Planning a Celebration of Life Service at Ascension Episcopal Church
PLANNING A FUNERAL

The liturgy for the dead is an Easter liturgy. It finds all 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.  -Book of Common Prayer, pg. 507

There are different terms to keep in mind

The preferred location is at the church, but a memorial, funeral or celebration of a life can be done at the funeral home, graveside, or a location of your choice.

- A Celebration of Life or Memorial is a worship service with no body present.

- A Funeral is a worship service that includes a body in the midst of the people.
  - A commendation is the act of committing the deceased to God.

- A Graveside service can be a full worship service and / or an interment service.
  - An interment is the act of placing the body or ashes into the ground.

Whatever you choose, the service will be filled the certain hope of the resurrection. We believe that God is bringing all things to completion for the sake of his resurrected Son, Jesus Christ. We will work with the funeral home of your choice. We consider it an honor to give your family the very best experience in saying good-bye to a loved one.

Logistics

Caskets and urns
Immediately following the worship service the ashes or casket are buried or interred. Arrangements for a graveside committal are often made by the funeral home of your choice. The coffin, when present, is closed and is always covered by a pall, which the church provides.

Obituary and Worship Bulletin
Email the church office a copy of the obituary to be included in the bulletin, which is provided by the church. office@ascensionepiscopalchurch.org

Flowers
Flower arrangements and pictures are welcome to be placed in the Narthex of the Church (the lobby). One vase may be placed behind the Altar (unless the Altar is already decorated for another service, then it is not changed). Flowers other than Altar flowers may decorate the narthex (lobby). They may be ordered through the church florist or the florist of your choice. If you need assistance, the Altar Guild can help you with the order.
Memorial Gifts
Ascension does not charge for funerals, or celebration of life services, however, in lieu of flowers, you may designate donations in the name of the deceased to Ascension Church or an organization.

Designee:____________________________________________________________

Musician Fees & Clergy Honorarium
- Organist’s ministry for burial and memorial services includes a 30 minute organ prelude, service music & hymns, and a closing voluntary: $250.00. All fees are due prior to the actual service. If not paid in advance, the fee may be paid directly to the organist before the service commences.
- Any soloist or instrumentalist is paid separately, based on their individual fees, which average $150.00.
- The clergy honorarium is paid directly to priest. It is the family’s discretion; however, $250 is suggested.

Receptions:
You are welcome to use Ascension’s Parish Hall (maximum occupancy - 239) for a catered or family member sponsored potluck reception. The kitchen facilities are not available. There is a nominal fee assessed for clean-up.

PLANNING YOUR WORSHIP SERVICE

Full Name of the deceased as you would like it to appear in the bulletin:

___________________________________________________________________________

Date of Birth: ____________________________ Death: ________________________________

Date of Service: ______________________________

Would you like a picture of the deceased on the bulletin cover? Y______  N_______

If so, please send an electronic copy of the picture to the office. If an electronic copy is not available, please bring one into the office so we may scan it. We have beautiful cross images, as seen below, that maybe placed on the cover of the bulletin, or you may use one of your choice.
There are two “Rites” in the Book of Common Prayer, please select which rite you prefer.

- Rite I (traditional language) BCP p. 469
- Rite II (contemporary language) BCP p. 491

Eucharist Y____ N___

If a Eucharistic service is desired, please select your preference below:

- Rite I, Eucharistic Prayer I, p. 333
- Rite I, Eucharistic Prayer II, p. 340
- Rite II, Eucharistic Prayer A, p. 361
- Rite II, Eucharistic Prayer B, p. 367
- Rite II, Eucharistic Prayer D, p. 372

Will the body or ashes be present at the service? Y____ N___

Would you like the organist to play service? Y____ N___

Soloists and Other music
A great way to include your musically inclined family and friends would be to allow them to play at your service. They must provide their own instrument or may use the piano. Is there someone you would like to play?

Who: ____________________________________________________

What instrument: __________________________________________

If you do not have anyone specific in mind, but still have a special request, such as a flautist or guitar player, our music leader may be able to help you. What are your requests?

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

Who would you like to serve as ushers? If there is no one who comes to mind, please know that Ascension members consider it a privilege to serve.

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
You may also choose someone to serve as crucifer, acolyte, and chalice bearer; however, the person or persons selected must be trained in the Episcopal Church. If you do not know anyone who is trained or if no one is available, please remember that Ascension members consider it a privilege to serve.

Crucifer: ___________________________________________________

Acolytes: ___________________________________________________

Chalice Bearer: ______________________________________________

Worship Order
Here you will find the order of service. In each section of this planning guide, you will see a listing of suggested readings and hymns. These are by no means the only scriptures or hymns you may use. They are listed to help you if you are unsure what you would like.

Traditional and Contemporary, ancient to modern, music are welcome as long as it is oriented towards the praise of God. If there is a song or songs that you would like to have played, but are not sure if they are appropriate, the Pastor will help you decide.

The prelude is a series of songs that are played while guests are arriving and being seated. The organist begins playing approximately 30 minutes before the service starts. You may also choose to have a silent entrance, and go without a prelude. Below you will see two examples from services that have been held at Ascension.

**Example 1:**  When in the hour of utmost need, BWV 641 ...............J. S. Bach  
Nimrod from Enigma Variations ....................................Sir. Edward Elgar  
Chorale Prelude on “Abide with me”...............................Noel Rawsthorne  
I call to Thee, Lord Jesus Christ, BWV 639 .................J. S. Bach  
"God’s time is best", Sinfonia from Cantata 106 ........J.S. Bach

**Example 2:**  Largo in E from Concerto Grosso # 12 ....................George Frideric Handel  
When in the hour of utmost need, BWV 641 ...............J. S. Bach  
Chorale Prelude on “Abide with me”...............................Noel Rawsthorne  
I call to Thee, Lord Jesus Christ, BWV 639 .................J. S. Bach  
"God’s time is best", Sinfonia from Cantata 106 ........J.S. Bach

**Prelude:**  
_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________
The Opening Hymn is sung by the congregation and may have the words printed in the bulletin.

**Opening Hymn**  
Words Printed? Y____ N_____

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One to four readings are recommended for a memorial service. Typically there is an old testament reading, a psalm, a new testament reading, and the gospel. You are not required to have any more than one and it is not recommended to exceed four. If this is a communion service, the gospel is required.

The **First Lesson** is traditionally an Old Testament reading, and may be read by a family member or friend. You may use one of the suggestions or choose your own.

**Old Testament and Apocrypha Readings**

- 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)

Or other reading: __________________________________________________

**First Lesson Reader**: ____________________________________________

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Here is an opportunity for a **Psalm, Canticle, or Hymn**. The Psalm may be sung or spoken, read by an individual or spoken together by all. The words may be printed in the bulletin.

**Psalms**

- Psalm 23 (The Lord is my shepherd) Rite I or Rite II version
- Psalm 27 (The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear?)
- Psalm 42 (As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God)
- Psalm 90 (Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations)
- Psalm 116 (I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my supplications)
- Psalm 121 (I lift up my eyes to the hills – from where will my help come?)
- Psalm 130 (out of the depths I cry to you. O Lord)
- Psalm 139 (O Lord, you have searched me and known me)

Or other Psalm, Canticle, or Hymn ______________________________________

Will it be sung _____ or spoken ______? Individual _____ or Congregation_______?

If read by an individual, who :_____________________________________________

Would you like the words printed in the bulletin? Y____ N____
The **Second Lesson** is traditionally a New Testament reading, and may also be read by a family member or friend. You may use one of the suggestions or choose your own.

**New Testament Readings**

- Romans 8:14-19, 34-35, 37-39 (Neither death, nor life...will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord)
- 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 35-38 42-48. 53-58 (Christ has been raised from the dead)
- 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:9 (So we do not lose heart)
- 1 John 3:1-2 (See what the father has given us)
- Revelation 7:9-17 (there was a great multitude)
- Revelation 21:2-7 (And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem)

Or other reading: __________________________________________________

Second Lesson Reader: _____________________________________________

Typically there is a hymn between the Second reading and the reading of the gospel. It is called the **Sequence Hymn**. Suggested hymns are at the end of this document. You may also request a song, such as the ‘Wind beneath my Wings’, or “In Christ Alone.” Special requests are at the organist’s discretion with the rector’s approval.

Sequence hymn or song ______________________________________________________

The **Gospel** is the final reading and is read by the pastor. If this is a Eucharist service, there must be a Gospel reading. You may use one of the suggestions or choose your own.

**Gospel Readings**

- John 5:24-27 (anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life)
- John 6:37-40 (Everything that the father gives me will come to me)
- John 10:11-16 (I am the good shepherd)
- John 11:21-27 (Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died)
- John 14:1-6 (Do not let your hearts be troubled)

Or other Gospel reading ______________________________________________________


Reflections

For the sake of those coming to remember your loved one, please ask those who are giving a eulogy to write out their thoughts and limit individual eulogies to 5 minutes per person.

Eulogist(s): ___________________________________________________

___________________________________________________

___________________________________________________

Homily

There will be a brief reflection on the scriptures by the priest.

The Apostles Creed follows the homily.

For a Non-Eucharistic Service the Lord’s Prayer is recited next and then the Prayers of the People. At this time that you may request any special prayers, such as the serenity prayer, the Al-Anon prayer, Prayers of St. Francis, etc. You may have a family member or friend read the prayers, if you choose.

Who would you like to read the prayers? __________________________________________

What are your special prayer requests? ___________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

To continue for a non-Eucharistic service, please skip the next section and go to the blessing.

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For a Eucharistic Service, the prayers of the People are next, followed by the passing of the peace. Once everyone is seated, the service continues with communion.

During the communion, an offertory anthem is played while the pastor is setting the table. If you choose to take an offering, the plates may also be passed at this time. Please select an anthem that you would like at this time. (Suggested hymns are listed on the last page.)

Offertory Anthems ____________________________________________________________

Would you like to pass the offering plates? Y_____ N_______
You also need to select a minimum of two hymns to be played during communion. If you expect an excess of 125 guests you may select a third hymn.

**Communion Hymn(s)**
_______________________________________________
_______________________________________________
_______________________________________________

After the **Blessing**, is spoken the **Dismissal** will read as follows:

Celebrant  Alleluia, Alleluia, Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

*People*  Thanks be to God, Alleluia, Alleluia.

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The Dismissal is followed by the **Closing Hymn**, which is sung by the congregation at the conclusion of the service. Here are some time tested and well respected suggestions:

- Jesus is Risen Today  207
- Alleluia! The Strife Is O' er The Battle Done  208
- For All The Saints, Who From Their Labors Rest  287
- Joyful, Joyful  376
- O God, Our Help In Ages Past  680
- A Mighty Fortress Is Our God  687 or 688
  (circle one)

Or **Closing Hymn of your choice**  _______________________________________________

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As with the prelude, the **Postlude**, or closing voluntary, is played for about 15 minutes after the service, while the guests are exiting the church. Here are some examples that have been used at previous Ascension services or you may choose to have a silent exit:

- Closing Voluntary  Elegy  John Ireland
- Closing Voluntary  Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring  J.S. Bach
- Closing Voluntary  Choral  Joseph Jongen

Or **Postlude of your choice**:  _______________________________________________

Will there be military or other honors?  ___________________________________________

Additional requests  ___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
You may choose to leave a copy of the worship planning pages with the Church and let loved ones know that you have made these choices by sharing this information with them.

**Suggested Hymns - The Hymnal 1982**

From Deepest Woe I Cry To Thee 151
Jesus Lives! The Terrors Now 194/195
Alleluia! The Strife Is O'er The Battle Done 208
For All The Saints, Who From Their Labors Rest 287
From Glory To Glory Advancing 326
Wherefore, O Father, We Thy Humble Servants 338
Into Paradise May The Angels Lead You 354
Give Rest, O Christ, To Your Servants 355
May Choirs of Angels Lead You To Paradise On High 356
Jesus, Son of Mary 357
Christ The Victorious, Give To Your Servants 358
I'll Praise My Maker While I've Breath 429
Blessed Be The God Of Israel 444
The Christ Who Died But Rose Again 447
O Love Of God, How Strong And True 455/456
Come My Way, My Truth, My Life 487
Lord God, You Now Have Set Your Servant Free 499
How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling Place 517
Remember Your Servants, Lord 560
Jerusalem, My Happy Home 620
Light's Abode, Celestial Salem 621/622
O What Their Joy And Their Glory Must Be 623
Ye Holy Angels Bright 625
If Thou But Trust In God To Guide Thee 635
How Firm A Foundation, Ye Saints Of The Lord 636/637
The King of Love, My Shepherd Is 645/646
As Longs The Deer For Cooling Streams 658
The Lord My God My Shepherd Is 663
My Shepherd Will Supply My Need 664
All My Hope On God Is Founded 665
Out Of The Depths I Call 666
I To The Hills Will Life Mine Eyes 668
O God, Our Help In Ages Past 680
A Mighty Fortress Is Our God 687/688
Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah 690
I Heard The Voice Of Jesus Say 692