Hall. Just before the hour of the funeral, the clergy will greet the family to pray with them and walk through the liturgy with them. The clergy will then usher the family to reserved seating in the church. The family will be the first to receive Eucharist, and will follow the crucifer out of the church at the conclusion of the liturgy.

Coffins – When the body arrives at the church, the coffin shall be closed and remain closed for the duration of the liturgy and reception. The coffin remains closed as it permits the mourners to acknowledge the parting caused by death and our commending the deceased to God.

The Body – Every effort should be made to have the body present for the funeral (whether in a casket or in an urn as cremated remains). The body is not merely a “shell” for an eternal soul; this is a Platonist corruption of the Christian faith. Our faith is rooted in the doctrine of the Incarnation, which deeply is deeply embodied in our faith. Having the body present more fully enables us to gather as the community of the faithful to continue to walk in faith with our dearly departed. Furthermore, the Commendation portion of the liturgy is one of the most healing and profound and this portion of the liturgy cannot be used when the deceased is not present. The body or ashes will lie “in state” before the Paschal candle in the church prior to the start of the liturgy.

Easter liturgy – As funerals are properly seen as Easter liturgies, the color of church hangings will be white. The overall mood for the liturgy is also one of hope, and so “alleluias” will be used in the liturgy, even during the season of Lent. The Paschal candle will also be lit, reminding us of our Baptism into Christ’s Death and Resurrection.

Holy Eucharist – In this sacred meal, we remember our Lord’s victory over sin and death while sharing in his Body and Blood. The Eucharist is a Sacrament that unites heaven to earth and the living to the dead. Funerals are perhaps the most appropriate of all liturgies in which to celebrate Holy Eucharist. **At St. Luke’s, the Eucharist will be celebrated at all funerals.** In The Episcopal Church, all baptized Christians are welcome to receive Communion, regardless of denominational affiliation, and the unbaptized are still welcome at the altar to receive a blessing pronounced by the clergy. There is no danger of Eucharist being an exclusionary ritual, but rather it is one that unites us to the deceased as they share the same meal with us at the heavenly banquet.

Funeral pall – As a symbol and reminder that in death, God’s grace cover us all equally, any casket or urn will be covered in a white funeral pall. Flags, flowers, or other decorations must be removed before entering the church.

Homilies and remembrances – In the Church, eulogies (tributes to or remembrances of the deceased) are discouraged because of how we understand the purpose of the funeral. The funeral is the place to lift the deceased up to God and to give our sorrows to our Maker and Redeemer. **Remembrances by family and friends are not to be part of the funeral liturgy at St. Luke’s.** A member of the clergy will give a homily which proclaims the Christian faith and testifies to the particular grace of God manifest in the life of the deceased. Because the funeral liturgy is an expression of the Christian story and participates in the drama of God’s salvation, having a brief homily to draw these connections between God’s grace, our need for comfort, and the ways in which this grace was particularly manifest in the life of the deceased is essential; the homily is not an optional portion of the liturgy.

This guideline is in place for several reasons. Some people have family members who can make eloquent speeches while others have no family members. Often, such family reflections, while helpful for that particular

family member, can detract from the funeral's ability to proclaim the Gospel and provide comfort to those who mourn. Having a member of the clergy deliver the homily ensures that each person receives a fitting and proper remembrance which proclaims the Resurrection. Having a member of the clergy offer the homily ensures that it will conform to the expectations of length, content, and decency for a funeral. Eulogies (sometimes called remembrances) are not a part of our Episcopal tradition, as the focus is on the Good News of Jesus Christ.

However, if the family would like a time for remembrances, this can be accommodated during the reception. One to three family members or friends can speak for about five minutes each at the start of the reception. This setting is much more appropriate for such remembrances.

Committal - If the body is present (which is the normal and expected practice), following the Eucharist and Commendation, the Committal will often follow in St. Luke's columbarium (or other cemetery). If it is a casket burial, we will proceed to the cemetery. When it is not possible for the body to be present, the Committal can be done at a later date and the liturgy concludes with the blessing.

Other rituals - Fraternal, military, or other organizational rites are not to be mingled with or added to the funeral liturgy of the Church. If such services are desired, they may precede the church service. Often, these rituals are best done during a funeral home visitation or during a reception.

Bulletins - Information that will be needed for the bulletin is: full name of the deceased, dates of birth and death, names of any family members who are serving as readers. Bulletins may not be customized by the family and will only contain information pertaining to the liturgy, burial site, reception location, and designation for memorial gifts.

Other participants - No other musicians or clergy should be invited to participate in the liturgy without the approval of the Rector. Please refrain from asking anyone to participate before having a conversation with the Rector.

Ushers and pallbearers - St. Luke's will provide ushers who are familiar with the flow of our liturgy and campus to assist guests. The family does not need to provide ushers. Pallbearers are not needed in cases of cremation. For caskets, pallbearers play a largely ceremonial role, as often the funeral home will provide staff who will maneuver the casket in and out of the church building. The funeral home will provide information on how many pallbearers may be needed at the graveside, but the aisles of St. Luke's do not allow for pallbearers to carry a casket in or out of the church in procession.

4. FLOWERS

If the family would like flowers to be present at the altar, they can speak with the clergy for information about where we often order flowers from. Flowers that include some white selections will work best with the liturgical hangings for Easter. Please do not order flowers beyond the two vases for the altar. Any additional flowers that are sent to the church may be displayed at the reception but will not be used in the church building.

5. RECEPTION

The Parish Hall is available for a reception following the funeral liturgy. A light reception will be offered by the Church (simple foods and drinks) at no charge to the family. This is a good time to greet those who attend the liturgy. It is strongly recommended not to form a "receiving" line in the Parish Hall, but rather to locate family members throughout the Parish Hall so that you can engage with the guests instead of simply shaking hands with each person who attends. You may also choose to display photos, a slideshow, or have family remembrances during the reception. A reception can be held either before or after the liturgy.

5. COLUMBARIUM

The Parish has a set of guidelines which govern the Columbarium. If internment will take place there, please consult those guidelines for further information.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. PRE-PLANNED LITURGIES

Members may choose to pre-plan their own funeral liturgy. While doing so can be helpful to family members, especially those who are not very familiar with the faith tradition, planning a loved ones funeral can be a very helpful part of the grieving and healing process that should not be taken away from the family. Planning a loved one's funeral is a profound act and provides one final opportunity for the family to show care for the deceased. As St. Paul remarks (Galatians 6:2), we are "bear one another's burden." Though planning a funeral can be burdensome, it is a deeply holy act. It is important to keep in mind that though your particular desires will be considered and given respectful consideration, the final liturgy will be the decision of the Rector in consultation with the family.

2. VIGIL

Sometimes called a wake or visitation, you may choose to receive family and friends apart from the burial liturgy. These vigils are not nearly as common as they have been in previous generations and can be accommodated at the funeral home, or at St. Luke's in lieu of a reception. Please note that any casket that is present at St. Luke's must be closed upon arrival.

3. MEMORIAL GIFTS

Many families choose to note that memorials may be made to St. Luke's in lieu of flowers. It is appropriate to also direct memorial gifts to a charitable organization.

4. GRAVESIDE LITURGIES

In certain situations, only a graveside liturgy may be held. Please speak with the Rector if this seems fitting.

FEES AND HONORARIA

Fees: There are no fees for funerals held at St. Luke's. However, it is common to provide honoraria to the presiding clergy and organist.

Honoraria:

Any gifts to the clergy or organist should be paid by check made out to the individual or cash. The average honorarium is \$100 for the presiding clergy and \$100 for the organist.

CONCLUSION

It is the strong and sincere desire that the information contained in this booklet is helpful in making the funeral planning process easier, thereby allowing you to focus more on family. These guidelines are established in order to use the building and furnishings properly and to preserve the heritage and tradition of worship in The Episcopal Church.

A PRAYER FOR THE BEREAVED

Grant, O Lord, to all who are bereaved the spirit of faith and courage, that they may have strength to meet the days to come with steadfastness and patience; not sorrowing as those without hope, but in thankful remembrance of your great goodness, and in the joyful expectation of eternal life with those they love. And this we ask in the Name of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

FUNERAL PLANNING GUIDE

Full Name:

Date of completing this form:

Names and contact information of living relatives with close connections:

Date of Birth:

Preference for Rite I _____ or Rite II _____

Suggestions for Prelude Music:

Suggestions for Hymns:

Suggestions for Scripture:

Preferences for Chalice Bearers, Crucifer, and Readers:

Burial Location:

Other preferences or relevant information: