

FUNERAL POLICY

The purpose of this Policy is to document and communicate the position of St. Stephen AME Church as it relates to funerals that are conducted on Church premises. It is the mission of St. Stephen to salute a fallen church member as our final act of respect. We offer our condolences to the family of our fallen comrade and will try our best to present the most memorable memorial service we can provide with our limited amount of resources. We acknowledge that, even for Christians, experiencing the death of a loved one is a difficult time. In our humanity, we grieve the loss of our loved ones, but we do not sorrow as those who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13). It is through the Word of God that we have hope in times like these (Romans 15:4b). It is important that we issue this policy so that in the time of a family's bereavement we are clear on how our church will be of service to both members and non-members.

PRELIMINARY PROCESS

If the deceased was a current attending and financially contributing member of the church for a minimum the last year, the church will absorb the expense of the on-site funeral/memorial service in honor of the deceased membership. If not, the family of the deceased will be charged the non-member fee(s). Full payment must be made to the Church via cash, money order or certified check prior to the funeral service.

The **Benevolence Delegation** will contact the family immediately after being informed of the dearly departed.

- A. Invitation extended to the family to discuss (face-to-face) their desires/plans for the funeral
- B. A St. Stephen AME Church Funeral Policy packet will be provided to the family:
 - ❖ Copy of the **St. Stephen Funeral Policy**
 - ❖ Example of a standard **Funeral Order of Service template**
 - ❖ **Step-by-Step Guide** for creating the Obituary
 - ❖ Copy of the **Photo Consent Form**
 - ❖ **Facility Request Form** (required for Non-Members)
- C. The date and time of a funeral will be arranged in consultation with the Pastor based on availability and the preferences of the family of the deceased.
 - ❖ Funeral services will be scheduled around already scheduled events.
 - ❖ St. Stephen reserves all authority over all memorial/funeral service held on Church premises, as well as, its resources.
- D. The standard **Order of Service** will be established in coordination with the family and **St. Stephen Administrative** office:
 - ❖ **Order of Service** draft shall be sent to the designated **Funeral Home** by fax or via email.
 - ❖ **Funeral Home** will take on the responsibility of reviewing and final proofing.
 - ❖ The family will decide whether the **Funeral Home** will handle printing or a designated family member.

ST. STEPHEN'S WEBSITE

The process for positing a picture on the St Stephen's Memorial Tribute website page (posting time allowance – 24 – 48 hrs.):

- ❖ Photo/image can be received via email or hard-copy
- ❖ Photo/image shall be posted on the church website for a minimum of 30 days
- ❖ Responsible party must sign authorization form providing permission to post the photo on our site, as the website is considered public domain.

Website Statement: “In Loving Memory of Our Loved One”

“A Fallen Limb”

A limb has fallen from the family tree. I keep hearing a voice that says, “Grieve not for me”. Remember the best times, the laughter, the song. The good life I lived while I was strong. Continue my heritage, I'm counting on you. Keep smiling and surely the sun will shine through. My mind is at ease; my soul is at rest. Remembering all, how I truly was blessed. Continue traditions, no matter how small. Go on with your life, don't worry about falls I miss you all dearly, so keep up your chin. Until the day comes when we're together again.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

A funeral service at St. Stephen AME Church is a service of worship whereby we honor and praise God, and bow to His Sovereignty in all matters, even the death of our loved ones. The liturgy of the funeral and the burial service takes on the form of a basic worship service. The gospel is preached, the family of the deceased is pointed to Christ Jesus for help and comfort. **See the section on Non-Member Fees for charges relating to this service.**

Additionally, members—during their lives—may be involved in various **social organizations**. Quite often there are requests for these social organizations to be involved in funeral services. This is scrutinized closely by the Pastor and the Leadership team.

FUNERAL SERVICE MUSIC

Only music appropriate to a worship service shall be used. The President of the Choir must be consulted. Taped instrumental and accompaniment music, soloists, solos, musicians and all matters musically, must have the approval of the President of the Choir and in coordination of the Pastor.

- A. **Request for Choir:** St. Stephen will make every effort to coordinate with our Musicians and Choir on their availability if requested by the family. This responsibility will be handed over to the President of the Choir who will coordinate with the Musicians and the Pastor.

*(Fraternity, sorority, or other Greek letter organizations are **social** organizations which can be recognized during service. However, songs, chants, or group calls are unacceptable in our sanctuary)*

- ❖ **Acceptance of outside soloist(s) and how this should be addressed should be coordinated with the choir president**

- B. **Musicians for the Choir:** The cost of the Musicians' services will be forwarded to the family. Payment is required prior to the beginning of the Memorial Service payable in cash or by money order or cashier's check (personal checks are not accepted). **See the section on Non-Member Fees for charges relating to this service.**

- ❖ **If St. Stephen musicians are not in attendance, designated parties are able to use the church equipment as outlined in the policy.**
- ❖ **It is acceptable to allow outside equipment on church premises, so long as individual supplies own amplifier equipment. Tampering and access to the church equipment (changing settings, moving equipment to accommodate outside equipment, etc.) will not be permitted.**

FEEDING THE FAMILY (REPAST)

St. Stephen and members will do everything possible to accommodate the family of the deceased request for a family meal following a funeral service. The meal is prepared under the direction of the church’s Kitchen Coordinator. **See the section on Non-Member Fees for related charges**

A. **Feeding the Family.** This effort will be coordinated with our Missionaries and/or St. Stephen members (volunteers) will contribute food and coordinate efforts for handling the repass for the Family of a deceased member of St. Stephen.

- ❖ **Donated items are to consist of plates, cups, napkins, utensils; all food items and ice**
- ❖ If the family elects to coordinate bringing food items in for the repass, this effort must be managed under the supervision of our Kitchen Coordinator (family members of the fallen comrade nor St. Stephen members are permitted to have free run of the kitchen nor Fellowship Hall) must follow our mutually established rules.
- ❖ Leftover food will go to the family of the deceased or be disposed of via the family instructions.
- ❖ The church will take full responsibility of feeding the family (MEMBERS ONLY); no supplies or food items are expected.

The **Kitchen Coordinator is an onsite facilitator, managing the resources of the Church. They will not take on the responsibility to run errands, pickup nor deliver food. The Coordinator will not handle money, checks or other forms of payment or donations. The Kitchen Coordinator’s primary responsibility is that of an agent for the Church. **

B. Details needed from the family:

- ❖ Number of people to be served
- ❖ Instructions on handling leftover food

PREPARATIONS & DECORATIONS

Families may wish to display the deceased’s remains, as well as certain photographs of the deceased and his family. The following guidelines apply in these situations:

- ❖ Any displays or pictures must be appropriate to a worship setting.
- ❖ No nails, tacks, staples or screws shall be put into the walls or attached to the pews.
- ❖ All decorations must be removed within 3 hours of the conclusion of the service.
- ❖ No furniture or equipment shall be removed from the church building.

NURSERY

St. Stephens AME Church does not provide a nursery service for children during the Memorial/Funeral Service.

MEMBER FEES

Pastor (Clergy Fees & Services).....	\$ 100.00
Musicians (Fees & Services)	\$ 100.00 (subject to change)
Repast/Feeding the Family (up to 25 People).....	No Charge
Repast/Feeding the Family above 25 People	\$ 10.00 per person

NON-MEMBER FEES

We offer our condolences to the family of our fallen comrade and will try our best to present the most memorable memorial service. However, church resources are limited and the cost for supporting funeral/memorial services (utility expenses, clergy/musician services, feeding the family, etc.) can add up to be a rather large expense:

Clergy Fees & Services.....	\$ 100.00
Musicians Fees & Services	\$ 100.00 (subject to change)
Use of the Sanctuary (Allocated 4 hours)..... (Fee charges increases after 4hrs. - \$175.00 per hour)	\$ 750.00
Custodial Fee	\$75.00
Use of the Fellowship Hall	\$ 300.00
Use of the Kitchen	\$ 150.00
Repast/Feeding the Family	\$ 10.00 per person

WHAT CONSTITUTES MEMBERSHIP?

Please refer to AME Church Discipline:

In accordance with the AME Church Discipline, we follow its practices and procedures as outline:

- 1) Sacerdotal and Committal services are only done by Itinerate Elders of the A.M.E. Church.
- 2) The Pastor of the Church will give the Words of Comfort/Eulogy for it Members.
- 3) If the Pastor is not available a member of our Ministerial Staff will be designated.
- 4) Totally respecting the family’s wishes to have the Deceased friends or associates who knew the deceased during their active years, giving their knowledge of and relationships with him/her by giving Remarks/Tributes during this memorial service.
- 5) We will only provide Memorial Services for our Church Membership. Current Church Membership verified to be active and in good standing. This is the same list that is submitted annually to the Quarterly Conference.
- 6) Membership issues will be discussed and resolved by the current Steward Board. There shall be an independent Ballot vote by the Steward Board members present at that meeting, and the Church will follow the directive of our leaders. Membership will not be identified by outside sources as “Our Home Church”, “The Church where we all grew up”; St. Stephen A.M.E. is the only Church we have ever known”. For outside friends and associates, a cost structure will be set-up and determined by the Steward Board, to actively lease the church and services for that day at the projected cost.

***Detailed version of St. Stephen Funeral Policy available upon request.**