

# Caring in the Time of Death

## Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church

3557 Crosshaven Drive, Birmingham, Alabama, 35223

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*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.... This, 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. The Book of Common Prayer*

The death of a loved one, whether suddenly and unexpectedly, after a long term illness, or having lived a natural life span is a traumatic time in the lives of those left behind. While still grieving, families and loved ones are called on to make decisions with little time to prepare. The following pages are designed to facilitate the planning of a funeral during a very difficult time, and establish guidelines and policies designed to make it easier for family and friends to prepare for the funeral and interment of their loved one.

There are provisions in the *Book of Common Prayer* for the appropriate readings, psalms, and hymns for a funeral service. Please choose those which will make this service the right one for the celebration of the life of the departed and a fitting memorial in the hearts and minds of those who mourn.

We at Saint Stephen's stand ready to assist you in making decisions for a beautiful and meaningful service. With that in mind, all arrangements for the funeral should be made in consultation with the officiating priest. In the Episcopal Church, a funeral is a celebration of resurrection.

*I am Resurrection and I am Life, says the Lord.*

*Whoever has faith in me shall have life, even though he die.*

*And everyone who has life, and has committed himself to me in faith, shall not die for ever*

### **PARISH STAFF AT FUNERALS**

The Reverend John Burruss, Rector

Jen Manning, Parish Administrator

Martha Black, Funeral Coordinator

Whitney Page, Music Director

## **The Burial Service**

Subsequent to a death, and prior to meeting with the funeral home, surviving family members and/or those responsible for making the funeral arrangements should contact the Church so that one of the parish priests may be present at that meeting. This is especially important if no prior planning or contact has been made with a funeral home. Your priest will help guide you toward making appropriate and reasonable decisions regarding the funeral home services.

Selection of a time for the service should be based on the needs of the family, the expectation or lack thereof of out-of-town mourners, and the availability of the Church. This should be done in consultation with the priest prior to establishing a day and time with the funeral home.

Saint Stephen's uses *The Book of Common Prayer* for all services. The Holy Eucharist is customarily celebrated at funerals; however it is not required. The Prayer Book Service of The Burial of the Dead with Communion takes approximately forty-five minutes, depending upon the number of people receiving communion. A homily may or may not be preached.

The coffin or cremains may be already in place in the Church or may be a part of the opening procession. A coffin is always closed in the church and is covered with a pall. Cremains are covered with a smaller pall\*. [\* pall-- a white hanging placed over the casket instead of flowers] \*. In the case of a veteran of the Armed Forces, the American Flag may be used. Such arrangements may be made by the family prior to the service.

## **Participating Clergy**

The parish priest who has helped the family members prepare for the funeral is the appropriate priest to preside at the burial rite. If an Episcopal priest other than one from Saint Stephen's parish staff is desired to assist (or officiate), the permission and invitation of the Rector is required according to The Canon Law (Title III, Canon 21, Section 5a). The location of the funeral other than in the parish church changes nothing; non-parochial priests may only function with the permission and invitation of the Rector of the parish. Guest clergy (other than Episcopal priests and deacons) are invited from time to time to read the lessons, lead prayers, and/or preach.

## **Readings from Scripture**

During the service, one to three readings from the Bible are read. You may choose a reading from the Old Testament, a psalm (read by the congregation as a whole), a reading from the New Testament, and a reading from the Gospel. The parish priest will assist you in selecting the readings. A deacon, priest, or bishop reads the Gospel. Lay Readers available from the church can read from the Old Testament and the New Testament and lead the congregation in the reading of the psalm. If the family would like a family member or friend to read a lesson, please take into careful consideration the emotional state of that person in respect to the deceased. The following readings are those authorized for The Burial of the Dead:

### **Old Testament:**

Isaiah 25:6-9 (He will swallow up death in victory)

Isaiah 61:1-3 (To comfort all that mourn)

Lamentations 3:22-26, 31-33 (The Lord is good unto them that wait for him)

Wisdom 3:1-5, 9 (The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God)

Job 19:21-27a (I know that my Redeemer liveth)

### **New Testament**

Romans 8:14-19, 34-35, 37-39 (The glory that shall be revealed)

I Corinthians 15:20-26, 35-38, 42-44, 53-58 (Raised in incorruption)

II Corinthians 4:16-5:9 (Things which are not seen are eternal)

I John 3:1-2 (We shall be like him)

Revelation 7:9-17 (God shall wipe away all tears)

Revelation 21:2-7 (Behold, I make all things new)

### **Psalms:**

Psalm 21, Psalm 23, Psalm 27, Psalm 42, Psalm 46, Psalm 90, Psalm 106,  
Psalm 116, Psalm 121, Psalm 130, Psalm 139.

### **Gospel:**

John 5:24-27 (He that believeth hath everlasting life)

John 6:37-40 (All that the Father giveth me shall 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 mansions)

## Music at the Funeral Ceremony

There is a wealth of beautiful and appropriate sacred music that is suitable for use in the context of the Burial of the Dead. We recommend one-three hymns be sung. Suitable times for hymns are in the opening procession; before the Gospel reading; as the altar is prepared; during Communion; at the final procession into the world. The music director of Saint Stephen's will provide music for the funeral as a part of her services as our musician. An honorarium given directly to her is acceptable. If musicians [soloists or instrumentals] other than the church music director are used, the music director will coordinate the hiring of such persons. Fees for such services will be paid directly to the musicians.

### Some hymns appropriate for the Burial of the Dead:

208 The strife is o'er	293 I sing a song of the saints of God
314 Humbly I adore Thee	324 Let all mortal flesh keep silence
383 Fairest Lord Jesus	473 Lift high the cross
474 When I survey the wondrous cross	490 I want to walk as a child of the light
608 Eternal Father, strong to save	645 The King of love
662 Abide with me	671 Amazing grace!
680 O God, our help in ages past	690 Guide me, O thou great Jehovah
691 My faith looks up to thee	707 Take my life
708 Savior, like a shepherd lead us	

There are songs from our supplemental hymnal that are also appropriate.

## Reserved Seating

Pews will be reserved at the front of the church for the family and for pall bearers. If there will be a coffin present, please let the priest know ahead of time how many pallbearers there will be. Please also let the priest know how many family members will be seated in the reserved area.

## Flowers at the Service

Saint Stephen's is blessed with a competent and talented Flower Guild, which will provide flowers at the altar during the funeral. However, if the family would like to use a local florist, that is accepted, in consultation with the priest responsible for the funeral. Floral sprays and decorations sent by family and friends will not be displayed in the church. These should, more appropriately, be sent to a family member's home or to the funeral home. When the funeral is on a Friday or Saturday, the flowers will be used on Sunday morning. The color for Altar hangings and clergy vestments is always white for funerals, because the liturgy for the dead is an Easter liturgy; it finds all its meaning in the resurrection. Because Jesus is raised from the dead, we, too, shall be raised.

## **Visitations**

If so desired, arrangements can be made for the family to have a visitation either prior to or following the service. If done after the service, a reception may be held in the Parish Hall. Please refer to the "Receptions in the Parish Hall" section for details.

## **During the Service**

Members of the family will be seated prior to the beginning of the service. The lay ministers and clergy will enter in an appropriate liturgical procession from the back of the Church. This will be explained and discussed by the officiating priest in the course of preparations for the funeral

## **Service Leaflets**

It is our policy that service leaflets for the funeral be produced in-house.

## **Guest Book**

In most cases, a guest book is provided by the funeral home. However, if that does not occur, Saint Stephen's will provide a guest book.

## **Ushers**

Ushers at the funeral fulfill two important responsibilities: seating of guests, and ushering of the congregation to the Altar Rail to receive Holy Communion. We will provide ushers at all funerals. Thus, ushers from funeral homes are not necessary at the church.

## **Memorial Gifts**

Gifts to the church may be made by individuals or by the family of the deceased. That information will be printed in the service bulletin. Should the family choose Saint Stephen's, please designate your choice of either Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church, or The Saint Stephen's Charitable Endowment, Birmingham, AL. Gifts to the church are placed in the memorial fund for furnishings and appointments to the building. Gifts to the charitable endowment are invested to encourage growth of the principal; the earnings are intended to fund Outreach programs.

## **At the Graveside/Memorial Garden**

The committal service is brief. It can be held either prior to the church service or following it. Family and friends may choose for this to be a private service or may open the service to all. Military honors are always a welcome part of the Committal Service. Extra-liturgical ceremonies, conducted by fraternal organizations, may be held subsequent to the church's Committal Service.

## **Receptions in the Parish Hall**

It is our gift following the service to provide a reception if so desired. "Finger food" and non-alcoholic beverages will be provided. If a floral arrangement centerpiece for the reception table is desired, those arrangements will need to be made through a florist. Displays of pictures of the deceased and other memorabilia may be displayed on a table in the Parish Hall.

## **Cremation**

Cremation is an acceptable practice within the Episcopal Church. Saint Stephen's has a memorial garden for the interment of ashes. If interment is desired, please coordinate the delivery of ashes to the church with the officiating priest. If you wish for more information about the Memorial Garden, please call the church office. Crematory ashes may be placed in the Garden by either the spreading or burying of the cremains. No containers may be placed above or below ground in the Garden (such as urns or vials). The church provides a blessed urn to hold the cremains for the service.

The plaques in the Garden will be utilized for inscriptions with the names of Saint Stephen's parishioners who are committed. For simplicity and equality, no other plaques will be installed in the Garden. A donation of \$600.00 is requested for use of the Garden. While the garden is self-maintaining, larger contributions for enhancement of the Garden are most appreciated. Other memorials are to be discussed with the Rector.

## **Fees**

There are no fees for burial from Saint Stephen's Church. Donations made to the parish to offset the cost of flowers, the reception and the music are appreciated.

*"All we go down to the dust;  
Yet, even at the grave we make our song  
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!"*

### A Statement for the Guidance of my Parish and Family

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." 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. The Book of Common Prayer p. 507

**Services are to be conducted at Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church in Birmingham, Alabama or:**

\_\_\_\_\_ (Parish Church), (City or Town).

*If in another location, the Funeral Director will be told: "The parish priest will be in charge of the services and all related arrangements. It is my desire that the services be conducted as instructed by the parish priest and as provided in the Book of Common Prayer. The priest will make selections when no preference is expressed below."*

1. **Full Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date of birth:** \_\_\_\_\_

In the course of the service the name of the one who died is used often. What name would you like used?

\_\_\_\_\_

**2. Please use**

\_\_\_\_\_The Burial of the Dead: Rite One (BCP p. 469) \_\_\_\_\_The Burial of the Dead: Rite Two (BCP p 491)

I would like The Holy Eucharist to be celebrated as a part of the service. \_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_ No

**3. I would like a Visitation before the Service \_\_ Yes \_\_ No**

Location: Church\_\_\_\_ Funeral Home\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_

**4. If the Holy Eucharist is celebrated:**

I would like the following people to present the offerings of bread and wine at the Offertory

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

I would like the following people to serve as Eucharistic Ministers:

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Music** Please list any hymns you would like sung:

Other music:

**6. The Liturgy of the Word (Please choose from the following category)** *One or more of the following passages from Holy Scripture is read. If there is to be a Communion, a passage from the Gospel always concludes the Readings.*

**a. Old Testament**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Isaiah 25: 6-9      He will swallow up death forever
- \_\_\_\_\_ 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

Choice of Reader: \_\_\_\_\_

**b. Psalms**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Psalm 42: 1-7      As the deer longs for the water brooks
- \_\_\_\_\_ Psalm 46      God is our refuge and strength
- \_\_\_\_\_ Psalm 90: 1-12      Lord, you have been our refuge
- \_\_\_\_\_ Psalm 121 I lift my eyes to the hills
- \_\_\_\_\_ Psalm 130 Out of the depths have I called
- \_\_\_\_\_ Psalm 139: 1-11      Lord, you have search me out
- \_\_\_\_\_ Psalm 23      The Lord is my Shepherd
- \_\_\_\_\_ Psalm 27      The Lord is my light and my salvation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Psalm 106: 1-5      Hallelujah!\_ Give thanks to the Lord
- \_\_\_\_\_ Psalm 116      I love the Lord, because he has heard my the voice of my supplication
- \_\_\_\_\_ # Other

**c. New Testament**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Romans 8: 14-19,34-35, 37-39      The glory that shall be revealed
- \_\_\_\_\_ I Corinthians 15:20-26, 35-38, 42-44,53-58      The imperishable body
- \_\_\_\_\_ II Corinthians 4:16-5:9      Things that are unseen are eternal
- \_\_\_\_\_ I 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

Choice of Reader \_\_\_\_\_

**d. The Gospel**

- \_\_\_\_\_ John 5: 24-27      He who believes has everlasting life
- \_\_\_\_\_ John 6: 37-40      All that the Father gives 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

**7. Additional requests for the service:**

- 8. I would like my remains** \_\_\_\_\_ 1) buried in a casket,  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2) cremated,  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3) donated for research

If cremate, do you wish for the ashes to be interred into the church memorial garden? \_\_\_ Y \_\_\_ N

If buried, name of cemetery where burial is to occur: \_\_\_\_\_

I have received information about the Parish memorial Garden: \_\_\_ Y \_\_\_ N

When would you prefer the committal of ashes/body to occur:

\_\_\_ Before the Burial Service      \_\_\_ After the Burial Service      \_\_\_ At a separate time

**9. Do you have any requests regarding military honors?** \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Do you have any preference with regard to memorial gifts?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**11. Have you made arrangements previously with a mortuary or burial society?** \_\_\_ Y \_\_\_ N

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

**12. My next of kin is (name, address, phone)**

Name

Address

Phone #

**13. Who do you want to be present when final arrangements are made with the church?**

Name[s]: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**14. Information about you**

Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

*These instructions should be placed on file at the church and a copy given to a close friend or relative.*