



Diocese of Missouri  
THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

# PASTORAL RESOURCES

## DURING THE TIME OF COVID-19



*God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear,  
though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the  
heart of the sea; Though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. -Psalm  
46:1-3*

### INTRODUCTION

For Christians, gathering to comfort those who are sick, support those who mourn and commend those who have died are essential practices as we proclaim the hope of the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Savior. Ours is an incarnational faith, and yet during this time of global pandemic many aspects of our expressions of pastoral care are limited. The ongoing need for pastoral caring and support, particularly among those who are sick, the dying and those who are grieving, is vitally important during this time of physical distancing.

Our present reality means that for a time we must be creative, compassionate, and imaginative in ministering those in most need. As followers of Jesus we are challenged to find new ways of loving, caring, and bearing witness to hope from afar.

These resources are intended to be both pastoral and practical guides for those ministering to the sick, caring for the grieving and burying the dead.

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## MINISTERING TO THE SICK

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*"Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord."* - James 5:13-14

Praying with the sick, with the laying on of hands and anointing has been a part of the ministry of Christians since the early Church. The comfort offered to those who are ill by the prayers of God's people together with the laying on of hands and anointing is an indispensable gift of the church.

During this time of global pandemic, while we are not able to be physically present with those who are sick, the ministry of prayer is a valuable and vital act of compassion especially during this time. The safety, care, and comfort of those who are sick and entrusted to our care is of utmost importance, because in ministering to them we minister to Christ.

Please note that the following suggestions for ministrations to the sick during the time of pandemic are intended to be best practices and are by no means an exhaustive list.

### GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

Be in contact with parishioners who have chronic conditions.

- Encourage them to have a list of contacts in the event they might need to be hospitalized.
- Create and have access to a list of those to whom the hospital is allowed to be in contact with should the parishioner be in need of hospitalization and/or unable to communicate.
  - It is a good practice to maintain a copy of this in the Parish Offices outside the time of pandemic.
- Encourage them to send a tablet or phone with their loved one.
- Ensure that the proper charging cords are included and that device is clearly labeled.
- Include a list of numbers to call in addition to the primary contact person.
- Include a list of prayers or other resources that might be utilized by medical care providers in the event a clergy person is not available.
- Where/when possible do a video or conference call with the family and the person who is sick. There are several free resources available including Zoom, FaceTime, Google Meet etc.
- Contact the spiritual care team or the hospital chaplain.
- Establish a relationship, if possible, with the medical staff who may also need spiritual care.
- Share updates with members of the community of faith as appropriate.

### HOSPITAL VISITATIONS

- Contact your local hospital to determine their policy for care of patients at this time.
- Different hospital systems have various practices around visitors and pastoral care so be sure to familiarize yourself with your local hospital policy.

### IN-PERSON HOSPITAL VISITATIONS

In the event that the hospital system allows for clergy visitation of patients a few things to note:

- You do **NOT** have to make in-person visit even if the hospital allows for it.
- Check with the hospital about their procedures for personal protective equipment.
- Limit in-person visits to no more than 20 mins.

## ON THE PHONE:

- Be sure you are communicating with the right person.
- Take care that this is a good time for the person to talk with you.
- Be creative in finding ways to deepen the conversation beyond the diagnosis.
- Have a plan for getting off the phone gracefully.
- Pay close attention to any signs of distress.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Deepen the conversation beyond the medical diagnosis. Questions to further conversation:
  - Has anything been particularly challenging for you?
  - Has anything been helping you cope?
  - How can I or your community be helpful at this time?
  - May I pray with you over the phone?

## MINISTRATION AT THE TIME OF DEATH

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The time of death is a holy time. It is a sacred privilege to attend to one who is passing from this life into a nearer presence with God. Our faith tells us that although we experience the pain of death as a loss, we find hope and solace in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

During this time of pandemic the normal rituals of laying on of hands with prayer and anointing with oil are not possible, and yet, the need to be present with the dying and their loved ones has taken on greater significance.

Please note that the following suggestions for ministration at the time of death during the time of pandemic are intended to be best practices and are by no means an exhaustive list.

## GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

- Spend some time in conversation with the loved ones of the person who has died or is near death.
- Contact hospital medical staff in the event that death is eminent or life sustaining measures are to be removed.
- Be familiar with Ministration at the Time of Death in the Book of Common Prayer page 462.
- If possible offer to include the medical staff in the prayers.

## AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- [Enriching Our Worship 2](#) (available [online](#) as a PDF from Church Publishing) offers several liturgies and prayers that are appropriate for this time.
  - A revised version of Ministration at the Time of Death, page 96
  - Litany at the time of death, page 102
  - Commendation at the Time of Death, page 108
  - A Litany Anticipating Heaven, page 111, is appropriate with the family after the person has died.
  - A Form of Prayer When Life-Sustaining Treatment Is Withheld or Discontinued, page 117

## BURIAL OF THE DEAD

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*Jesus said "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die." –John 11:25-26a*

It is always sacred work to bury the dead. This is additionally complicated during this time of pandemic. Thank you for using the best of your pastoral skill, wisdom, and experience to model the enduring love of Christ to those who grieve. Through you, those who mourn know that they are not alone, and may experience the unconditional love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The ritual acts in which we gather, give thanks, commend and commit the dead to God seeks to embody Christ's resurrected presence in the community of faith. In addition sharing in the loss of a loved one within the community of faith offers comfort and hope. During this time of pandemic burial of the dead looks and feels different from our regular pattern. The usual acts of gathering, connecting, and sharing with those who mourn are not available to us. Familiar signs of compassion, often expressed in sacred touch, are not practicable during this time. Grief and loss will most likely be heightened by the new reality in which we find ourselves ministering.

Pastoral care to those who are grieving the death of a loved one remains the utmost sacred work of the community of faith.

### GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

- Provide your local funeral home with a copy of the church's funeral policy.
  - A sample policy is provided below for use which should be approved by the vestry or bishop's committee.
- Meet with the family via conference or video conferencing to plan the funeral liturgy.
- Set a date for family and the faith community to gather to commemorate the dead.
- Plan the memorial service for those who are bodily interred at or before the burial service.
- Invite family and members of the faith community to gather virtually after the burial.
  - Allow family members and friends to share and hear stories of their loved one.
  - While a virtual gathering does not take the place of a later in person memorial it should be grounded in scripture and prayer.
- Offer resources for those who mourn to honor their loved one after the burial service.
- Remind family members about physical distancing practices.
- Be in contact with family members after the burial liturgy.
- Provide family members and loved ones resources to commemorate loved ones at home.

### BURIAL RESOURCES

- The Committal from the Book of Common Prayer page 501
- [Enriching Our Worship 3](#) (available [online](#) as a PDF from Church Publishing) offers several liturgies and prayers that are appropriate for this time.
  - Reception of the Body, page 21 can be added to the BCP Committal
  - The Committal, page 59, offers an extended version of the BCP liturgy.
  - Committal under Special Circumstances, page 62, offers a more robust graveside liturgy.
  - Prayers for the Committal of a Body at a Crematory, page 84

# SAMPLE FUNERAL POLICY FOR CONGREGATIONS

Funeral Policy for \_\_\_\_\_ Church during COVID19:

For Christians, gathering to mourn the dead, celebrate their life and proclaim the hope of Resurrection are essential practices of our faith. During the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID19 outbreak, our usual mourning rituals have been interrupted. We think of those women on that first Easter, who went to follow their familiar mourning ritual to anoint Jesus's body, to find it disrupted.

We remember their initial shock and confusion and feel it too. We're waiting to feel the hope of resurrection. In times of trial like the death of a loved one, we turn to the familiar practices and rituals of our faith and ancestors. And so we know that this disruption for a grieving community is doubly hard. We grieve this disruption with you.

During the COVID19 outbreak, the Centers for Disease Control has recommended no gatherings larger than 10 people. Until the ban on gatherings is lifted, we will be limited in our funeral practices in the following ways:

## Viewing/Wake:

We are not able to accommodate a wake or viewing at this time. The potential for large gatherings and contact is too high. The logistical and safety considerations are too great.

## Funeral:

Christians bury their dead traditionally from the church with the community of faith gathered. At this time we are not able to host a funeral service at the church. The Burial of the Dead together with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist in thanksgiving for the life of a loved one can and will be celebrated at a later date.

## Graveside:

We are able to host a graveside service outdoors, where possible, and require that all people practice physical distancing of 6 feet between one another. In coordination with the funeral home and cemetery we are able to accommodate only 10 people<sup>1</sup> present. It may be possible, in coordination with the funeral home or cemetery to livestream the graveside service.

## Repast/Collation:

We are not able to host a meal following the funeral at this time. While we are limited in what we are able to host at this time, we are able to plan for memorials after the pandemic has passed. We would welcome the opportunity to host a memorial service for your loved one at a later date when we can all safely gather and celebrate their life.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that cemetery practices vary and not all cemeteries may allow gatherings of 10 people.

# SAMPLE GRAVESIDE LITURGY

*The Officiant may begin with this or other suitable anthems.*

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have everlasting life.

*or this*

Grace and peace to you from our Savior Jesus Christ.

Let us pray.

Gracious God, you alone are the source of all life, may your life-giving Spirit flow through us, so that we may be ministers of your compassion to one another; in our sorrow give us the calm of your peace, kindle our hope, and in your good time, let our grief give way to joy, through Jesus Christ our Deliverer. Amen.

*A portion of scripture from the burial rite may be read.*

John 5:24-27

Jesus said, "Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life.

"Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; and he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. "

John 10:11-16

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away-- and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd."

John 11:21-27

Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother, Lazarus, would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

John 14:1-6

Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

*A brief homily or hymn may follow.*

*At locations where graveside services are prohibited, the following may be said*

In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Savior Jesus Christ, we commend N. to her merciful God. Grant that her body/remains may rest in peace, awaiting her last call to service; and that we and all who worship here may offer our humble thanks for those who have fought the good fight [and faithfully lived in service of their country], and who now wear the crown given us by the Victor over death, Jesus our Redeemer. Amen.

*If the body is being committed to the earth immediately, standing before the grave or crematory door, the Officiant says*

In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Savior, we commend N. to her loving God, and we commit her body/remains to the [ground, the deep, the elements, its resting place] earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. The Lord bless her and keep her, the Lord make his face to shine upon her and be gracious to her, the Lord lift up his countenance upon her and give her peace. Amen.

*or this*

We have entrusted N. to God's mercy, and we commit her body to the ground [or to be cremated], earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Savior Jesus Christ, who will transform our bodies so that they may be conformed to his glorious body, who died, was buried, and rose again for us. To Christ be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

*or this*

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, by the death and burial of Jesus your anointed, you have destroyed the power of death and awakened the dead into your true and eternal life. Keep N. whose body we now lay to rest in the company of your saints. And at the last raise her up to share with all the faithful the endless joy and peace won through the victory of Christ our Savior; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, unto ages of ages. Amen.

#### THE PRAYERS

The Lord be with you.

***And also with you.***

Let us pray.

May God be with you.

***And also with you.***

Let us pray.

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER

*Officiant and People*

***Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your Name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever. Amen.***

*Officiant and People*

***Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory  
for ever and ever. Amen.***

*Other prayers may be added.*

*Then may be said*

Rest eternal grant to her, O God;

**And let light perpetual shine upon her.**

May her soul, and the souls of all the departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen

*The Officiant or some other person may lead the congregation in this prayer*

Jesus, Savior of the world,  
**be gracious to us.**

By your atoning death,  
**be gracious to us.**

By your incarnation and nativity,  
**be gracious to us.**

By your rest in the grave,  
**be gracious to us.**

By your prayers and tears,  
**be gracious to us.**

By your triumphant resurrection,  
**be gracious to us.**

By your grief and anguish,  
**be gracious to us.**

By your presence with your people,  
**be gracious to us.**

By your cross and suffering,  
**be gracious to us.**

By your promise of your coming at the end of the ages,  
**be gracious to us.**

The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant: Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight; through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SENDING

Go in peace. The souls of all the faithful departed are in the hands of God. Alleluia.

**Thanks be to God. Alleluia.**

*or this*

Alleluia, Christ is risen.

**The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.**