



# FUNERAL CUSTOMARY

## HOLY FAMILY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

MILLS RIVER, NC

### Introduction

As a place to begin, here's what our Prayer Book says about the funeral liturgy (worship service):

*"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 (BCP), pg. 507*

The death of a family member or loved one is a moment in our lives filled with all sorts of emotions, fears, anxieties, and sadness. As poignant as these moments are, they may also fill us with joy and love for the person we knew and those who are still in our lives. Death is an inevitable part of life and is part of the larger life of the soul, which ultimately is reunited to God in everlasting life. When we grieve at the loss of a loved one, we grieve for ourselves and for our loss.

The liturgy for the Burial Service in *The Book of Common Prayer* reminds us that "in the midst of life we are in death." The Church's ministry prepares us both for life in this world and for the life to come promised to the faithful. It prepares and equips us to live within the Family of God, the Body of Christ, here on earth, where we may be fed and sustained through Word and Sacrament by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The following is a recommended set of steps to guide you through the process of planning a funeral service at Holy Family.

**If a family member or loved one is ill**, you may contact our Pastoral Care Coordinator, Liz Spahr, at (828) 388-1474. She will arrange for someone from our pastoral care team, including the clergy at Holy Family, to visit the ill person and family members for

prayer, pastoral support, and communion. You may also call the church phone number is (828) 891-9375.

**Whenever possible, when a person is near death**, our Pastoral Care Coordinator or a member of the clergy should be notified, in order that the ministrations of the Church may be performed. This may include the Holy Unction and prayer.

**When the death of a member of the church or a loved one occurs**, it should be reported as soon as possible to the clergy of the parish. After calling the church and coordinating with the funeral home, the family or loved ones will meet with the rector to plan the date, time, and content of the funeral service. This meeting can take place at the home of the bereaved or at the church office.

### **Burial from the Church**

The Episcopal Church believes that it is most appropriate that Christians are buried from the Church. There may be extenuating circumstances which prevent burial from the church from happening and those circumstances should be discussed with the clergy.

The day of the service will depend on the availability of the church facilities, clergy, and key volunteers. It is suggested that funerals and memorial services conducted at Church of the Holy Family be scheduled for mid-to-late morning or early afternoon. This will provide sufficient time for the burial to take place prior to dusk. The time of the service will be scheduled on the church calendar as soon as possible to avoid conflicts with regularly scheduled activities in the church building and assist with traffic and parking facilities.

No arrangements for the funeral, which involve the clergy and the church itself, should be announced before the rector has been consulted and approval received.

### **The Funeral Liturgy**

Episcopal burial services (BCP p. 469, p. 491) are rooted in the hope of resurrection and the eternal love of God. They are both solemn and joy-filled, expressing sorrow in grief and thanksgiving for the life of the departed. We call the service a funeral when the person's body is present. We call it a memorial service when there is no body present. Most things about funerals apply to memorial services as well. The service may be a small and quiet with just a few people in attendance, or it may be large with many people present.

All funeral arrangements are made in conversation with the clergy. The clergy of Holy Family are under the authority of the Bishop of the Diocese of Western North Carolina, the rubrics of *The Book of Common Prayer*, and the Constitutions and Canons of the

Episcopal Church and the rector will guide you in the planning of the funeral within the context of those traditions. Our parish administrator will prepare service bulletins.

The prayers, readings, and readings and music chosen for the service are from *The Book of Common Prayer*, the Bible, and the hymnals approved for public worship. The priest from the parish normally presides at the service.

The actual Burial Service centers around prayers which will be for the departed person. We believe that death is but an episode in eternal life and that we should continue to pray for loved ones after death even as we did before death. The Burial Service contains prayers for the faithful departed, as well as those who mourn. The lessons from scripture and the psalms remind us of our faith and dependence upon God and of that place that our Lord has prepared for those who love Him.

It is desirable that the Lesson from the Old Testament, and the Epistle, be read by lay persons. Since every funeral is an occasion to remember that we affirm the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting, it is the custom in the Episcopal Church to have a requiem celebration of the Eucharist, which is itself a feast of the Resurrection. The Prayer Book contains a service of the Holy Eucharist that can be used as a part of the Church Burial Service. In such services, the family takes their Communion first and then members of the congregation are invited to receive Communion.

The service concludes in the church with the Commendation and Blessing. If ashes are to be interred in the Memorial Garden, the Committal may immediately follow, with the procession from the church leading the congregation outside.

### **The Service at the Grave**

The Committal is the graveside service found in the Book of Common Prayer (p. 501). The Committal is not just the end of the funeral liturgy; it's a sacred moment of love and faith and is understood as the last act of care we offer for a loved one's earthly body, as we entrust them fully into God's hands.

If ashes are to be interred in the Memorial Garden, the Committal usually takes place immediately after the Burial Service. The priest may also conduct a graveside service at a cemetery where the family has made arrangement for burial. During the Committal Prayer, the priest may cast earth onto the casket or cremains while saying "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." Those invited will be invited to also cast a handful of earth. When the service is concluded the family of the deceased may choose to depart immediately or to remain to acknowledge the presence of their friends.

## **Cremation and Interment**

The Episcopal Church approves of cremation for those who desire it. The Church of Holy Family has a both a columbarium (wall with niches) and grounds for interment of ashes in our Memorial Garden. The clergy will be pleased to discuss with the family the possibility of interment of the ashes immediately either following the funeral service or at a later date.

## **Veterans**

The military funeral honors ceremony occurs immediately before the Committal at the graveside or columbarium.

## **Flowers**

It is our custom for one arrangement of fresh flowers to be placed at the altar for a funeral. If there is a reception at the church, the flowers may also be placed as centerpieces on tables. Families may purchase flowers with assistance from our Flower Guild Coordinator, Linda Bregartner ([lindabregartner@bellsouth.net](mailto:lindabregartner@bellsouth.net)).

Any other flowers delivered to the church from friends and family are placed around the baptismal font at the entrance of the church and in the gathering area. In lieu of flowers, some people may wish to make a donation in the name of the deceased to the parish memorial fund, or a charity designated by the family.

## **Homilies and Eulogies**

The Prayer Book provides for the possibility of a homily after the reading of the Gospel. This is usually given by a member of the clergy. The homily speaks of our Christian faith in God's grace, love and mercy, and that in death, "life is changed, not ended" (as our Prayer Book says in one of the Eucharistic prayers). The homily is based on the readings and how the promises of God relate to the person who has died. No invitation should be extended to anyone to give the homily without the prior consent of the officiating minister. Eulogies and other tributes are best offered during a reception which follows the service and should be limited to 5 minutes each.

## **Music and Pianist**

The music at funerals should be appropriate for the occasion. Music serves to support, clarify, and compliment the action and words of the liturgy at all times. It should suggest triumph, resurrection, strength, comfort, thanksgiving, and repose; Easter hymns are especially appropriate. When the family of the deceased meets with the clergy, suitable hymns and music can be discussed. It is appropriate to sing hymns or have music according to the wishes of the family. "Popular" music is generally not

suitable for use in the liturgies of the church. The final responsibility for determining the suitability of music is reserved for the Officiating Minister.

The family is responsible for hiring the pianist and musicians. Our music minister has the right of first refusal. All music is to be coordinated through him.

### **Continuing Care**

The death of a loved one is a difficult experience and mourning may become enduring, but it comes and goes in cycles during the rest of a person's life. Holy Family is a community devoted to welcome, pastoral care for all stages of life, and the sharing of the Good News that God gave us in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Redeemer. Being in a community of people devoted to the bringing of God's kingdom of justice, mercy, and love is an important way to remain hopeful and joyous. To members and non-members alike, we offer a community of love to sustain you in your journey.

### **Pre-Arrangements**

Forms are available from the church office for those who wish to leave directions to their family regarding their wishes for burial. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the church office.

### **Helpful Resources**

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. (Book of Common Prayer, p. 507).

- The rector and/or our parish administrator will provide you with a separate document with suggested hymns and readings for use in the Liturgy of the Burial of the Dead.
- The Book of Common Prayer is found online at <https://www.bcponline.org/>

## **Use of the Church for a Reception after a Funeral or Memorial Service**

If a family would like to hold a reception in the church after a funeral or memorial service, the family will need to make many of the arrangements in consultation with our Coordinator for Special Receptions. Here are some points to consider:

**First**, the family must coordinate with the Rector and/or Parish Administrator in the church office at 828-891-9375 to confirm that the church is available for a specific amount of time after the service.

The Rector and/or Parish Administrator will also need to confirm that there is parish coverage to oversee the set up and clean up after the reception. There is no fee for use of the sanctuary/parish hall and kitchen for a reception that *immediately* follows the funeral or memorial service.

**Second**, once the family has secured the space and time, then the family will be put in touch with our Coordinator for Special Receptions. Working with the coordinator, the family will make arrangements to bring in and pay for food and drinks. A list of local caterers can be provided on request.

What the church provides:

- Space for up to 70 people in the sanctuary/parish hall.
- Use of the kitchen.
- Four folding tables for use as buffet tables and a drink table (to be set immediately after the service). We do not have the ability, immediately after the service, to set up additional tables where guests may sit.
- White cloth tablecloths for the serving tables.
- Some miscellaneous serving dishes and trays (all fairly casual).
- Coffee pots and water pitchers. The church will also provide utensils, small plates, water glasses, and ceramic coffee cups, if able to accommodate the size of the guest list.
- Coffee, creamer, sugar if there is going to be coffee. We can also provide ice, water, lemonade, and iced tea.
- A table for memorabilia and use of a monitor and laptop for videos or digital photos.

What the family provides:

- Food and additional beverages.
- Paper goods, including plates, napkins, cups, forks and spoons, etc. if that is preferred or needed for logistical reasons.
- Decorations for the serving tables, if desired.

**Third**, if the family wishes to serve alcohol at the reception, this must be approved by the rector. The family agrees to follow the policy regarding alcohol use by the Diocese of Western North Carolina<sup>1</sup> which includes, but is not limited to:

1. All applicable federal, state and local laws should be obeyed, including those governing the serving of alcoholic beverages to minors.
2. When alcohol is served, it must be monitored and those showing signs of intoxication must not be served. Whenever alcohol is served, an adult to oversee its serving. That adult must not drink alcoholic beverages during the time of his or her execution of his or her responsibilities. If hard liquor is served, a certified server is required.
3. If minors are present, alcohol must be served at a separate station that is monitored at all times to prevent underage drinking.
4. Alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages must be clearly labeled as such.
5. Whenever alcohol is served, appealing non-alcoholic alternatives must always be offered with equal prominence and accessibility.
6. Food must be served when alcohol is present.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.diocesewnc.org/\\_files/ugd/0de39d\\_810eb8fd76944cd8b72317efad4fb960.pdf](https://www.diocesewnc.org/_files/ugd/0de39d_810eb8fd76944cd8b72317efad4fb960.pdf)

## **Fees for Services Associated with Holding a Funeral at the Church**

*Donations and fees should be made by check, payable to Church of the Holy Family. All donations and fees should be submitted to the parish office one week before the service. Thank you.*

### **Donations\***

Requested donation for cost of Altar Flower Arrangement (1)	\$150.00
Donation at your discretion to the general fund of the church	\$_____
Donation at your discretion to the discretionary fund of the officiating clergy	\$_____

*(Clergy discretionary funds are used for charitable purposes.)*

### **Fees for Professional Services and Facility**

Pianist/musician (base fee)	\$150.00
Pianist/musician (extra fee for rehearsal or special music)	\$100.00
For officiating clergy services	\$250.00

*(Fee disbursed directly to clergy member and not to a discretionary fund. This applies to non-members only. Members\*\* are encouraged to donate to the priest's discretionary fund as an acknowledgment of her time and care.)*

### **Additional Fees**

Use of facilities for reception which <i>immediately</i> follows service	\$0.00
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*Hospitality to include simple drinks, setup, service, and cleanup is a gift from our congregants. Family agrees to provide all food and additional beverages.*

Fee to offset printing costs for service bulletins	\$60.00
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### **Memorial Garden Fees**

*arranged through Linda Bregartner - lindabregartner@bellsouth.net*

Ground interment in the garden	\$400.00
Wall interment	\$800.00
Bronze plaque with wall interment	market cost

**Total Amount to Church of the Holy Family** \_\_\_\_\_ **\$** \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Donations to the church and to the clergy discretionary fund are tax-deductible gifts; fees are not.*

*\*\* Members are defined as regularly attending worshipers known to the clergy and contributors of record for at least one year before inquiry about a date for an event. Additionally: Member contact info has been received, Member has made donation to the church by check or pledge, Member is known to clergy by contribution of time and talent.*