

WHY IS THAT 'BIG CANDLE' USED IN THE SERVICE?

The Paschal Candle is first lit each year in the Easter Vigil to symbolize Christ dispelling the darkness. As the candle is brought into the darkened church, we sing that the light of Christ has conquered the darkness of the grave. The Paschal candle is lit every time the Church celebrates a baptism. In baptism we are "sealed by the Holy Spirit" and "marked as Christ's own forever." (BCP, 308) The candle is lit at every funeral to remind us of this unbreakable bond and the truth that nothing in all of creation, including death itself, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).

WHY IS THE CHURCH ADORNED IN WHITE?

The church is adorned in white because the burial office is an Easter liturgy and focuses on the unexpected joy of the resurrection, which the Church has proclaimed for two thousand years. In the liturgy, there is a beautiful phrase, "Yet even at the grave we make our song, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia." It is in the hardest, darkest times of our lives, that we insist on proclaiming our hope that "in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

WHY DOES THE PRAYER BOOK SELECT CERTAIN SCRIPTURE READINGS TO BE USED IN THE SERVICE??

The Book of Common Prayer is the result of centuries of thought and theological reflection. As the result of this intentional conversation across generations the prayer book has provided selections from the Holy Scriptures to sustain us at the time of death. There is a certain latitude given to the officiant and the family planning the liturgy to chose favorite hymns or alternative readings, but the appointed readings have been chosen because they speak directly to the resurrection hope that lies at the heart of the Christian faith.

WHY DO WE HAVE COMMUNION?

God has given us the chance to be united with those we love but see no longer through the redeeming action of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. When we share in the sacrament of bread and the wine, partaking in the body and blood of our Lord, we are united with all the hosts of heaven, and all the members of Christ's Church of all time. We share this final Communion meal, the family meal of God's own household, in anticipation of that great day. We will not be able to share Thanksgiving or Christmas, birthday or anniversary meals any longer with the people we have lost, but we will, for eternity, share this Eucharistic meal with them. **There are occasions in which communion may not be desirable. Discuss this with the church when planning the particulars of the service.*

IN SUMMARY

Few are the times in this present age when people are aware of God's acting to graft us in to his larger and eternal purposes. Baptisms, weddings and funerals are among those occasions. It is in those events when time and eternity touch that we and our loved ones need the truth, beauty, and comfort of the words of Holy Scripture and the great tradition. The burial office exists because the final goodbye to your loved one is simply too significant a matter to make it up as we go.

The liturgy for the dead is an Easter liturgy that finds *all* its meaning in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It gives us permission to express deep sorrow over the death of loved ones. It also reassures us that all who die in Christ share in the victory of his triumph over death. Using this liturgy in the church for the burial of a Christian reaffirms and strengthens our faith that just as God raised Jesus from the dead, he will also raise us.

We are glad that you are considering our church for this important event in the life of your family.

Please contact the Trinity office at (904) 824-2875 to set up an appointment to plan the particulars of the ceremony.

FUNERALS



Answers to questions about burial services in an Episcopal church.



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QUESTIONS ABOUT FUNERALS



WHY HAVE A FUNERAL IN A CHURCH?

One of the characteristics of an Episcopal or Anglican Church is that you will often see graves inside the church or on the church grounds. When we speak of the Church, we mean both the church militant (those who are alive right now) and the church triumphant (those who have died and ended their earthly race). When you worship in an Episcopal Church you are literally and tangibly in the presence of the whole Church. A funeral in the church building is a sign that, even though death seems to divide us from those we love, the Body of Christ is never divided. As members of Christ's body, we are still connected with those we love but see no longer. Therefore, a funeral in the church building foreshadows that day when we will be reunited with the entirety of the Body of Christ in the presence of God.

WHY A BURIAL SERVICE (prayer book funeral service) INSTEAD OF A MEMORIAL?

Rather than focus on what we believe to have been important about our loved one's life, the burial liturgy reminds all present that we are brought into a reconciled relationship with God after our death because of what God has done, not because of what we did in life. Using the burial office rather than trying to create a particular and personal memorial service is a consequence of that belief. In the burial office the gathered body of Christ expresses gratitude for God's redeeming work in our loved one's life, hands them over to God's gracious care, and looks forward in hope to God's future resurrection of us as well.

WHY DO CLERGY ACCOMPANY THE FAMILY ON THE INITIAL CONSULTATION WITH THE FUNERAL HOME?

It is often a good idea to have the church funeral planner accompany you to the mortuary in order to coordinate arrangements at the beginning of the planning process. The clergy/church representative is *your* advocate and a calm and supportive presence at a time when difficult decisions must be made.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR THE BODY OR CREMAINS OF THE DECEASED TO BE PRESENT?

Christians believe in the bodily resurrection, not just of Jesus, but of each of Jesus' followers. We do not know what our new bodies will look like, but we do know that God is going to transform the essence of our whole selves, our minds, our souls, and our bodies. The presence of the body or cremains of our loved one is a sign to all of our trust in God's plan to redeem and transform us in the end.

WHEN THERE IS A BODY, WHY IS THE CASKET CLOSED AND COVERED WITH A PALL?

Holy Scripture tells us that "to be away from the body is to be home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). We close the casket because our loved one is no longer present-only their remains.

Once inside the church the casket is completely covered with the "pall." As Easter people we are dressed in white in our final church service. The pall points to the reality that, whatever our station in life, we all come before God by virtue of being clothed in robes made white by Christ's loving action on our behalf.

WHY ARE THERE NO EULOGIES?

Although there is a degree of latitude granted in some parishes, there is a longstanding tradition of not having eulogies in the burial office. This is because the burial office, rather than fixating on the past, orients our faces toward the future promised by God that is a consequence of our relationship with Jesus. It is a good thing to remember the lives of our loved ones and to give thanks for all they have meant to those who remain behind. That work of remembering, though, happens best when we can do it in conversation. Perhaps you will want to have someone speak about your loved one's life during visitation hours before the burial office, or at the reception following. You also have the option of having a Vigil the evening prior to the funeral as a time to offer prayers and to share memories of the deceased. (BCP, 465-466). **Feel free to speak with your priest if you wish to discuss this further.*