

# *A Customary for Christian Burial* *St. Benedict's Episcopal Church* *Lacey, WA*

The Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* advises: “The death of a member of the church should be reported as soon as possible to, and arrangements for the funeral should be made in consultation with, the Minister of the Congregation. Baptized Christians are properly buried from the church. The service should be held at a time when the congregation has opportunity to be present.” (BCP 490).



*Including an outline for “last things” planning*

**A Note About Christian Burial** 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 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."

**Why do we practice Christian Burial?** Central in the Christian faith is the belief that the death of our physical bodies is not the end of our existence, but a new beginning in the sharing of the resurrection from the dead of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christian burial proclaims and shows forth this faith and allows us to commend the deceased to God's grace. Christian burial is also a ministry to the living, to share in and express grief, both individually and in community. It is an opportunity for the community to share in the grief over the loss of a member of the community; to share in the remembrance of the life lived among them; and to celebrate our faith in the resurrection.

**Is Grief Unchristian?** Grief is an important part of our humanity and is both inevitable and necessary when a loved one or member of our community dies. Grief is a natural process and is in no way unchristian. Our example is our Lord Jesus Christ at Lazarus' tomb, when he wept over the death of his friend. The love we have for one another in Christ causes grief when one we love dies. 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. (BCP 507)

**When Should the Priest be notified of a Death?** If at all possible, the minister should be notified before death occurs to allow an opportunity to minister to the dying person and their family. If this is not possible, the death of a member of the Christian community should be reported to the minister as soon as possible. This is both to arrange with the minister for the funeral and to allow for pastoral care for the family and friends of the deceased.

**Who is properly buried from the Church?** Members of St. Benedict's Mission, having been nurtured in the church are properly buried from the church. The service should take place in St. Benedict's church and be scheduled at a time that allows the congregation to be present. The church is most appropriate for a vigil and wake, and as a place where the congregation can extend their sympathy to the bereaved. Persons who are not members of St. Benedict's or immediate family of members may be buried from St. Benedict's with the Vicar's permission.

**The Burial Liturgy** is a public service of worship open to all. A clergy or licensed layperson of the Episcopal Church will officiate at all Funerals/memorial services in St. Benedict's Church according to the Burial Rites of the Book of Common Prayer, 1979. Any parish clergy may Officiate/Celebrate; other clergy may participate or officiate with the Vicar's permission.

Unless the deceased has made prior arrangements, the Vicar or Officiant, with the help of the family, will determine the order of service, scripture readings, and music. Scripture readings must be from the suggested readings in the Burial office in the Book of Common Prayer.

**Caskets and Urns** The body or cremains should be present in the church during the service, unless the Internment is done before the service. The coffin is to be closed before the service and remain closed thereafter. The coffin or urn is covered with a pall. This is specified in the Book of Common Prayer and is the tradition in the Anglican Church. If the family desires, the Internment in a cemetery or columbarium may be done before the Burial service.

**Should we Sing Hymns during the Service?** Yes. Hymns, anthems and instrumental music are very appropriate. Music is an important part of Christian Worship and keeps its importance during a burial service. The Vicar or musician in consultation with the family during the service planning chooses music for the service. Only Music and texts authorized by the Church may be used. The Church Musician is normally the musician for funerals.

**What costs are involved in having a Service in the Church?** There is no charge for contributing members or their immediate family for a funeral or memorial service in the church. For non-members, there is a \$350 charge. The musician is paid an honorarium and an honorarium is expected for the officiating clergy's Discretionary Fund,

**What about Memorial Gifts?** Memorial gifts can be made for whatever purpose the deceased desired or at the desire of the family. The family should determine to whom gifts should be given and that information will be printed in the service bulletin.

**Should the Service include Holy Communion?** Holy Communion is the principal act of Christian Worship. As such it is very appropriate to include the Communion in the burial service for members of the Christian community. The vicar or officiant in consultation with

the family does the planning of the service; at that time the determination about including Communion is made.

**What about Church Decorations?** The decorations in the church will be comparable to those used for a Sunday service. If flowers are desired, they will be limited to the vases placed in a normal place in the church sanctuary. Other flowers may be placed in the narthex or fellowship hall if there is to be a reception.

**How may family members and friends who are not part of the church staff participate in the service?** It is most appropriate that laypersons read the lessons from the Old Testament and Epistle. The homily is normally given by the Officiant, or with prior arrangements with the vicar, may be given by someone else. Family and friends may also present the bread and wine at the offertory.

Eulogies, testimonies, or reflections are not appropriate in the context of the Burial Office. The Homily allows for comments about the deceased and provides, a focus on the Christian Hope of Resurrection to Eternal Life with God and with loved ones who have died before. If the family desires to have an opportunity for other testimonies or reflections, these are done before the burial service begins or arrangements should be made for a wake or reception allowing further comments about the deceased.

**Internment:** The body or cremains should be interred in the cemetery or columbarium as soon as practical after the burial service. The Officiant at the burial service should accompany the family for the internment to conduct the service of Committal.

**Can we have Masonic, fraternal or military rites?** Yes, but not as part of the burial service. If such rites are desired, they are done before the service in the Church, or before the committal at the place of burial.

**Reception after the Burial Service:** If the family desires to have a reception in the parish hall after the service, contact the church office.

**May a Christian be Cremated or be an Organ Donor?** Yes. There is no theological reason why either choice is not acceptable. We do not believe that it is necessary to preserve our physical bodies in order to guarantee resurrection. Organ donation is a very important way to give life and health to others. If desired the service of Committal may be

used prior to cremation.

**What kind of Coffin is recommended?** A simple, inexpensive coffin is most appropriate so as to keep the cost at a minimum. Extravagant funeral expenses are simply not good stewardship. The purpose of the pall used to cover the coffin is to demonstrate that in death we are all equal and an expensive coffin serves no practical purpose.

**Final goodbyes.** The last goodbye to a loved one is difficult at best. Consider gathering the family in the funeral home, before any public visitation, in the company of your priest, to offer prayers and have a time of goodbyes; after which the casket is closed, not to be opened again.

**What about Pre-planning for your Own Funeral?** This is a very good idea and is very helpful to the family. Pre-planning should include such things as determination about burial or cremation, organ donation, and to whom memorial gifts should go. Information about financial and personal affairs is also an important part of pre-planning.

**What about Help dealing with Grief?** The vicar is available to help with dealing with grief. It is important that survivors be allowed to grieve and have the support of the community.

**What about other questions?** You should contact the vicar about any questions about funeral planning or pre-planning.

### **Some important things to consider**

**Do you have a will?** Every adult should have a will, regardless of marital status or dependents. This is the only way you can assure your wishes for care of minor children and disposal of assets is carried out. Without a will, the state may make these critical decisions for you. Consult your lawyer about what kind of will you need to have.

**Are you an Organ and Tissue Donor?** Seriously consider this gift of sharing your life with others after your death. Make sure your physician and your family knows of your wishes. You may also donate your body for anatomical study. Consult your physician and your priest about organ and tissue donation.

**Do you have a Medical Power of Attorney?** You should. This appoints someone you trust to act on your behalf and see that your desires about the use of artificial life sustaining methods and administration of nutrition and fluids if you're unable to make your desires known due to illness or injury. Consult your lawyer and physician about these decisions. Your physician also should have a copy of your medical power of attorney.

**What about cremation?** In reality, cremation only accelerates the natural process of decomposition. It can significantly reduce funeral and burial costs, and there is nothing in Christian theology or doctrine that prevents cremation. St. Benedict's Columbarium is available for members and their immediate family. There is no cost for burial in the Columbarium.

**Talk to your loved ones!** When considering all these issues, you should talk with your family, including your children so that everyone knows and understands your wishes. This also provides an opportunity to discuss anything that might cause concern among your survivors. It is much easier on your family if you have already made some of these necessary decisions before your death.

**Talk to your physician, lawyer, funeral director, and your priest.** There is nothing morbid about talking about your own death. As Christians we believe that death is not the end, but a new beginning of life with God for eternity. Funeral directors encourage pre-planning, as does the Church. You will probably find that serious consideration and decisions about these issues will be good for your mental and spiritual health.

## *Preparing for the Transition to Life in the World to Come*

### **A planning guide for "last things."**

**St. Benedict's Episcopal Church** keeps a file of burial instructions and requests by parishioners. A copy should also be given to your Executor and Next of Kin and your lawyer.

Please fill out this form, discuss it with your priest, and file a copy in the parish office.

*Please type or print plainly.*

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Although you may not wish to "bother" with such details now, planning a funeral at the actual time of your death is the worst possible moment, with so much emotional stress already present. Therefore, this document will be of great assistance to your priest and family. The Episcopal Burial Service is a celebration of your life, in the context of the Gospel promise of eternal life with God. It is an Easter Liturgy offering hope in time of loss and joy in time of sorrow. Discuss these plans with your spouse and/or family - and with your priest.

### **Before you begin this process - take time for prayer:**

O God of peace, you have taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength: By the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

1) Personal Information:

Full Name:

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Present Address:

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Social Security Number:

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Date of Birth:

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Place of Birth (City, State):

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Immediate Family: (Name, address, phone number, email address)

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Who do you want notified of your death? (Name, address, phone number, email address)

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2) Advance Medical Directives:

I DO / DO NOT HAVE a living will/medical power of attorney/advance medical directive (directive to physicians concerning life-staining procedures, and legal authority given to your "agent") (*If the answer is "do not have" you should make one*)

A copy may be found: \_\_\_\_\_

Name, address, phone of your agent:

\_\_\_\_\_

3) Funeral Planning:

Person likely to handle final arrangements: (Name, Phone, relationship to you)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Funeral Home, phone number:

\_\_\_\_\_

I wish my Burial Service to take place at (name of church)

\_\_\_\_\_

I DO / DO NOT desire calling hours at the funeral home.

I DO / DO NOT want my coffin to be open during visitation hours

I prefer \_\_\_ whole body burial \_\_\_ Cremation

(If cremation: BEFORE / AFTER the service)

I prefer my Casket to be: \_\_\_ Least Expensive \_\_\_ Mid-range \_\_\_ Elaborate

I am a Veteran: Yes / No

If yes, do you desire military honors at graveside or interment? \_\_\_\_

I wish my remains to be buried/interred at:

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\_\_\_\_\_ I own a burial plot or niche at that place.

Or: \_\_\_\_\_ I wish one to be purchased there.

Desires about a grave marker:

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#### 4) Burial Service Planning

*The Burial Service begins on page 491 in the Book of Common Prayer, 1979. The burial service for an active parishioner should include Holy Communion, and, if practical, the remains should be present.*

Service with Holy Communion: YES / NO.

I would like the following BIBLE READINGS and Psalms to be included (*listed here are the choices from Page 470 of the Book of Common Prayer*). Four lessons, including a Psalm) may be used; one from the Old Testament, a Psalm, one from the New Testament, and one from the Gospel. There must be at least a Psalm and Gospel reading.

*From the Old Testament: Isaiah 25:6-9 (He will swallow up death for ever); Isaiah 61:1-3 (To comfort those who mourn); Lamentations 3:22-26,31-33 (The Lord is good to those who wait for him); Wisdom 3:1-5,9 (The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God); Job 19:21-27a (I know that my Redeemer lives)*

Old Testament: \_\_\_\_\_

*From the Psalms: 23, 27, 42:1-7, 46, 90:1-12, 106:1-5, 116, 121, 130, 139:1-11.*

Psalm: \_\_\_\_\_

*From the New Testament: Romans 8:14-19,34-35,37-39 (The glory that shall be*

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revealed); 1 Corinthians 15:20-26,35-38,42-44,53-58 (The imperishable body); 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:9 (Things that are unseen are eternal); 1 John 3:1-2 (We shall be like him); Revelation 7:9-17 (God will wipe away every tear); Revelation 21:2-7 (Behold, I make all things new).

New Testament: \_\_\_\_\_

*From the Gospel: John 5:24-27 (He who believes has everlasting life); John 6:37-40 (All that the Father gives me will come to me); John 10:11-16 (I am the good shepherd); John 11:21-27 (I am the resurrection and the life); John 14:1-6 (In my Father's house are many rooms)*

Gospel: \_\_\_\_\_

The following persons may be willing to read a lesson or psalm:

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Music and Hymns: It is appropriate that congregational hymns be sung during the service. If you have particular instrumental pieces, discuss this with your rector/priest in charge. Hymns should be selected from the Hymnal 1982, if other hymns or songs are desired, discuss this with the rector/priest in charge. Easter Hymns (Hymnal 1982 # 174-213) are the most appropriate as the burial office is an Easter Liturgy. Other hymn suggestions are: (Hymnal 1982) # 300-347, 354-358, and 287, 376, 410, 556, 613-625, 637, 671, 680, and 688. Up to four hymns or instrumental music may be used in the office with Holy Communion.

I would especially like the following hymns:

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5) Other arrangements:

- Altar Flowers for Burial Service (may be arranged by the family or the altar guild)
  - Musician(s) \_\_\_\_\_
  - Ushers
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- Pall Bearers

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6) Donations in my memory:

- In lieu of flowers sent to the family I would prefer memorial contributions be sent to:

St. Benedict's Memorial Fund (Endowment)

St. Benedict's General Fund

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

(Other Church, or charity; specify:)

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7) Organ Donation - entire body or certain organs or tissue

I am already an Organ/Tissue donor

I am interested in more information about Organ/Tissue donation

8) Estate Planning:

I HAVE / DO NOT HAVE NOT a Will.

My Executor is: \_\_\_\_\_

The original of my Will may be found:

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My Attorney is: (Name, phone)

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Person(s) with Power of Attorney for me:

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\_\_\_ I have designated a portion of my estate to benefit St. Benedict's Mission

\_\_\_ I wish to have information about planned giving and how I might provide for the future mission and ministry of my parish through my estate or other planned giving programs.

If your wishes change in the future, simply request a new form and it will take precedence.