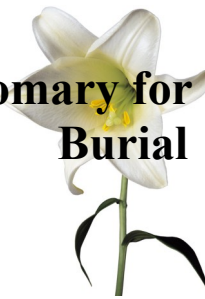


# St. Paul's Episcopal Church



## A Customary for Christian Burial



This customary for Christian burial is a guideline for services performed at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Exton. It explains some of the requirements of the Episcopal Church and of this Parish regarding the burial service.

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- Call or have someone call close relatives and friends.
- Find out how soon those who wish to come for the funeral can arrive, so that a date can be set.
- Get some rest. Don't push yourself.

### **Planning the Funeral**

- Set a time as soon as possible.
- Make certain that the funeral home will be responsible for getting the vital information to the news media, as well as information regarding gifts to the Church or other institutions in place of flowers.
- Select a lot for burial if this has not been done previously.
- Talk the service over with the clergy person who will officiate. Are there lay persons to read the Old Testament lesson and the Gospel? Are there special music requests? Who will be pall bearers (for the casket)? Are there other clergy to be invited to assist? Is there to be a Eucharist? Will the family walk in the procession into Church? How will they get to the burial site? Does the family wish to begin filling the grave as part of the ceremony?

### **After the Funeral**

- Check the funeral cost payments through Social Security, pension plans, and insurance.
- Settle insurance claims.
- Get assistance if there are financial questions.
- When times get rough, call your Priest and lean on your friends.
- Don't make major decisions such as the sale of a house or a move to another town too soon.

## **The Nature of Christian Burial**

Baptized Christians are properly buried from the church. Death, as life, for the Christian is a community process and therefore the funeral should be held at a time when the Church and community can gather to celebrate the life of one of its members.

The liturgy for the dead is an Easter liturgy, that is, it finds its meaning in the Resurrection and has a strong emphasis on Baptism. Undergirding and running throughout this celebration in the Episcopal service for burial is a strong sense of joy and celebration. The emphasis of the service falls on the Christian hope of the Resurrection, as promised In the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. At the Christian burial the faithful submit in trust the one they have lost to God who cares for every person even through the final crisis of life.

The joy of resurrection does not and should not wipe away the powerful emotions of grief. Grief is good and healthy and is an experience that should not be denied. Experiences of grief are inevitable and have nothing to do with faith or lack of faith, but rather the capacity to love. The funeral is part of the grieving process.

The cost of a funeral should be kept to a minimum. Spending a lot of money should not be confused with showing love for a person, nor making amends for unresolved feelings. A wooden, felt casket is more than adequate (it will be covered with a pall, any way); no vault is necessary; special limousines and memorial books are not advisable; and embalming is a personal choice, not a legal requirement if burial is in this state. The Priests of the church will be glad to help with the choice of a funeral home and subsequent choices.

## **At the Time of Death**

When someone is near death, the Priest should be notified immediately, no matter what the hour. It is helpful to those concerned as well; as to the person near death to read the Litany for the Dying. At the time of death, a priest should read the Commendation of the Soul.

## **Cremation—Organ Donation**

Cremation is an approved possibility within the Episcopal Church. While holding to the concept of resurrection in its fullest definition, it is not necessary to preserve our physical bodies intact to guarantee resurrection. In fact, in some cases, it is considered to be more ecologically responsible than earth burial. Of course, each person's theology is shaped in this matter by emotion; you may want to discuss this with your Priest.

A third possibility also open to Episcopalians is the bequeathing of one's body to medical science.

Each Parishioner should be encouraged to make the necessary arrangements to donate useful organs such as corneas etc. Make certain that the family and the Priest know of these arrangements so that they can be carried out quickly.

## **Flowers and Memorials**

The family should provide two flower arrangements for the Altar. Other persons wishing to send flowers should be encouraged to send donations to the Church or some other institution or charity. The casket will be covered by the pall provided by the Church. The graveside service should also be very simple, without expensive extras such as plastic grass, tents, etc.

## **The Service**

The Service should take place in the Church, not at the funeral home. The Parish Priest will officiate at all burials held in the Church. If the family would like another clergy person to assist her in the Service, they should make that desire known to the Parish Priest, who will extend the invitation to the clergy person. Only ordained clergy of a Christian church can be extended an invitation. The planning of the service will be the responsibility of the officiating clergy person.

The Service begins with the opening sentences or anthems of the Burial Office said or sung by one of the clergy. These may be done in procession. If there is a casket (which is to be closed before and during the service), the clergy precede it down the aisle. The family may follow the casket.

During the service, friends of the family may serve as lay readers. If there is no preference, lay readers may be chosen from the lay readers of the Church. The Acolytes may also be chosen from the Church's roster.

Music for funerals is chosen using the same criteria as for other services of the church. Some music of a sentimental or highly emotional nature is not appropriate; other music is not available in organ transcription. The Organist of the Church will play for all funerals. The singing of congregational hymns is strongly encouraged; the Priest or Organist can offer appropriate suggestions.

The Eucharist is a normative part of Christian funerals. It is strongly recommended that it be included.

Following the service, the clergy leads the procession out of the Church to the graveside (if internment is to follow immediately). At the graveside there is a brief service of Committal, after which clergy friends and family begin filling of the grave.

St. Paul's offers the use of the Parish Hall or the library of the Lockwood Reilly building for a gathering following the burial service. There is no fee for the use of this space. Arrangements for catering must be made by the family. Wine may be served only if other non-alcoholic beverages are also provided. The Eucharist is a normative part of Christian funerals. It is strongly recommended that it be included.

Fees	Contributing
Church Maintenance (includes Administrative)	\$750
Clergy	\$300
Organist	\$150
Soloist	\$150