

PLANNING AHEAD

Most people do not want to think about their own death, but as Christians we are admonished to do just that. We are to be in a state of grace at all times for death, which comes like a thief in the night – no one knows the day or hour.

In the Prayer Book Office for the Visitation of the Sick the priest is advised to *“inquire of the sick person as to his acceptance of the Christian Faith, and as to whether he repent him truly of his sins, and be in charity with all the world; exhorting him to forgive from the bottom of his heart, all persons that have offended him; and if he hath offended any other, to ask them forgiveness; and where he hath done injury or wrong to any man, that he make amends to the uttermost of his power.”* (p.313) This is how we should be striving, by God’s Grace, to be living every day.

Additionally, the prayer book states *“The Minister is ordered, from time to time, to advise the People, whilst they are in health, to make Wills arranging for the disposal of their temporal goods, and, when of ability, to leave Bequests for religious and charitable uses.”* (p.320) Although not affecting our salvation, this is a Christian Responsibility, so that at our deaths our temporal affairs are not mired in probate, and our grieving relatives made anxious about discerning our intention concerning our earthly estate. It is an act of love and charity to make these arrangements before we die.

THE RITES OF THE CHURCH

Just as the Church, as the Body of Christ, is intimately tied to our sanctification through the Sacraments of Baptism, Communion, Confirmation, Marriage and/or Ordination, and Reconciliation (forgiveness of sins), so too the Church is involved at the time of our Death, administering the Sacrament of Unction. It is a great comfort near the time of death to receive anointing, the opportunity to receive the sacrament of reconciliation, and the Holy Communion. Please be sure to call the priest if you or a loved one is in imminent danger of death.

After death you are entitled to the Rites of the Church for your burial. These have evolved and changed over the years. **IT IS PREFERABLE THAT YOU BE BURIED FROM THE CHURCH**, since it is the place where you began your Christian journey at the Baptismal Font, and where the sacramental milestones of your life have been administered.

Below is listed a variety of options for you to decide from.

Requiem Communion Service

From the earliest days of the Church, it was the tradition to have the burial service in the context of Holy Communion, since it is the tangible way in which we are connected to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ both on earth and in the afterlife. Additionally, the reception of the Sacrament of our Lord’s Body and Blood is an assurance of Grace, and is of great comfort for those who mourn. *This is the recommended service.*

The Burial Office

Beginning on page 324 in the Book of Common Prayer. This simple service can be done at the Funeral Home or the Church. It is a relatively short service, and can be done with or without music.

Vigil Service

Also known as a Wake, a vigil service can be arranged at the Church or funeral home the night before the funeral. This is a relatively simple prayer service, and provides the opportunity for eulogies by family members. There are to be NO eulogies at the Burial Office or Requiem Communion Service.

Other decisions that need to be made before your death include –

Music – will you or your family want to hire the services of our organist, or even have a quartet from our choir to lead worship? This is an expense that must be paid for by the family. If the answer to one or both is yes, then you will perhaps want to pick out **hymns** that you would like sung – perhaps a favorite of yours or your family.

Burial or Cremation – The church recognizes both of these as viable options, in addition to the donation of organs/body for medical use and research.

Internment Where would you like your remains to be buried? Burial or Internments plots can be purchased ahead of time, including niches for ashes at St. John’s.

