

A Christian Perspective on Death

The Book of Common Prayer gives us a helpful way to think about death and our service for burials. It tells us,

“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 [as St. Paul said] 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 the one we love has entered into the nearer presence of our Lord, we sorrow in sympathy with those who mourn.” (p. 507)

Our assurance as Christians, as our Catechism teaches, “is that nothing, not even death, shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Our hope is to live “with confidence in newness and fullness of life,” knowing that in death life is “changed, not ended,” and that “there is prepared for us a dwelling place eternal in the heavens.” In everlasting life, as the Catechism teaches, “we are united with all the people of God, in the

joy of fully knowing and loving God and each other.”

Arranging a Funeral

For those wishing to leave instructions as to their wishes for their own funerals, a form for this, and consultation with the Rector, are available through the parish office.

When a member of the Church dies the Rector should be called as soon as possible. The Rector may also be called when a person is near death. The Rector can say the rite for Ministration at the Time of Death, and help you begin to plan the funeral when the time comes.

Baptized Christians are properly buried from the church, not a funeral home. In the church we are surrounded by the symbols of our faith, and by our Christian community. Funerals are arranged at times convenient for the family, the church, and the funeral director. Funerals usually take place about three days after the person has died, but this can vary depending on circumstances. There should be sufficient time for making arrangements, but also for moving through the grieving process. The Episcopal burial liturgy is full of comfort and speaks richly of God’s unending love for us all; people find it singularly helpful at times of loss.

Burial of the body and cremation are both options in Episcopal Church practice. The committal of the body may take place prior to cremation or before the service in the church, if desired. Cremated remains may be buried or otherwise reverently dispersed. When the

body is present in the church, the coffin is closed before the service, and remains closed thereafter. It is appropriate that the coffin be covered with a pall or other suitable covering. At the Church of the Holy Spirit, a pall provided by the Church is available. Cremated remains may also be present.

The Liturgy

When planning a funeral service, remember that the service is for the living, who will want to celebrate and give thanks for the life of the departed.

Although Communion does not have to be part of the liturgy for the Burial of the Dead, a celebration of the Holy Eucharist is always appropriate at the funeral of a Christian, and is encouraged. Our eucharistic liturgy speaks powerfully of the resurrection faith and God’s undying love, shown to us in Jesus Christ, and known through the sacrament of bread and wine, the Body and Blood of Christ.

The Book of Common Prayer provides for burial according to both Rite I and Rite II, found on pages 468-507 of the Prayer Book. Choices are given in the Prayer Book for scripture readings and psalms. Appropriate readings from other sources, in addition to the Bible, may also be included if desired, in consultation with the Rector. The Rector will preach a brief homily at the funeral. Others may also be invited to speak, if desired.

As at all liturgies, music should be appropriate for the occasion. As celebrations of the resurrection, Easter hymns are particularly appropriate at funerals, in

addition to those in the Burial section of the Hymnal. A list of hymns suggested for the various parts of the burial liturgy is available from the parish office. Generally, hymns should be drawn from the resources of the church, and express the hope and faith that Christians affirm in the presence of death.

Flowers for the altar may be sent from a florist or the funeral home. Florists should call the church to arrange a convenient time for delivery.

The Church Burial Yard

Burial of cremated remains in the Church of the Holy Spirit Churchyard is available to members of the Church. Plots around the perimeter of the Churchyard are available for \$300; these plots are marked with a simple, flat stone marker set in the ground. Burial of cremated remains elsewhere in the memorial grounds, without a marker, is available for \$100. Additional fees of \$35 each cover the costs of markers, and opening and closing the grave. Complete information about the Church of the Holy Spirit Churchyard is available from the Parish Office.

Memorial and Endowment Funds

Mindful that all we have comes from God, the Prayer Book teaches “the duty...of all persons to make wills, while they are in health, arranging for the disposal of their temporal goods, not neglecting, if they are able, to leave bequests for religious and charitable uses” (p. 445). Accordingly, we trust that members of the Church of the Holy Spirit will remember CHS in their wills.

Gifts in memory of loved ones may be made to the Church’s Memorial Fund. These funds are used to purchase items for permanent use in the church, usually in connection with the Church’s liturgical ministry.

Bequests given for the church’s Endowment Fund will help build up this Fund, and ensure the continuance of the Church’s ministry in Wayland and MetroWest.

Fees for Funerals

There is no fee for the use of the church for a funeral. The fee for the organist is set according to the current standards of the Boston Chapter of the American Guild of Organists and the Association of Anglican Musicians. This fee is normally paid through the funeral director. Gifts of Sunday flowers in memory of loved ones are always welcome; a gift of \$50 to cover their cost is suggested.

An offering may be given to the Rector’s Discretionary Fund, but none is required.



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Funerals

at

The Church of the Holy Spirit

With information about

The Church Burial Yard and Memorial and Endowment Funds

“...to your faithful people, Lord, life is changed, not ended...”

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 382