

St. Mary's Episcopal Church Funeral and Memorial Service Policy

1. Purpose and Theology

A funeral service or memorial service held at St. Mary's is an act of worship that celebrates resurrection hope, honors the deceased, and comforts the grieving. This policy ensures that church facilities, resources, and pastoral staff are used in a manner consistent with the church's mission as a community of worship, wellbeing and service.

2. Eligibility for Church Services

The use of the church, gathering space, and pastoral services for funerals is a privilege reserved exclusively for active members of St. Mary's and their immediate families.

3. Definition of an "Active Member"

To ensure fairness, an active member is defined as an individual who, at the time of their passing, met the following criteria:

- **Parish Directory:** Officially recorded on the current church membership directory.
- **Attendance:** Regularly attended community worship services, unless prevented by health or other good cause as determined by the rector.
- **Stewardship:** Contributed a regular financial pledge and personal service to the church's ministries.
- **Duration:** Was not absent or inactive for more than six (6) consecutive months without communication or medical explanation.

4. Approved Extensions and Exceptions

St. Mary's recognizes the need for pastoral care during times of loss. The following individuals are eligible for a church funeral, subject to the approval of the rector:

- **Immediate Family:** Spouses, dependent children, and parents of an active, living member.
- **Homebound/Care Facility Members:** Long-term members who became physically unable to attend services due to age, illness, or confinement, but maintained a relationship with the church.
- **Present and Former Pastoral Staff and their immediate families:** Individuals who previously served as ordained pastors or ministry directors at this church.

5. Policy for Non-Members

Funerals for individuals who do not meet the active membership criteria above are generally not held at St. Mary's.

- **Pastoral Discretion:** In rare instances, pastoral exceptions to this policy may be granted by the rector or priest in charge.

6. Pastoral Oversight and Discretion

The Rector has final authority over all funeral arrangements, scheduling, waiving of fees and facility use.

7. Burial in St. Mary's Churchyard

Sale of grave plots and burial services are offered to non-members. The dates and times of such services are subject to the availability of clergy, staff and vendors.

Reviewed and adopted by the St. Mary's Vestry, June 25, 2026, effective immediately