

## *Preparing an Episcopal Funeral*

again in the heart of God. We hear this connection to Baptism very clearly in the introduction to the Creed when the officiating priest says "In the assurance of eternal life given at Baptism, let us proclaim our faith." The gathering for the Burial Rite is the ultimate statement of faith in God, in Christ and in the Church.

Please note the page of guidelines offered in the prayer book on page 468, titled *Concerning the Service*.

### ***Prayer for a Vigil***

If the family wants to have a calling hours before the funeral, there is a lovely service of Prayers for a Vigil in The Book of Common Prayer (p. 465). While the custom of gathering for a prayer vigil in the church or funeral home is not widespread in the Episcopal tradition, those who practice this rite as a normal part of their grieving process find the time together to be peaceful and healing.

### ***Rite One or Rite Two***

The *BCP* provides two versions of the burial service. The Rite One form of the service was taken from The Book of Common Prayer, 1928 and includes Elizabethan English. For example, the opening sentences begin:

I am the resurrection and the life, saith  
the Lord;  
he that believeth in me, though he were  
dead, yet shall he live;  
and whosoever liveth and believeth in me  
shall never die.

The Rite Two version has a very similar structure but includes language that is closer to current usage. The decision to use Rite One or Rite Two is always made in conjunction with the

officiating priest and keeping in mind the norms of the church and the wishes of the person who has died.

### ***What Is the Difference between a Funeral and a Memorial Service?***

The difference between a funeral and a memorial service is that when the remains of the person who has died, either a coffin or an urn of ashes are present in the church, the service is called a *funeral*. The distinction, from the church's point of view, is not very important, because in both circumstances we use the same liturgy.

### ***The Bulletin or Service Leaflet***

The people who gather for a funeral or memorial service will come from a variety of faith traditions, so prepare a user-friendly, printed bulletin for the service. Those who gather should feel comfortable participating in the service. The Episcopal Church has many traditions and practices that are unfamiliar to others, and providing a clear outline of what to expect with appropriate instruction is an act of hospitality and evangelism. Include the order of service, including all readings, prayers and music.

### ***Giving a Remembrance, Homily or Eulogy***

Practices vary in congregations concerning the giving of a remembrance, eulogy, tribute or homily. The Book of Common Prayer states that after the scripture readings "Here there may be a homily by the Celebrant, or a member of the family, or a friend." This is not required, nor is it always permitted (depending on the parish); consult with the clergy in charge. You might think of one or two people who were close to the deceased who might feel comfortable offering a few words of remembrance.

