
The Christian Community
Movement for Religious Renewal
366 Washington Street, Brookline, MA 02445 (617) 522-2972
www.thechristiancommunity.org

Around Death

The Christian Community offers three distinct services to accompany a death.

The **Last Anointing** (last rites) is the last sacrament in a human life. It is held before death actually occurs, and as close to the passing as possible. It is done whether the person is conscious or unconscious. It helps prepare the soul and spirit for its transition into its body-free existence after death. The responsibility for contacting the priest to arrange for this sacrament often falls with the next of kin. Therefore, if you would like to have this sacrament, be sure that your family or caretakers are aware ahead of time of your wishes.

After death, the soul reviews the events of its entire life for three days. To assist this process, the body **should not be embalmed**, but rather allowed a quiet repose, during a **three-day vigil**. State law does **not** require embalming. Arrangements may have to be made to keep the body cool. This involves finding a funeral home that is willing to work with you in this. It would be a good idea to investigate undertakers or make arrangements ahead of time, as such a practice is unusual.

Conditions permitting, the vigil can take place at home (as it always was in the past), or at the funeral home, or possibly in our chapel. Dry ice can be used to keep the body cool. Some have experienced great comfort in having their loved one's body at home during the transition time of the vigil period.

At the end of the three days, but before the body is cremated or buried, the Funeral Service itself is held in the presence of the body. In the Christian Community, we have a ritual given by Rudolf Steiner for this purpose. It consists of two parts: the first part marks the ending of the vigil and is ideally done privately with the family where the body was laid out. The second part is the consigning of the body to the elements, and raising our awareness to the realm in which the soul/spirit of the deceased is entering. This second part is the public part, and ideally would be done graveside or at the crematorium, though conditions do not always permit. It is in this part that the eulogy, usually by the priest, is held. The eulogy attempts to characterize the quality and meaning of this very individual life. Sometimes the two parts are celebrated back-to-back as one.

The third service in connection with death is the memorial Act of **Consecration of Man for the Dead**, held on a Saturday after the funeral. In a special prayer at the end, the deceased is addressed by name.

Additionally, sometimes families hold a memorial gathering of friends and acquaintances to share memories of the deceased. Though not a religious service, this might be particularly appropriate when the deceased was locally well-known, and a more social event is desired.

If you would like your death to be accompanied by the Christian Community's services, please fill out the enclosed form and send copies to your family and to the priest. Keep a copy for yourself. Please also copy this article for your family, friends, and potential caretakers, along with the contact information of the priest and the funeral home you have chosen.

The Christian Community does not charge fees for these services. However, since it exists solely through gifts and donations, please consider a donation worthy of the occasion. Holding a funeral costs the congregation approximately \$1,500-\$2,000. In addition, by remembering The Christian Community in your will, you will continue to support the work of The Christian Community even after your death.

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Instructions to be Carried Out as My Death Approaches, and After My Death

I, _____

request that before my death, a priest of The Christian Community in Boston be called (phone 617, 522-2972) in good time to attend and prepare me for my passing, whether I am conscious or unconscious.

I would like to have the last rites, called the Last Anointing, before my death.

After my death, every effort is to be made to prevent my body from being embalmed or in any way artificially preserved.

I would like my burial or cremation not to take place until at least 3 days, that is, 72 hours have passed.

Three days after my death, I would like the full funeral rites of the The Christian Community.

I would like to be buried.

I would like to be cremated.

I would like The Christian Community's Act of Consecration for the Dead to be celebrated for me.

Name

Street Address

City State Zip

Date

Name of Witness

Street Address

City State Zip

Date

Name of Witness

Street Address

City State Zip

Date