



Homegoing, Funeral, and Memorial Services Policy

(Suggested Template – 8th Episcopal District, A.M.E. Church)

Purpose and Scope

This policy provides guidance for the planning, scheduling, and conduct of Homegoing, funeral, and memorial services within the local church. It is intended to ensure theological integrity, pastoral authority, dignity, safety, and good order. This policy is **suggested, not mandatory**, and may be adapted by local congregations while remaining consistent with the Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

The use of the church sanctuary for a Homegoing or Celebration of Life is a **sacred privilege, not a right**, and is extended at the discretion of the Pastor.

Pastoral Authority and Scheduling

1. The **Pastor of the local church has full authority** over all Homegoing, funeral, memorial, and related services conducted in the church.
2. The Pastor is responsible for guiding the family and the funeral home regarding:
 - Date and time of services
 - Location of services
 - Worship elements and participants
3. **Under no circumstances shall the church calendar be driven by the funeral home or by family preference.**
4. All arrangements **must be approved by the Pastor before being finalized or publicly announced.**
5. Funeral and memorial services **shall not conflict** with:
 - Episcopal District meetings
 - Annual Conference sessions
 - Planning meetings
 - Connectional or officially called church gatherings
6. The church is not required to cancel or reschedule previously planned events to accommodate a Homegoing service.

Initial Family Guidance

Upon notification of a death, the church will provide pastoral care and guidance. Families will be encouraged to prayerfully consider:

- Burial, cremation, donation to medical science, or research
- Wishes of the deceased and the family
- Viewing or visitation



8th District Sample Policies for Local Churches



- Location of services
- Repast or fellowship gathering
- Primary family contact
- Financial considerations

What To Do When a Loved One Transitions

1. Notify immediate family and close friends
2. Contact the church Pastor
3. Notify employers, if applicable
4. Notify schools if minor children are involved
5. Select a funeral home
6. Locate insurance policies and legal documents

Information to Gather Prior to Funeral Home Arrangements

- Full legal name of deceased (including aliases)
- Date and place of birth
- Marital status and next of kin
- Parents' names (including mother's maiden name)
- List of surviving relatives
- Church, civic, and professional affiliations
- Family physician
- Memorial donation preferences (if any)

Service Types

1. **Memorial Service**
A service without the body present; may be held days, weeks, or months later.
2. **Funeral / Homegoing Service**
The body is present. The casket may be open or closed at the discretion of the Pastor.
 - Once the casket is closed, **no final or second viewings are permitted.**
3. **Graveside / Committal Service**
A service held at the cemetery, mausoleum, or chapel prior to burial or entombment.



Interment, Entombment, and Committal

1. Interment (burial), entombment (mausoleum), or inurnment shall be conducted in a manner consistent with the wishes of the family and applicable law.
2. A committal service is traditionally held at the cemetery or mausoleum.
3. **When distance, weather, safety concerns, or logistical limitations make travel impractical**, the committal or words of interment **may be conducted in the sanctuary** as part of or immediately following the Homegoing service.
4. The Pastor, in consultation with the family and funeral director, shall determine the most appropriate setting.

Facilities and Hospitality

Each local church shall define its facility capacities and accessibility.

There is no required fee for services or facilities when the deceased was an active member in good and regular standing. Donations to offset ministry expenses may be welcomed but shall not be required.

Clergy Participation and Honoraria

1. A member of the church's ministerial staff shall officiate unless otherwise approved by the Pastor.
2. Outside clergy may participate with pastoral approval.
3. If a non-staff clergy member presides entirely, the nature of the church's involvement may be adjusted.
4. Honoraria are voluntary and at the family's discretion. Suggested ranges:
 - Officiant: \$100–\$200
 - Eulogist (if different): \$100–\$200

Music, Worship, and Programs

1. All music selections must be approved by the Pastor.
2. Music must reflect the dignity of Christian worship.
3. The church may assist with bulletin or program preparation when needed.

Tributes and Participation

1. Tributes shall be limited in number and duration (typically two minutes).



2. Speakers must be named in advance.
3. Open tributes are discouraged.
4. The Pastor reserves the right to limit or omit tributes.

Recording and Media

Recording, photography, or livestreaming is not customary but may be permitted with pastoral approval and coordination with church staff.

Repast and Fellowship Meal Policy (Suggested Model)

1. A repast or fellowship meal **may be provided at no cost to the family** when the deceased was an **active member in good and regular standing** at the time of death.
2. This provision is a **privilege of covenant partnership**, not an entitlement.
3. The fellowship meal may be provided:
 - o At the home or designated location of the family; or
 - o As a repast immediately following the service
4. When provided, a standard meal may include:
 - o Chicken (baked or fried)
 - o Tossed salad
 - o Rolls
 - o Beverage
 - o Dessert
 - o Paper goods

(Typically for up to 100 persons.)
5. Families may supplement the menu.
6. Use of the fellowship hall is subject to availability and must conclude **within three (3) hours** of the service's conclusion.
7. If the fellowship hall is unavailable, the church may provide servers and support at another location selected by the family.

Family Summary (For Distribution)

- All arrangements must be approved by the Pastor
- Services may not conflict with District or Annual Conference meetings
- The church calendar cannot be overridden by funeral home scheduling
- Use of the sanctuary is a sacred privilege
- The church provides pastoral care, worship leadership, and coordination



Clergy Intake and Planning Form (Required for Services)

Deceased Information

Full Name: _____
Date of Birth: _____ Date of Death: _____

Primary Family Contact

Name: _____
Relationship: _____ Phone: _____

Funeral Home Information

Funeral Home: _____
Director: _____ Phone: _____

Service Details

Service Type: Funeral Memorial Graveside Sanctuary Committal
Approved Date & Time: _____
Service Location: _____

Interment / Entombment

Type: Burial Entombment Cremation
Comittal Location: Cemetery Sanctuary

Clergy Participation

Officiant: _____
Eulogist: _____

Music & Tributes

(Attach selections and names)

Repast

Eligible Member in Good Standing? Yes No
Repast Requested? Yes No

Special Considerations or Concerns