



Dear Friends,

The death of a loved one brings great sadness and grief. Bethesda—the clergy, staff, and the entire parish—will hold the deceased and family in prayer during this very difficult time. Our desire is to be with those who mourn and to extend comfort and support in the name of the God who loves us all and promises us life.

The manner in which we journey from this life to the next is very important. We are a people born of and by the resurrection of Christ, and it is entirely right that our death reflect this reality. The Episcopal Prayer Book makes this point: “The liturgy for the dead is an Easter liturgy. It finds all its meaning in the resurrection.”

This great hope, however, does not make human grief unfaithful. The very love we have for each other brings deep sorrow when we are parted by death.

The purpose of a funeral service is to commend the deceased to God’s loving care and to extend to those who grieve God’s promise to love and to be with them even in difficult times. Funerals are about grounding the deceased’s life and people’s grief in the universal and always reliable love of God in Christ. At Bethesda, we seek to make funeral services opportunities for every person who attends to experience that love and hope and to find the support of a community as they grieve.

Please read through these guidelines to understand what a Bethesda funeral entails and where choices will be made as the service is planned.

FUNERAL GUIDELINES

A BETHESDA FUNERAL

All funerals at Bethesda will take place at an altar in the church: the chapel altar, the Garden Chapel altar, or the high altar.

The service follows “The Burial of the Dead” in *The Book of Common Prayer*, in either Rite I or Rite II. This beautiful liturgy eloquently gives voice to all of the feelings that accompany the time of the death of a loved one. It is essentially an Easter liturgy—a celebration of life—because in death, our Christian faith assures us that we have in store for us a life beyond this life. It helps those who attend to experience the joy and hope that accompany profound grief and sadness at the death of a loved one.

PRESIDING CLERGY

One of the Bethesda priests will preside at funerals. Those planning the service are free to ask any member of the Bethesda clergy to preach. Participation of other non-Bethesda clergy is at the Rector’s invitation and discretion.

One of the parish clergy is responsible for planning all funerals and will schedule a time to meet with those making funeral arrangements. The Worship and Pastoral Care Coordinator will be the primary point of contact and will schedule meetings and tend to the arrangement of all the details.

SCHEDULING A SERVICE

Bethesda gives priority to the scheduling of funerals, and we will make every effort to accommodate the wishes of those planning their loved one’s service. There are, however, many events on the church calendar that, because of their nature, cannot be changed, and funerals on Monday are not possible. The Worship and Pastoral Care Coordinator will work with church staff and the family to find a reasonable time that fits within the Church’s schedule and respects the pastoral nature of these circumstances.

COMMUNION

As the funeral liturgy is an Easter liturgy, communion is customarily a part of a Bethesda funeral. The clergy make every effort to help all in attendance feel comfortable and welcome to participate in the service in a way that is right for them.

REFLECTIONS

The Episcopal liturgy does not make provision for eulogies, and these are best offered either at a visitation prior to the service or at a reception following. One person chosen by those responsible for planning the service may offer brief (five minutes) remarks on behalf of the family and loved ones, and the remarks must be charitable and welcoming. Given the emotional nature of funerals, remarks should be written out in advance and not extemporaneous. Remarks that are maudlin, off-color, self-serving, anti-Christian, or denigrating of the deceased are inappropriate.

READING & LECTORS

One of the parish clergy will assist in selecting scripture readings from those suggested for funerals in *The Book of Common Prayer*. The readings will follow the customary pattern: a reading from the Old Testament, a psalm read by the congregation, a reading from the New Testament, and a Gospel reading. Selecting appropriate persons to read these passages will be part of the planning process. Readers must be mature and serious enough to appreciate that this is a sacred moment where people's attention should be on the text being read, not on the reader. Readers should prepare in advance and read the passages as provided without other remarks or comments. Readers read from the New Revised Standard Version copy in the binder on the lectern, not from papers brought up by the reader. Readers must be able to read in a manner that is clear, understandable, and expressive of the text.

The Book of Common Prayer does not allow for readings from sources other than the Bible.

USHERS

An usher's ministry is to see to the logistics of seating and movement within the service, and as such those ushering should be familiar with the physical space of the nave and the flow of communion. Given this need, ushers are chosen from Bethesda's active corps of trained ushers. Should a family have a strong desire to include persons within the usher team, they may assist those chosen from our Bethesda usher corps. Unlike weddings, ushering at a funeral is not a place to honor those with close relationships to the deceased. Should such a group exist, those persons are best recognized as pallbearers, should a body be present, or honorary pallbearers.

MUSIC

The Associate for Music and Liturgy is responsible for all music in the service. Music comes from *The Hymnal 1982* and other traditional sources. Any music appropriate for Sunday morning worship at Bethesda is appropriate for a funeral. The Associate for Music and Liturgy must approve all soloists requested to play or sing at a funeral.

LEAFLET

A service leaflet will be printed for the service following the church's structure and style. A proof can be provided to ensure the proper spelling of names and correct dates, though not for approval of style or structure. Funeral leaflets include the order of service and scripture readings; they do not include photographs or other literature.

FLOWERS

Two flower arrangements will be placed at the altar. No other flowers or decorations are permitted in the church for a funeral. Any flowers delivered as gifts will be placed in the narthex and cloister.

COFFIN/URN

When the body is present at a funeral, the coffin is covered either with the church's pall or with an American flag (if desired by the family and legal as a veteran). No other cover is permitted. The coffin will be closed before arriving at the church and will remain closed thereafter. An urn for cremated remains is covered with the church's pall. Either the coffin or urn will normally enter in the opening procession. The coffin will be placed by the funeral directors at the front of the nave. The urn will be carried by a member of the clergy in procession and placed on a table at the top of the chancel steps if not placed on the table before the service.

A graveside service or inurnment normally follows the funeral, either immediately before or after a reception. Other arrangements may be made with the clergy.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography is limited at services of worship at Bethesda. Photographers and other media representatives will be required to stay at the back of the church behind all the pews and may not use a flash. If the family and those responsible for arrangements prefer that no photographers be present, the staff will ensure to the best of their ability that those wishes are honored.

MILITARY HONORS

Military Honors may be arranged through the funeral home if desired by those responsible for making arrangements. They take place immediately before the Commendation. The Honor Guard will carry in the flag, unfold and fold it, present it to the family, and play taps. The Honor Guard will then march out. No other additional ceremonies are permitted during the service and are best left to a graveside ceremony or at the reception. Bethesda encourages obtaining the donated services of a real trumpet or bugle player (the Honor Guard uses a recording) through Bugles Across America.

RECEPTIONS

Should the family desire and scheduling allow, arrangements can be made to hold a reception after the service in the Parish Hall, the Guild Room, or the Garth (the outdoor courtyard), or the Cluett Garden.

COST

The Worship and Pastoral Care Coordinator will work with those responsible for making funeral arrangements to arrange for payment and may be contacted for specific questions about fees. These costs include but are not limited to: leaflet preparation and printing, flowers, organist fee, police and traffic management, guest book, and a room use fee to cover utilities and cleaning.

FUNERAL/MEMORIAL FEE

\$775 *(Includes two high altar flower arrangements, music, leaflet, and sexton, but does not include a gift made to the priest's discretionary fund which is traditionally given to honor time spent preparing for and leading the service.)*

Bethesda charges a modest fee for funerals to help defray the basic costs of the service. This fee is the same for any funeral.

ADDITIONAL FEES

Reception	
Parish Hall (More than 50 people)	\$300
Guild Room (Fewer than 50 people)	\$125
Guest Service Book	\$35
Police (if over 200 guests)	\$420
Additional Music Fees (i.e. soloist) <i>(if any, to be determined by the Associate for Music and Liturgy)</i>	