

Funerals at St. Matthew's

When death occurs, the rector should be called immediately. The rector will confer with the family and make arrangements for the funeral.

Services from the *Book of Common Prayer* will be used for all burial or memorial services. The selection of service, scripture readings, prayers, hymns (if any), and other details will be made by the rector in consultation with the family. As provided in the *Book of Common Prayer*, a communion service and/or homily may be part of the service if desired.

The place for the service is properly the church, according to the *Book of Common Prayer*, but it is acceptable for the service to be held at the graveside. If there is only a graveside service, the rector will use portions of the Burial Office with the Committal Service. In any event, the rector will discuss fully with the family the options available before the decisions are made.

The burial service of the church is complete in itself, dignified and brief, and should not be combined with the services of any fraternal or military organization.

Music

It is appropriate to sing hymns at the burial of the dead. The selection of hymns appropriate to the service can be discussed with the rector or music director. The organist, schedule permitting, is available to play at funerals. Any other organist or musicians must be approved in advance by the rector.

Flowers

Flowers are permissible only on the shelf of the reredos (two arrangements) and in the narthex (one arrangement) and should enhance, not overpower the church. Generally, arrangements that are tasteful, in keeping with the scale of the altar and the season of the church year are acceptable. The brass vases belonging to St. Matthew's may be used and arrangements for a florist to pick up the vase liners may be made with the parish administrator. Delivery of flowers should be coordinated with the parish administrator or the altar guild team on duty. During the week following Christmas and Easter, there will be flowers placed elsewhere in the church under the direction of the altar guild. Specific questions about floral arrangements should be directed to the rector or the altar guild chairperson.

Alternatively, St. Matthew's has a general memorial fund, a churchyard fund, and an outreach fund, if the family would like to designate memorials to the church in lieu of flowers.

Planning

It is advisable for members to make preparation for death, including instructions for burial, memorials, and monuments. Forms are available in the church office. Consultations with the rector are encouraged.

Ministry at Time of Death

As death approaches, it is always appropriate to contact the clergy so that prayers and other pastoral services may be offered at the time of death.

Burial at St. Matthew's

Active church members are entitled to burial in St. Matthew's churchyard. Others with ties to St. Matthew's may petition the vestry for permission. The allocation of grave sites is made by a committee.

Pall

St. Matthew's has a white pall which will be placed over the casket or urn at the door of the church by altar guild members on duty. A casket spray or flag will be removed at the door and replaced when the casket is brought out of the church.

Fees

A funeral service is a normal service of the church and no fees are charged for the use of the building, the services of the clergy, or the altar guild for members of the parish family. It is customary to give the organist an honorarium of \$150 and the Sexton \$75 for opening up the ground for cremated remains.

Reception

At St. Matthew's, following a funeral, a reception can be prepared in the Ruffin House to give the congregation an opportunity to visit with friends and relatives. For non-members of the parish family a fee of \$100 is charged for hosting a reception.

Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we, too, shall be raised.

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 creations, 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, page 507*