

# Funeral Guidelines

This set of guidelines is intended to help you think about and make plans for your own funerals so that when your death occurs, those responsible for making the arrangements will find help in an often grief-stricken and confusing time. It does not matter how old you are or the state of your health, death can and often does come in an unexpected way.

**Call the Priest.** This should be done when death is near or has just occurred. There is an appropriate liturgy in the Prayer Book, which is helpful at such a time. The priest has had much experience in dealing with grief, recommending mortuaries, going with the family to make arrangements, and in guiding the survivors in this difficult time.

**Where to have the Funeral.** The most appropriate place for a Christian funeral is the Church. This is the place where we are baptized, nourished in the sacraments, and from which we are appropriately buried. A mortuary chapel, no matter how beautiful, is still a commercial place and a place where only death is remembered. That is not to say that in special circumstances (for example the death of a loved one, who is not a member of the community) one cannot have a memorial service or funeral in a non-traditional setting. Please feel free to talk to the priest about alternative wishes.

**What kind of Service to have.** *The Book of Common Prayer* provides for several possibilities. There are two complete forms for the Burial Office: Rite I (in Elizabethan English) and Rite II (in more contemporary language). In addition, "An Order for Burial" is provided when neither of the two forms is deemed appropriate. There are many suggested choices for scriptures, psalms, and prayers. Is an elaborate or simple service desired? What about music? Though not required, a "Requiem Eucharist" is very traditional and appropriate for a person who was an active part of the parish fellowship. For it is in the Eucharist that earth and heaven are joined in worship with God, "therefore with angels... and all the company of heaven..."

Because music in a service is a statement of what the church believes, Canon Law states that texts sung shall be congruent with scriptural and liturgical sources, and thereby, be in conformity with the church's teachings. The Director of Music at St. Luke's, in consultation with the Rector, is responsible for coordinating music at all services, and has knowledge of appropriate and beautiful music. He is most willing to discuss all aspects of the music with you.

**Flowers.** The only flowers at a funeral are those at the altar (on the stands, in front of the altar, or in front of the lectern) as on most Sundays. Floral tributes are placed in the entry or by the doors. Instead of spending large amounts on flowers which will soon die and lose their beauty, those who wish to remember the deceased might better be encouraged to donate to a worthy charity or the Parish Memorial Fund.

**Avoid Excessive expense.** When arriving at a mortuary to make arrangements, you will be immediately confronted the possibility of spending large amounts of money on goods and services, from burial clothes to coffins, to limousines, to gold plated vaults. Having a priest present can help you make reasonable choices. It is important to remember that those who die are in the hands of a loving God and do not need extravagant trappings for their mortal remains. The best tribute we can give to those we have loved is the beauty, dignity, and triumphant joy of a Christian burial, and our continued prayers. In death, as in life, all Christians are equal in the sight of God. The Church makes this apparent in the service. All caskets are closed and covered in the Church with a pall, so whether your casket is ornate or plain, it will appear equal before God and all people. As already mentioned, the flowers are as they are for every Sunday.

**Cremation.** Cremation is perfectly acceptable in the Episcopal Church. Cremation speeds the natural process of the body's decay. In time of dwindling space and resources, it becomes even more appropriate. The burial liturgy is written in such a way that both burial and cremation are provided for. Some have found that it is meaningful to have the body brought to the Church (in an inexpensive casket) for the funeral with cremation and committal of the ashes at a later date. (In any case, embalming is not required in the State of California.) One may also have the cremated remains present during the service in an appropriate urn.

**Fraternal services, etc.** The liturgy of the Church is complete as written and having multiple services on the day of burial is discouraged. Appropriate rituals may be held as part of a wake/visitation the evening before. If held at the Church, they are to be scheduled twenty minutes prior to the beginning of the Burial liturgy and may take no longer than 15 minutes.

There are probably questions that are not answered in these Guidelines. Please feel free to talk with our clergy about Christian beliefs or customs regarding death as you reflect and plan your own funeral or that of a loved one. Forms are available in the church office to assist you in planning your services.

**What are the typical costs?** While there are costs associated with funerals, no priests in their right mind and spirit will refuse to offer the prayers and sacraments at such a tender time because of a family's, or individual's inability to pay. That being said there are traditional honorariums and gifts to the parish that are appropriate and helpful.

First, *a donation to the general fund* of the church helps not only to offset the additional costs associated with opening and running the facilities outside of normal service hours, but can also be a way to glorify God and express the faith and gratitude of the deceased. It is also common to present the presiding Priest with an *honorarium, made to their discretionary account*, so that they may continue to reach out pastorally in myriad ways to special needs of the community of which she or he may be aware.

Other costs typically associated with a funeral are:

<b>Guild Hall</b> (if needed)	\$100.00
<b>Organist</b>	\$250.00
<b>Soloist</b> (optional)	\$150.00
<b>Altar Guild</b>	\$150.00

**Priest's Honorarium** A donation to the **Rector's Discretionary Fund** is appropriate and appreciated. Checks can be made out to **Rector's Disc. Fund – St. Luke's**

**Burial in the Memorial Garden** is available to members and family of the parish; the cost of a plaque is **\$200.00**

Checks for incidental expenses should be made out to **St. Luke's Episcopal Church**

Additional donations to further the ministry of St. Luke's Episcopal Church are also welcome. We especially invite you to consider remembering the parish of St. Luke in your estate planning.