

Memorial Service Planning:

Spiritual leaders and philosopher throughout history have taught that the contemplation of one's death is essential if one is to embrace life fully. Jesus said, "for whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it" Mk 8:35. Encouraging you to contemplate your death is not a morbid activity, but rather a spiritual discipline. Asking you to design your memorial service is one way to engage in this spiritual exercise for it will energize your purpose, but it will also allow you to throw your last party by extending your love and your unique spirit and wisdom to those who will gather to remember you and seek to emulate you.

When you think about it, wouldn't anyone want to have a say in an event that is entirely about them that happens only once? We so want to provide for those we leave behind, but ironically, people often forget to guide friends and family as to what they would like included in their memorial service. Designing your memorial service is your last act of love to those you leave behind and knowing you have provided guidance and inspiration for this important moment will bring you peace. Formatting your memorial is just as important as making sure you have a will or an advanced directive. For physician orders for life-sustaining treatment you can visit: <http://capolst.org/>

This work sheet is meant to catalyze your creative energies, not control them. At St. John's we invite you to be yourself and think about ways that would best express who you are. (At a memorial service for an artist, we turned the sanctuary into an art museum, displaying many of their works. At another service we recreated an Easter morning service with brass and tympani. At yet another service we had a motorcycle club play a significant role that the parishioner belonged to.)

Here is our suggestion for how to approach this process:

What memorial services have inspired you? Take some time and write down the things that you might want to use in your service. This can include readings, music choices, prayers, use of technology (like slide shows) etc. Some have kept a file of services they have been to and circled things in the bulletins that they enjoyed or meant something to them. **Having a file, clearly marked and easy to find**, is an opportunity for your loved ones to sort through these documents and spend some time together remembering you. We suggest that you **provide a copy to the church** as well.

If you would like some guidance about format, readings and prayers, we suggest you explore the Book of Common Prayer pages 491-505 or go to this

link: <http://www.bcponline.org/PastoralOffices/BurialI.htm>

List the following:

- Music you like
- Prayers you would like (Can be referenced in Book of Common Prayer. e.g. "2nd prayer on page...
- Readings you like (from Bible or elsewhere)
- Quotations that have meant a lot to you
- Where would you like memorial gifts to be sent?
- If you are planning to be cremated where would you like your ashes placed? (You may wish to leave this decision to your loved ones.) Do you want your ashes present at the memorial?
- List one crazy idea for your service that will help communicate your unique spirit.

Write one or two sentences that summarize what you hope your life has meant and how you have been an example for others. These key characteristics of your life will help guide the design of your service. Here are some examples:

- “Loving others is what has made me the person I longed to become”
- “Laughter is an important ingredient to everything.”
- “Nature is where I always found God”
- “Education is the key to living a full life.”
- “Hospitality is where I found my joy”

Here are some key questions you should answer:

- A. Where do you want your service?
- B. Do you want the service to include Eucharist?
- C. Who do you want to play a role in your service?
 - Officiant/Celebrant (if available)
 - Readers
 - Musicians
 - Eulogists (An important question here is whether, after a few key eulogists speak you would like to open it up for others to share memories or stories)
 - Military participation?
- D. Do you want to be cremated?
- E. If you do not want to be cremated do you want the coffin present at the service?
- F. Do you want a graveside service or service for the scattering of ashes?
- G. Do you want a reception?
 - Where

- Special Foods? (You might like there to be foods that you enjoy or things that you like to make)
- Special Music?
- If you chose not to have an open mic in the service itself, is the reception a place where you would like others to share stories and anecdotes?
- Would you like a photo display or slide show?

Finally, it is always helpful to include a biography or notes about your life noting important dates, transitions and accomplishments. This can be extremely helpful in writing a eulogy.