

YOUR GUIDE TO SCHEDULING A FUNERAL
ST. SOPHIA GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH



SYRACUSE, NY
METROPOLIS OF DETROIT

Orthodox Funerals

The following information is designed to give you to a greater understanding of what is required to schedule a funeral at Saint Sophia's Church.

Following the death of a beloved relative or friend, contact Fr. David at 315-269-4940 prior to making any arrangements.

All baptized Orthodox Christians may have a funeral service conducted in the Church as long as the person has lived according to the Orthodox faith, is a member in good ecclesiastical standing,

Individuals who are found to be in severe violation of canon law may be denied a funeral service. The parish priest will use his discretion to decide if an individual may have a funeral service conducted in the Church. A Trisagion service may be scheduled at the funeral home the evening prior to the burial. Cremation is not allowed in the Orthodox Church: Orthodox theology is based upon the resurrection of *both* the soul and body.

An Orthodox funeral service may only be held in the Church. Wakes are discouraged from being held in the Church as we do not have the capacity to provide adequate viewing times or staffing. In the event the parish priest allows a wake to be held in the Church, it must be scheduled for the morning prior to the funeral service. Evening wakes cannot be held in the Church. At a wake in the Church prior to the funeral service, the family receives guests in the Church lobby and mourners pay their last respects to the deceased in the narthex. No wakes may be held in the Church sanctuary.

Only priests are allowed to offer prayers for the deceased in the Church. No eulogies by family or friends are allowed. Friends or family may give a eulogy at the funeral home or at the mercy meal.

In the event the deceased is in good ecclesiastical standing but 1) stands in arrears of his/her stewardship pledge for the previous year, or 2) has not completed the pledge for the current year, or 3) has submitted no stewardship form for the current year: the pledge and/or payment from the previous year's stewardship form/donation will be used and added to the funeral home invoice payable to St. Sophia's Church.

If the deceased is an Orthodox Christian in good ecclesiastical standing, but is not a steward of St. Sophia's Church a charge of \$500.00 will be added to the funeral home invoice payable to St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church.

Our parish priest is available for this sacrament. In the event you wish to invite an additional Orthodox priest, permission must be granted from the priest of St. Sophia's. Priests from other religious denominations are not permitted to participate in the sacrament. If permission is granted, the family is responsible for all the financial requirements and accommodations of the additional priest.

The Church will attempt to provide a chanter, if possible, for the funeral service for all stewards in good standing of St. Sophia's Church.

Different regions of Greece have different customs and items that are traditional for the funeral, such as white hand towels, olive oil, wine, koliva, prosfero, and brandy. Please discuss this with the priest to assure the items are proper and that they are present for the service and mercy meal.

A mercy meal (makaria) is customary and held by the deceased family after the funeral service and burial. A list of venues is available from the Church office. If you wish to offer a variety of entrees, please include fish as the main entree.

Please be considerate of the clergy and chanter. A gratuity is encouraged for the priest and chanter, given directly or mailed to the Church. Please indicate clearly who the gratuity is for on your check or in an enclosed note.

You may also choose to make a gift directly to St. Sophia's Church. Please indicate clearly who the gratuity is for on your check or in an enclosed note.

Please call Fr. David at 315-269-4940 to schedule the customary memorial services which are held at 40 days, one year and three years.

For more information on the customs of our faith and heritage, please consider purchasing the books The Orthodox Study Bible and A Guide to Greek Traditions and Customs in America, both available in our Church bookstore.

The Requirements for being a Parishioner in Good Ecclesiastical Standing

Any person eighteen years of age or over who was baptized according to the rites of the Greek Orthodox Church, or was received into the Greek Orthodox Church through chrismation (confirmation), who lives according to the faith and canons of the Greek Orthodox Church, who has met his or her stewardship obligation and abides by the regulations and by-laws of the parish, is a parishioner in good standing of the parish.

A person qualifying as a parishioner in good standing who also wishes to be a member in another Orthodox parish must pay his/her financial obligations fully to each parish.

No person shall be accepted as a parishioner while retaining membership in a non-Christian religion, or on a non-Orthodox Christian denomination, or in an Orthodox parish which defies the jurisdiction or the ecclesiastical authority of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, or who deliberately disregards and transgresses the moral law.

When transferring from one parish to another, the parishioner shall present to the priest of the new parish a letter of transfer signed by his or her former priest, which shall include all the pertinent information required.

The religious, moral and social duties of a parishioner are to apply the tenets of the Orthodox faith to his/her life, activities, his/her time, to attend the Divine Liturgy and other services of worship faithfully on Sundays and holy days, to keep the rules and fasts of the Orthodox tradition, to receive frequently the sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion, to train and teach the young according to the faith and spirit of Orthodoxy, to respect the clergy, the ecclesiastical authority, and all governing bodies of the Church, to be obedient in matters of faith and ecclesiastical order, and to cooperate in every way towards the welfare and prosperity of the parish and the success of its sacred mission.

The obligations of a parishioner are to support St. Sophia's with regular stewardship gifts and special assessments as the Parish Assembly may establish, and to meet such Archdiocesan financial charges as may be fixed by the Biennial Assembly. Financial hardship will be reviewed by the parish priest and/or the Stewardship Committee.

The rights of a parishioner are to attend all regular and special parish assemblies, to take part in its discussions and to vote therein, and be elected a member/officer of the Parish Council and in such position to take part in the administration of the Parish and in the direction of its life and activity.

We can all use our talents in response to God's love by serving God on the Choir, Sunday School Program, Philoptochos, GOYA and Parish Council - or by participating in the other ministries of our Church.

Annual Stewardship Pledge

To support the ministries of St. Sophia's Greek Orthodox Church and to meet its financial obligations the annual Stewardship Program was adopted in January 2004. Each parishioner (18 years old and above) herein (or husband and wife) are requested annually to sign and submit to the church office a stewardship pledge card during the month of January or soon thereafter making a financial commitment to support our parish. Please fill out the pledge form completely. Each steward is requested to commit an honest portion of his/her/their annual income for the work and support of the Church.

A new stewardship pledge must be submitted every year.

The Parish Register shall include the following information concerning each steward:

The baptismal and family name and dates of baptism, dates of marriage, complete family record of spouse and children, date of entry into the parish indicating if a transferee from another parish, record of payment of parish and Archdiocesan financial obligations, and the date of death.

Many have asked for guidance on how much the annual stewardship donation should be. The parish council has set a guideline of between 1% and 2% of your household annual income. The amount of your gift is between you and God, this is only a guide. No one will ask for verification.

Proportional giving is much more equitable for each person gives of their treasure according to his or her means. Those who receive more may give more and those who receive less may give less and still be active parishioners of the church. Your pledge amount should come from your conscience and love for God.

Your annual stewardship commitment may be paid weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annually or annually. You may pay at the Church office during business hours, request personalized offering envelopes, mail in by check (no cash in the mail please) or pay electronically through direct deposit or a bank card.

A commitment is in the strictest of confidence and is not a legal obligation but a promise to God. A parishioner may contact the priest or a member the Stewardship Committee to increase or decrease his or her stewardship pledge according to financial circumstances.

A person whose name appears on the membership rolls of the Church and has executed an annual stewardship pledge card, submitted and is not in arrears in payment of his/her stewardship obligation for the preceding year is deemed a parishioner in good standing.

A new parishioner is considered in good standing if he/she has submitted an annual stewardship pledge card. If a new member is to have a baptism or wedding in the Church, the pledge must be paid in full prior to the sacrament and a pledge card filled out for the following year.

When a wedding, baptism or confirmation is requested by a current member of the parish, and the stewardship commitment for the prior year has not been met, the pledge must be fulfilled. The parishioner must also fill out a current annual pledge form which must be paid in full prior to the wedding baptism or confirmation. He/she must also fill out a pledge card for the following year. You are considered a new member if you have not been a member in good standing the previous year.

For the purpose of voting for Parish Council members and/or participating at a parish assembly a new member of the parish must have been enrolled for a minimum of 3 months.