

# Funeral Customary & Planning Guide



**ST. GEORGE'S**  
Episcopal Church  
Dayton, Ohio

5520 Far Hills Ave.  
Dayton, OH 45429  
937-434-1781  
[stgeorgesdayton.org](http://stgeorgesdayton.org)

## A Word from the Rector

A funeral is not an easy thing to go through, and at times can be extremely difficult. In addition to mourning for the loss of a loved one, a great number of decisions need to be made and arrangements enacted. Advanced planning for a funeral and making end-of-life preparations is uncomfortable and often avoided, but extremely important.

Yet funerals must happen, it is a part of life, however peaceful an end one comes to, or however tragic. Yet in the midst of life ending, the hope of Christians is found in the power of Jesus Christ and his Resurrection from the dead. In seasons of grief and disorientation the Christian Burial service is intended to reorient us, to point us back to God. It helps renew our trust in the Gospel promises of forgiveness, hope, and ultimately resurrection from the dead and a place in God's new Creation with the saints in light. It is a sacred thing to come alongside those grieving, to help them make decisions, and guide them to the grace and power of Christ in the midst of tears.

At St. George's it is our Christian duty and Gospel calling to minister to you and your family and friends in the matter of funeral arrangements. I hope you find this little booklet a helpful guide for funeral planning or making your own advanced plans. Grace and peace be with you,

The Rev. Benjamin T.S. Phillips  
Rector



## Some thoughts on death, dying, and funerals

Christians understand that life in this world is temporary, and when someone dies their absence is keenly felt, which is why we are sad at their absence. The Gospel tells us that those who die having faith in Jesus Christ will be with him and at rest in spirit (Philippians 1:19-26).

But an even greater promise awaits, for our eternal hope is not simply ethereal flotation to the pearly gates (with harp in hand), but to be actually, bodily raised from the dead, just as Jesus himself was bodily raised from the dead.

Eternal life is to be enjoyed with body and spirit reunited in perfection forever. How beautiful is that! It is helpful to keep these ideas in mind as we begin to plan for a funeral and navigate both the legal matters surrounding a death, and also the theological and liturgical aspects surrounding the funeral service.

A funeral usually marks the beginning of the grieving process, not the end. It is a good and even necessary step in saying goodbye to a loved one, gathering with others to remember their life, give thanks, and to grieve the loss. All people grieve in different ways and over differing spans of time, and it is important to know that as you plan a funeral. What is important is that you grieve, and not hide emotions. Sometimes funerals bring out regrets or past hurts involving the deceased, and a funeral is a key moment to begin addressing these emotions, and begin to heal.

At a funeral we give thanks to God for the life of our loved ones, celebrate their life, and grieve their death. But it is also good to note that funerals are for the living and for the benefit of those who survive the deceased.

## Funeral Pre-planning

Making arrangements for end-of-life issues is not an easy or pleasant thing to do, but it is very important and should be part of your Will and Estate planning. Remember, a funeral is for the survivors, and the days following the death of a loved one are hectic, chaotic, and emotional, during which many decisions need to be made. If the deceased has made funeral arrangements ahead of time it takes away much of the burden of those decisions from the family and actually helps to free them to be more present and grieve. Pre-planning is a significant way for someone to love and bless those who will survive them.

St. George's clergy have a special form available to fill out indicating their wishes and plans with regard to their funeral. It is recommended that when making these plans you meet with one of the clergy and go through the form. This form is signed by the individual and a copy retained at the church in a locked file. It is a valuable document when a family is planning the funeral of a deceased loved one. It gives the clergy clear instructions regarding the service, ensures that your wishes will be made, eases decision making by the surviving family, and can even help to settle disagreements among family members which can arise following your death.

## General Funeral Information

Funerals at St. George's are intended for members of the parish or their immediate family. Former members and other funerals may be held with the permission of the Rector.

Upon the death of a loved one the church office should be contacted as soon as possible to notify the clergy:

**937-434-1781**

The Rector or other clergy from the parish must give final approval in all arrangements regarding the funeral service.

There are certain fees involved, see page 13 for details. Sometimes these fees are paid to the church by the funeral home and included with the funeral services rendered, but not always. Note: Some checks are payable to the church, some directly to individuals.

Interment of remains, whether casket or ashes, shall take place after the funeral service.

## Working With a Funeral Home

Ohio State law requires that a licensed funeral home be contacted upon a person's death and will take custody of the body as the appropriate arrangements are made. The funeral home will typically work with those who survive the deceased regarding a death certificate, arrangements for the person's body (cremation, embalming for casket burial) and coordinate with the Church for scheduling the funeral. Funeral Directors and clergy work together on a regular basis, but it is helpful to keep the following in mind when meeting with your Funeral Director:

- Provide them with St. George's clergy contact information (phone number, and email if needed)
- Confirm with the clergy the date and time of the funeral before an obituary is released.
- In the case of cremation, the church does not take custody of ashes prior to the funeral. The ashes should be picked up by an executor or authorized member of the deceased's family, and kept by them until the day of the funeral.
- Please provide the funeral director with a description of all the church fees involved.

## Choosing a Funeral Home

You are free to use any funeral home you like. St. George's has a partnership with Tobias Funeral home, whereby members of St. George's receive a 10% discount on all funeral services. Please contact Tobias for more information: 937-435-2273.

## **Burial Options**

### Casket

This is the traditional means of burial, whereby the deceased person's remains are embalmed and prepared for burial in a casket. The family needs to decide, based on the deceased person's wishes or their own preferences, whether there will be a viewing of the casket, which normally takes place at the funeral home prior to the funeral, usually the day before.

Things to note for a funeral with casket:

- The funeral home will bring the casket to the church the day of the funeral, please schedule arrival time with the clergy.
- Open caskets during the funeral service are not permitted.
- All caskets are covered with a beautiful, high quality heavy white silk pall (special blanket) when brought into the church, which will remain for the duration of the funeral service.
- The purpose of the pall is to convey that in death all are equal before God. Whether someone's body is in a gorgeous, expensive casket or a pine box, they are equally covered by the same cloth and in the same state before God.
- Flowers, flags, and other adornments are not placed on the casket or pall during the service. However, flowers may be placed beside the casket as appropriate.

- At the end of the funeral the casket is brought out of the church, the pall removed, and any decorations, flowers, or flag may be placed on it at that time.
- Pall bearers will need to be assigned to help lift the casket into the hearse and bring it from the hearse to the graveside. This honor is particularly appropriate for family members and good friends of the family. If there are not any, or not enough, please coordinate with the funeral home on this.

### Cremation

Cremation is carried out only by licensed funeral homes. The ashes will be placed by the funeral home in a plastic bag inside a rectangular vinyl container. Depending on where the ashes are to be laid to rest will determine whether the family needs to purchase an urn. Options for cremains are:

- Columbarium – a wall with nooks in which the ashes are placed, may be indoors or outdoors; ashes may be laid to rest in an urn or in the original vinyl container.
- Interment in the ground (in an urn) at a grave.
- Direct interment, where the ashes are poured or placed directly in the ground, no urn or container.
- Scattering some or all of the ashes at a location requested by the deceased person.

Having a place of permanence is a beneficial thing for those who have lost a loved one, and scattering all the ashes does not necessarily give that sense. While it is good to honor someone's wishes in death, it is also important to keep in mind the needs of those who survive – a grave or memorial location is helpful as we move on in life and say goodbye to those we love, with a place to 'anchor' our parting and our memories.

**Important Note:** The family of the deceased need to be the ones who pick up the ashes from the funeral home and

hold on to them until the time of the funeral service. The church, its clergy, nor its staff are able to sign for or pick up ashes from the funeral home. If the funeral home is to retain custody of the ashes they should remain at the funeral home until the day of the funeral service. As a rule the church does not store or hold the ashes.

### Donation to Science

Some people may wish for their bodies to be used for the benefit and advance of medical science. All arrangements for this must be made while a person is still living as part of their Will. In these cases it is still appropriate, and indeed encouraged, for there to still be a funeral service. It is also important to note that eventually the body is returned to the custody of the surviving relatives for final interment, sometimes a year or more after death. Arrangements will need to be made for such final interment in addition to the funeral service. It is usually preferable to hold a funeral at the time of the person's death, even if the body is not available, rather than wait until after the body is returned to hold the service. When the body is returned a second, smaller service can be held and when the person's earthly remains are laid to rest.

### Special Circumstances Where There Is No Body

From time to time and for various reasons, sometimes the body of a loved one is not available for a funeral. Perhaps due to a tragic accident or overseas military service where the body was not able to be recovered. In these situations it is still important to have a funeral service, both to honor the person who died and for the sake of those who are grieving this loss.

# Planning the Funeral Service

## General Information

The Rector has final say on all aspects of the funeral service, including graveside burials if applicable. It is important to keep in mind that a funeral is a Christian worship service, in which God is worshiped, Holy Scripture read and preached, and if desired the Sacrament of Holy Communion administered. It is in this context of the worship of God that the deceased person is remembered, celebrated, and mourned, and those who grieve seek God's comfort, blessing, and truth. As decisions and plans are made for the funeral and other events surrounding the service it is helpful to keep this perspective in mind.

## Service Bulletin

St. George's provides a service bulletin for the funeral service at no charge. You are responsible for any other printed material, such as a handout, printed obituary, etc., subject to the approval of the rector. If you would like to provide your own specialized bulletin you are welcome to do so, but all service arrangements must still be made with the clergy, and the officiating minister **MUST** be sent a final draft and give approval before it is sent to print/publish.

## Service Details and Decisions

When you meet with the clergy to plan the service, or if you are interested in pre-planning your funeral, here are the things you will need to decide:

- Liturgy: Burial Rite 1 (traditional language) or Rite 2 (contemporary language). See the Book of Common Prayer, p. 469 (Rite 1) or p. 491 (Rite 2) or look online: <http://www.bcponline.org/>
- Holy Communion: Yes or No?
- Scripture readings: usually one or two; if there will be Holy Communion at least one reading must be from the

Gospels. If the deceased had a favorite Bible passage this would be appropriate to use, or there are recommended passages in the BCP, p. 494. Note, poems, selections from literature, song lyrics, etc. are not used in the funeral service and may be read at the reception or at the graveside.

- Readers (lectors): who will read the Bible passages? Family and friends are encouraged to be readers, it is a good way to have them involved in the funeral. They should be comfortable reading aloud in front of a large group, and anticipate being emotionally sound to make it through the reading in good order. The clergy will always read the Gospel lesson if there is to be Holy Communion. If no other readers can be found for other lessons then the clergy or those they appoint will read.
- Music: what hymns and other service music will be played? A suggested list of hymns is available upon request. The Director of Music (DoM) will be the organist/pianist for the service unless they are unavailable, in which case the DoM will find a substitute. Any additional vocalists or musicians that are brought in must be put in contact directly with the DoM, [music@stgeorgeohio.org](mailto:music@stgeorgeohio.org) or 937-434-1781x105.
- Flowers: see section below
- Estimate of how many guests are expected.

### Special Guest Clergy

The officiating minister of all funerals at St. George's will be the Rector or other parish clergy designated by the Rector. Sometimes there may be another minister close to the deceased or their family who may be invited to participate, either as a preacher or as an assisting minister in the liturgy. This is certainly welcome but the request must be made to and approved by the Rector before an invitation to that minister is extended.

## Flowers

You are free to use any florist you would like to provide flowers for the funeral and/or reception. St. George's does contract with Furst Florist, but if you decide to use another florist please make arrangements with the church office for scheduling delivery of flowers to ensure the church is open for the florist to get in and make the delivery.

Flowers may be placed in the following locations:

- In the Church:
  - On the retable (behind the Altar)
  - On the landings on either side of the chancel steps
  - If ashes/urn present, at the foot of the urn pedestal
- In the Narthex (entry hall)
- If there will be a reception, in the Parish Hall or Undercroft.

After the funeral the flowers may be taken by the family or left as a gift to the church; please indicate to the clergy what your preference is.

## Decorations

No items may be hung on the altar pews or on the walls. Portraits or photos of the deceased should be displayed in the Narthex or in reception location, but not in the Sanctuary. Photos and memorabilia are welcome to be set up at the reception, please request a table when making arrangements.

The Parish Hall or Undercroft may be decorated for the reception but all decorations must be cleaned up following the reception.

## St. Francis Memorial Garden

Interment of ashes in the St. Francis Memorial Garden is for members of St George's. Prior arrangements should be made with the church's Business Office to select a plot in

the Garden and pay fees. If prior arrangements have not been made they will need to be done so as soon as possible. The ashes are buried directly in the ground, not inside an urn – please note this with the funeral home since the purchase of an urn will not be necessary.

If you are a member of St. George's, to reserve your plot:

- Contact the business office at the Church, 937-434-1781x115
- Select an available plot from the recorder list
- Provide for the memorial plaque the full name as you want it to appear, and your date of birth.
- Pay the \$300 Garden donation, which covers the cost of the plaque and goes to the upkeep of the Garden.



## Receptions

St. George's has two rooms available for receptions, the Parish Hall (seats max. 60) and the Undercroft (seats max. 150). Reservations must be made through the Church Office, 937-434-1781, see Funeral Fees below for rates. Receptions are not required to be held at the church.

You may use your own caterer or provide the food and refreshments yourself – no beer, wine, or other alcohol may be served or stored for receptions. If using a caterer

arrangements must be made through the Business Office to schedule their arrival and setup times so the church can be unlocked. Use of any of the church's rooms requires that the rooms be cleaned by the user and set back up in the manner which they were found.

**Funeral Receptions Ministry-** For members of the church and their immediate family St. George's has a Funeral Receptions Ministry, which provides light refreshments (hors d'oeuvres, punch, tea, coffee, light sandwiches, cookies, etc.) for funeral receptions. Please inform the clergy when planning a reception at the church that you would like to have the Funeral Receptions Ministry provide the reception refreshments for you. As a courtesy to the Funeral Receptions Ministry, we ask for at least two days' notice.

## **Funeral Fees**

Church - \$100 (waived for members)

Organist - \$200 paid directly to the organist. If soloist or additional musicians are involved, there is a \$25 per rehearsal fee added to the organist's pay.

St. Francis Memorial Garden - \$675 (for the cost of reserving the plot, the bronze name plaque, and upkeep of the garden)

Reception – fees are waived for members of the parish. For non-members:

Undercroft - \$500  
UC Kitchen – add \$100  
Parish Hall - \$200  
Custodian - \$25/hr

Clergy – do not charge a fee, but an honorarium is encouraged and very much appreciated.

## Funeral Checklist

- Contacted the church office / Rector
- Contacted the funeral home
- Burial arrangements: ashes or casket, or other
- Cemetery contacted
- If interment in Memorial Garden, called Business Office
- Music and Scripture readings selected for service
- Family and friends of family contacted to be involved
- Florist contacted, drop off arrangements made
- Reception arrangements made
- Fees paid, checks made out to the right people

