

# **Death and Dying: What To Do**

**St. Luke's Episcopal Church**

**515 2<sup>nd</sup> Street**

**Woodland, CA 95695**

The death of a loved one brings profound sorrow. This sorrow affects our bodies, minds, and lives. Because grief can be confusing and painful, we sometimes find ourselves not knowing what to do next or where to turn for assistance. This packet has been designed to help you through this difficult time. There may be a need for you to seek where assistance at a later date, and we invite and encourage you to use the services listed in this packet and to contact the rector if you need assistance.

## **Checklist: What to Do and When**

The following list is a guide for knowing the tasks that you must perform to deal effectively with the practical aspects of death, particularly the death of a spouse. A timetable will help in accomplishing a smoother transition. Your particular circumstances may warrant quicker action or slower action. Use this guide and make adjustments when necessary.

### **Immediately**

There may be numerous details to attend to and some decisions to be made regarding services. Some will require your attention. Many details can be taken care of by other family members and friends—most will appreciate the opportunity to help.

- Contact your priest
- Choose mortuary
- Make decisions about the service
- Write obituary. Include age, place of birth, cause of death, occupation, college degrees, memberships held, military service, outstanding work, list of survivors in immediate family. Give time and place of services.
- Make a list of immediate family, close friends and employer or business colleagues. Notify each by phone.
- Arrange for members of family or close friends to take turns answering door or phone—keeping careful record of calls.
- Arrange hospitality for visiting relatives and friends.
- Coordinate the supplying of food for the next few days.
- Consider special needs of the household, as for cleaning, etc. that might be done by friends.
- Arrange for someone to stay at the home during the funeral service to assure home security
- Plan for disposition of flowers after funeral (hospital or rest home)
- Prepare a list of distant persons to be notified by letter and/or printed notice, and decide which to send each.
- Prepare a list of people to be thanked for flowers, food, calls, etc.
- Notify lawyer and executor. Get several copies of death certificate.
- If deceased was living alone, notify utilities and landlord and tell post office where to send mail.

## Planning The Funeral

(Many of the following details will be covered in conversations with the priest or with the mortuary.)

The Episcopal Burial Service is an Easter service. Therefore, we wear white vestments and sing uplifting hymns for the celebration of this person's life. It is appropriate to have Holy Eucharist at this service, although you may choose otherwise. The priest will help you with decisions regarding the service. There are various options. If you prefer, the priest can make most of these decisions for you.

Date and time \_\_\_\_\_

Burial \_\_\_ Cremation \_\_\_\_\_

Casket or cremains at service Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Rite I (traditional) Rite II (contemporary) \_\_\_\_\_

Holy Eucharist Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Incense Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Altar Flowers: Supplied by church for a small fee Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Family will supply altar flowers. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Memorials to: \_\_\_\_\_

Organist Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

The priest will inform you about the organist's fee.

Preferred hymns: \_\_\_\_\_

### 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 (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)

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\_\_\_ Psalm 42 \_\_\_ Psalm 46 \_\_\_ Psalm 90

\_\_\_ Psalm 121 \_\_\_ Psalm 130 \_\_\_ Psalm 139

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\_\_\_ Romans 8:14-19, 34-35, 37-39 (The glory that shall be revealed)

\_\_\_ 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 35-38, 42-44, 53-58 (Raised in incorruption)

\_\_\_ 2 Corinthians 4:16—5:9 (Things which are not seen are eternal)

\_\_\_ 1 John 3:1-2 (We shall be like him)

\_\_\_ Revelation 7:9-17 (God shall wipe away all tears)

\_\_\_ Revelation 21:2-7 (Behold, I make all things new)

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\_\_\_ John 5:24-27 (He that believeth hath everlasting life)

\_\_\_ John 6:37-40 (All that the Father giveth me shall come to me)

\_\_\_ John 10:11-16 (I am the good shepherd)

\_\_\_ John 11:21-27 (I am the resurrection and the life)

\_\_\_ John 14:1-6 (In my Father's house are many mansions)

Was the deceased baptized? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Confirmed? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

## **Episcopal Funeral Hymns**

The following are suggested hymns which may be used in funeral services held at St. John's.

### **The Hymnal 1982**

- 188 Love's redeeming work is done  
208 The strife is o'er, the battle done  
287 For all the saints, who from their labor rest  
335 I am the bread of life  
355 Give rest, O Christ  
356 May choirs of angels lead you  
373 Praise the Lord! ye heavens adore him  
379 God is Love, let heaven adore him  
388 O worship the King, all glorious above  
429 I'll praise my maker while I've breath  
447 Thou art the Way, to thee alone  
455/56 O love of God, how strong and true  
457 Thou art the Way, to thee alone  
492 Sing, ye faithful, sing with gladness  
526 Let saints on earth in concert sing  
608 Eternal Father, strong to save  
618 Ye watchers and ye holy ones  
620 Jerusalem, my happy home  
625 Ye holy angels bright  
635 If thou but trust in God to guide thee  
636/37 How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord  
645 The King of love my shepherd is  
663 The Lord my God my shepherd is  
664 My shepherd will supply my need  
668 I to the hills will lift my eyes  
671 Amazing grace! how sweet the sound  
680 O God, our help in ages past  
687/88 A mighty fortress is our God  
690 Guide me, O thou great Jehovah  
695/96 By gracious powers so wonderfully sheltered

### **Lift Every Voice and Sing**

- 38 The old rugged cross  
54 Nearer my God to thee  
60 How great thou art  
69 I come to the garden alone  
137 Just as I am  
184 Blessed assurance

## **Checklist: What to Do and When**

### **First Week**

Contact life insurance company for claim forms. Request only the funds you will need to live on until you can consult with a financial advisor.

### **Second Week**

Begin applying for survivor benefits.

Send medical claims to the appropriate insurance carriers.

Consult with a financial advisor about how to request large sum benefits executor(trix):

- Open a bank account to facilitate money due to the estate.
- Inventory all assets
- Collect all monies due the estate
- Apply for a tax identification number
- File Form 56, Notice Concerning Fiduciary Relationship
- Send thank notes and acknowledgments

### **Third Week**

See an accountant to get a tax projection.

Review all insurance with your agent to see if coverage is appropriate and adequate

Change beneficiaries on insurance policies, retirement accounts, savings bonds, etc.

Transfer all assets into your name or into trust accounts.

Make a plan for paying all debts and obligations.

Make necessary decisions concerning deceased's self-employment business

### **After the First Month**

Contact credit card and charge card companies.

Change billing name with utility companies.

Update Will.

Prepare a net worth statement.

Make a list of income and expenses.

Track your expenses to see where your money is being spent.

Seek professional counseling or grief support group.

Go through old records and files, including canceled checks for clues to any additional benefits, assets, or obligations.

Choose a memorial marker.

### **After the Third Month**

Create a new budget.

Apply for credit in your own name.

Begin gathering information for tax returns.

Investigate support groups and clubs.

### **After the Sixth Month**

Begin to think about investments.

As executor(trix)

- List claims against the estate.
- Liquidate assets as necessary to pay bills
- Prepare tax returns and pay tax liabilities.
- Pay all bills.
- Disburse assets to heirs.
- Prepare an accounting for the courts.
- Advise beneficiaries of the new tax basis for assets.
- After One year
- Close probate.
- Make decisions about your future living arrangements.
- Make plans for your future (life and career).

*~Excerpted from: No Lifetime Guarantee by Katie Maxwell, P.O. Box 219, Crozet, VA 22932*

### **Suggestions for Helping Yourself Through Grief**

We do need the help of relatives and friends, and may need the help of professional counseling. Calling the priest just to talk is a good idea. At the same time, it is important for us to make the effort to help ourselves. Remember that a lot of energy will be used for healing.

Treat yourself with the same care and affection that you would offer to a good friend in the same situation. Most of us are aware of “LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR”—we forget the part—“AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF.” Not all suggestions will be helpful to everyone. Grief has its unique side. Choose the ideas that appeal to you. Go gently. Don’t take on new responsibilities right away. Don’t over-extend yourself. Keep decision-making to a minimum.

- Accept help and support when offered.
- Ask for help. Our family and friends cannot read our minds. It is very important to find someone who cares, understands, and with whom you may talk freely. It’s okay to need comforting.
- Lean into the pain. It cannot be outrun. Let the grief/healing process run its full course. Healing takes time.
- Seek the help of a Counselor or Clergy if grief is unresolved.
- Read. There are many helpful books on grief. If grief is understood, it is a little easier to handle.
- Keep a journal. It is a good way to understand what you are feeling and thinking. Hopefully when you re-read it later, you will see that you are getting better.
- You may have physical problems brought on by your grief reaction. See your physician.
- Try to get adequate rest. Go to bed earlier. Avoid caffeine in coffee, tea and colas.
- Good nutrition is important to help the healing process.
- Moderate exercise helps (walking, tennis, swimming, etc.). It offers an opportunity to work off frustration and may aid sleep.

- Thinking you are going crazy is a very normal reaction. Most grieving people experience this. You are not losing your mind, only reacting to the death.
- Depression is common to those in grief. Be careful not to totally withdraw yourself from others. If your depression becomes severe or you are considering suicide, get professional help immediately.
- It's okay to be angry. You may be angry at yourself, God, the person who died, others, or just feel angry in general. Don't push it down. Let it out.
- If Sundays, holidays, etc., are especially difficult times, schedule activities that you find particularly comforting into these time periods.
- Join a self-help group. They offer support, understanding, friendship, and hope.
- Plan new interests. Join a tennis group, read a novel, take a class (crafts, skills, self-awareness), learn and do something new. Rediscover old interests, activities and friends.
- Do something for someone else. Join either a volunteer or support group. Helping others does much to ease the pain.
- Remember, you will get better. Hold on to HOPE. Some days you just seem to exist, but better days will be back.
- Simply stated—put balance in your life...Play, Rest, Work, Read and Relax.

### **Suggestions for Helping Yourself Through Holidays and Other Special Days**

There are many holidays and special days in our lives: birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, weddings, Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas and Hanukkah. These times, already stressful, may intensify feelings of pain and loneliness. Here are some things which other bereaved persons have found helpful. Choose the ones that will help you.

- Holidays and anniversaries often magnify feelings of loss of a loved one. It is important and natural to experience the sadness that comes. To block such feelings is unhealthy. Keep the positive memory of the loved one alive.
- Share your concerns, feelings, and apprehensions, as the holiday or anniversary approaches, with a relative or friend. Tell them that this is a difficult time for you. Accept their help. You will appreciate their love and support at this time.
- Learn to listen to your inner voice. It is one of the best friends you have. Intuition may lead you to the right person or activity for that specific moment, and can spare you those that are unsatisfactory.
- It is OK to be alone. Isolating yourself from others is not recommended, but there are times when solitude is deeply gratifying. Explore being alone and learn what is the most healing to do during your time alone.
- Create new traditions. You may want to spend holidays or special days in a new setting; take a trip, visit friends, or volunteering in a new setting. Be careful of "shoulds." Don't feel obligated to follow tradition, unless doing so would be a comfort to you.
- Send Christmas cards early. Receiving cards addressed to or mentioning the name of the one who died can be very distressing. Consider sending cards out very early informing others of the death, or enclose cards used at the funeral service. Writing cards can be therapeutic. It is also OK not to send any cards.

- If Christmas shopping seems too hard, shop by phone or catalog or have a friend or relative go with you or do it for you. Accept help.
- Keep a low profile. Don't wear yourself out by shopping and attending lots of social functions. Be selective. Saying, "No thanks!" is OK.
- Acknowledge your loss. Talk with your family about the holiday ahead of time and be honest about your feelings. Don't expect too much of yourself or of the holiday.
- Running away from feelings requires enormous energy and does not help you heal.
- On anniversaries and holidays commemorate your loss.

## **Bibliography**

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