

Let Your Life Speak:

Planning Your Own Funeral

A Lenten Discipline



Saint Mark's Episcopal Cathedral

Seattle, Washington

Lent 2020

RESOURCE GUIDE FOR PLANNING YOUR OWN FUNERAL

The faith community at Saint Mark's is honored to offer the hospitality of the cathedral to you as you consider details of the service. By giving thought, and sharing your notes with your family and the clergy, you will help us be about the work of celebrating your life and commending you to God with assurance that we honor you in the effort. Your planning will be a rich gift to those whom you love as they plan that service. The Cathedral clergy also consider it a privilege to assist you in any way you find helpful.

As Christians, we proclaim that in death, life is changed, not ended, and this burial service gathers up that belief with much grace. As people of faith, we do not deny death; rather, we see death as an integral part of life. What follows are some general guidelines intended to assist you in this important work.

Some General Guidelines

Funeral services have several alternative names (e.g., the Burial Rite, a memorial service, a celebration of life, a requiem mass, etc.), but they all attend to the liturgical work of marking the occasion when one has died. It is important work, and at Saint Mark's the funeral service is based on the order of service provided in the Book of Common Prayer. The officiating priest, and the liturgy and music department will help your family to plan the service, and to choose readings, prayers, hymns, and music that proclaim our faith in resurrection; reflect and celebrate the life of the person who has died; and offer comfort and hope to all who mourn.

Scheduling the Service

We will do everything we can to make the cathedral or a chapel available at the best time for your family and friends to gather for a service, but because we have many events scheduled, we may not be able to offer the most preferred time. It's important that the family clears the day and time with the cathedral clergy first before announcing the service publicly.

Participating Clergy and Musicians

Normally, a priest from the pastoral staff of the cathedral is the officiating priest at the service. We are happy to welcome assisting clergy from outside the cathedral, but it is appropriate for the Dean to extend any invitations to other clergy. Normally, the organist for the service is a member of the cathedral music staff. We are also happy to welcome assisting musicians from outside the cathedral, but ask that you consult first with the Canon for Cathedral Music before extending an invitation.

Speakers

We generally encourage those offering remembrances to do so at the reception. If you feel strongly about someone speaking during the service we would be happy to discuss that possibility.

Readers and Leader of the Prayers

Normally, laypersons rather than clergy read the lessons. Members of the family or friends might be invited to serve as readers. One or two readers will be needed, depending on how many readings you will be using. If the liturgy is a Eucharist, The Gospel is read by a deacon or priest of the cathedral. A member of the family or a friend might be invited to lead the prayers.

Will the Service include a Eucharist?

You will want to consider whether the service will be include a Eucharist (a Communion service) as part of the Burial Office (the service of readings and prayer). We encourage you to consider having Eucharist, even if your family and friends may not practice such faith traditions. The clergy will take great care to extend a welcome to all present as part of the radical hospitality we strive to practice here. There is also a profound mystery built into the burial rite wherein we state that, in the mystical ways of God, we share the eucharistic feast with those who have gone before, including the one whose life we celebrate on that particular day.

Will the Body of your loved one be present?

If there is a cremation, will the ashes be present?

Our faith is an incarnational (embodied) faith. We recommend, if it is possible, that either the body or the ashes of your loved one be present at the service. We honor the body (or the ashes which represent it) as the vessel that contained the gift of the person we love. The presence of that reminder as we proclaim, sing, and pray convinces us anew that the Christian hope of risen life in Christ is now a reality for our loved one.

If the body or ashes will be present, we recommend doing a formal reception of the body or ashes at the very beginning of the liturgy.

The next few pages provide an outline of the service which we hope will help you begin to think about your service. As questions arise, we encourage you to speak with family members if you find that helpful. Please know the cathedral clergy stand ready to assist also.

OUTLINE FOR PLANNING A FUNERAL OR MEMORIAL SERVICE

If you have a Book of Common Prayer (BCP) you may want to look at it with this outline. If you don't have one, you can find it easily online. Feel free to borrow a BCP from the nave for this work also. The Burial Service, Rite II, begins on page 491 of the Book of Common Prayer. Hymns are usually chosen from The Hymnal 1982, the Episcopal Church's main hymnal.

THE GATHERING

The purpose of this part of the service is to bring everyone together (family, friends, and colleagues) in the presence of God, creating a community which can join together in song, prayer and worship.

Prelude Music

PROCESSION

A procession of liturgical ministers to the liturgical platform, leading the body or ashes if present to the front of the cathedral.

The procession is accompanied by either:

A Hymn or The Anthems (spoken texts found at BCP page 491, all 3 sections; page 492 first section only.) *These draw heavily on scriptures and are especially poignant in setting the tone for the service. They can be said or chanted by the officiating priest (or cantor).*

WELCOME

The officiating priest may welcome the assembly, extends the cathedral's hospitality, and gives any instruction necessary to help those who are not Episcopalians follow the service.

THE ANTHEMS

If the Anthems were not said on the way in; they are said at this point.

COLLECTS

Prayers for the departed and for those who grieve.

Selected from BCP pages 493, 494

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

This part of the service proclaims our faith in resurrection and God's care for God's people. In light of the readings from Scripture and the sermon, we affirm our faith by saying together the Apostles' Creed and we pray for the departed and for those who mourn.

READINGS

We recommend that you select 1-2 readings if the service is not a Eucharist, and 2-3 readings if the service is a Eucharist. If the service is a Eucharist, one reading must be from the Gospels. What follows are readings suggested by the BCP, but you are welcome to select others as well.

First Reading *from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament), chosen from among:*

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)

Psalm

Possible choices are:

Psalm 23; Psalm 42:1-7; Psalm 46; Psalm 90:1-12; Psalm 121; Psalm 130; Psalm 139:1-11.

Second Reading *from the letters of the apostles, chosen from among:*

Romans 6:3-11 (our baptismal faith in Christ)
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)

If the service includes a Eucharist, a passage from the Gospels is always read by a deacon or priest.

Optional Hymn before the Gospel

A short hymn chosen to introduce the proclamation of the Gospel

The Gospel *chosen from among:*

John 5:24-27 (He who believes has everlasting life)
John 6:37-40 (All that the Father gives me will come to me)
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)

Sermon

The Apostles' Creed (BCP page 496)

An expression of our baptismal faith.

The Lord's Prayer *(said here if there is no Eucharist)*

Prayers of the People (BCP page 497)

Prayers for the departed and those who grieve.

If there is no Eucharist, the service continues as below at THE COMMENDATION.

If there is A EUCHARIST, the service continues as follows:

THE LITURGY OF THE TABLE

In this part of the service, we give thanks to God for all God's gifts and care of us, for Christ and his self-offering for us, and we share the presence of Christ in the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

The Peace

Hymn or Music (*while the altar is prepared*)

Eucharistic Prayer (*selected in consultation with the liturgist*)

The Lord's Prayer

Communion

Hymn or Music during Communion

Prayer after Communion (BCP page 498)

THE COMMENDATION

In this concluding part of the service, we commend the person who has died to God's care, acknowledging both our grief and our confidence in God's continuing care.

The Commendation (BCP 499)

The Blessing and Dismissal (BCP 500)

Procession

The liturgical ministers lead the family (and body or ashes) from the cathedral.

The procession is accompanied by either:

A Hymn or The Anthems spoken or sung by the officiant (BCP page 500)

Postlude

SOME OTHER PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As part of the funeral planning with your family, we will attend to such details as:

Reserved seating for your family.

We will reserve pews for your family, and will need to know how many are expected to attend.

Reserved parking.

We can also reserve parking spaces for your family, if needed, and will need to know how many cars to account for.

The Service Leaflet

The liturgy department will prepare and have printed a service leaflet based on the plans for the liturgy. If you would like personal information and photographs included, we are happy to include those. It is most helpful to receive photos electronically but we can work with hard copies as well.

Flowers

The unique space of the cathedral means that plans for any flowers for the nave should be discussed with the clergy or Cathedral Sacristan. The flower ministry is delighted to prepare the flowers for the service (usually one arrangement on the cornerstone) which will be used the following Sunday during services as well. We will include mention in the Sunday Prayers of the People that “the flowers are given in memory of _____ whose funeral service took place yesterday.” If the family wants special flowers included in the arrangement, the flower ministry will pass that cost along to the family.

Reception

We have several spaces that will accommodate receptions are various sizes. In some cases members of the community are able to provide refreshments. We can also provide catering contacts.

You may have other questions, and whenever those arise, please feel free to call us with them. It is our privilege to serve you and your family in whatever way we can.

Celebrating Life in the Resurrection: About Hymns

Hymns are words with rhyme and meter. They may be recited. But they are at their best when coupled with melody and sung. Think of the hymns you shared with loved ones; they'll be singing them at your funeral. Your favorites that are more esoteric and less likely to be known by your survivors might go in your list after those hymns that are well-known to your friends and family and among the general population.

A soloist or choir can help a lot in leading the singing at your funeral, especially if you anticipate most of your loved ones in attendance being uninitiated church goers. In fact, you can request a soloist to sing whatever hymns you would like, even more unfamiliar ones, as solos. But if you are thinking of asking a close friend or family member to be soloist, please think again. They will be grieving your loss and will want to be ministered to, not to serve as ministers. If you ask them, how will they say no? And then when the day comes, they will struggle emotionally to do what they so wish they could do to honor your memory. Trust me, it is more often than not a recipe for awkward moments in the liturgy and embarrassment all around. Consider making provision to hire a soloist or choir.

What about hymns that are not in The Hymnal 1982 or other authorized hymnals for use in the Episcopal Church? Of course, they are welcome as long as they are about God and God's relationship with humanity. It will be very helpful to the people executing your wishes if you can provide a copy of the music, or at least the name of a hymnal in which it may be found.

What about our favorite songs that are not about God and God's relationship with humanity? Include them at the wake, or at a post-funeral reception.

How many hymns should be in the service? It's up to you. The usual places are: Entrance, Sequence, Offertory, Communion, Procession Out (*not* "Recession.")

In addition, the Psalm can be sung in hymn form. Of all these, most important, perhaps, is the Sequence Hymn which can get people on their feet and prepared joyfully to receive the Holy Gospel. It comes relatively early in the service and can therefore help also to unify the spirit of the gathered assembly, to create a sense of community.

You might have a mix of hymns and solos or choral pieces. The Entrance and Procession Out can be said or chanted anthems (texts) found in the BCP (not to be confused with the term "anthem" customarily associated with a piece sung by a choir.) The order of hymns and placement in the service may best be left up to the priest and music leader, for optimum liturgical flow.

– Michael Kleinschmidt

Some Favorite Memorial Service Hymns *(just to get the juices flowing)*

From the Hymnal 1982

- 376 Joyful, joyful, we adore thee
- 680 O God, our help in ages past (Psalm 90)
- 517 How lovely is thy dwelling place (Psalm 84)
- 645 The King of love my Shepherd is (Psalm 23)
- 208 Alleluia! The strife is o'er
- 287 For all the saints
- 487 Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life
- 671 Amazing grace
- 620 Jerusalem, my happy home
- 665 All my hope on God is founded
- 688 A mighty fortress is our God (Psalm 46)
- 662 Abide with me, fast falls the eventide
- 335 I am the bread of life

SOME FUNERAL SOLOS FREQUENTLY CONSIDERED

(Note: selection of such music, and approval of soloists and other musicians is the purview of the Canon for Cathedral Music. The family is expected to pay any expenses for musicians).

Funeral Solos

Chant: In Paradisum
Bach/Gounod: Ave Maria
Bach: Bist du bei mir
Dvorak: Going Home
Faure: Pie Jesu
Franck: Panis Angelicus
Händel: I know that my redeemer liveth
Händel: Come Unto Him
Malotte: The Lord's Prayer
Pärt: Vater Unser (The Lord's Prayer)
Purcell: When I Am Laid
Purcell: Evening Hymn
Schubert: Ave Maria
Vaughan Williams: The Call

Hymns-

What Wondrous Love is This
Brother James' Air *The Lord is My Shepherd*
Amazing Grace
Children of the Heavenly Father
How Great Thou Art
In the Garden
Just A Closer Walk With Thee
On Eagle's Wings
Rock of Ages
Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling
I Was There to Hear Your Borne Cry
Abide With Me

OTHER RESOURCES

Principles of a Good Death

1. To know when death is coming, and to understand what can be expected
2. To be able to retain control of what happens
3. To be afforded dignity and privacy
4. To have control over pain relief and other symptom control
5. To have choice and control over where death occurs (at home or elsewhere)
6. To have access to information and expertise of whatever kind is necessary
7. To have access to any spiritual or emotional support required
8. To have access to hospice care in any location, not only in hospital
9. To have control over who is present and who shares the end
10. To be able to issue advance directives which ensure wishes are respected
11. To have time to say goodbye, and control over other aspects of timing
12. To be able to leave when it is time to go, and not to have life prolonged pointlessly

Adapted from Smith. British Medical Journal, 320(7228) January 15, 2000; 129-130

Strategies for Communicating with and Caring for Bereaved Persons

Things to Say

“I’m sorry,” or “I’m sorry she/he is gone.”

“I can’t imagine what you’re going through.”

“What are you remembering about (the deceased) today?”

Say the deceased’s name.

Talk about the deceased. Depending on your relationship with the deceased, you may want to say it was an honor to know him/her and that you will miss him/her.

“Do you have any questions about the final illness and treatment?”

“How are you feeling since (the deceased’s) death?” “How has (the deceased’s) death affected you?”

Things not to Say

“Call me.”

“How are you?” (casually)

“I know how you feel.”

“It was probably for the best.”

“She/he is happy now.”

“It is God’s will.”

“It was his/her time to go.”

“I’m sorry I brought it up.”

“Let’s change the subject.”

“You should work toward getting over this by now.”

“I had another patient who had the same illness as (the deceased) and he/she suffered for a long time. You should be glad (the deceased) passed away quickly.”

“You’re strong enough to deal with it.”

Practices to Implement

Death notification (don’t assume folks will know)

Outreach—express sorrow, invite discussion, schedule visit, and monitor symptoms.

Practices to Avoid

Passivity

Avoidance

Making comparisons with other losses

Pressure and inappropriate positivity

Adapted from Prigerson HG, Jacobs SC. Caring for bereaved patients. “All the doctors just suddenly go.” JAMA 2001;286: 1373.