

## How to Plan a *Final Affairs Fair*

*This program is adapted from one at St. Philip's Cathedral, Atlanta, Georgia. For more information on raising awareness of end of life issues, see Funding Future Ministry Chapter III Caring for Givers and Chapter VI Educating Your Congregation. See also "Planning for the End of Life," a resource booklet that walks individuals through the process of setting up a medical directive, planning a funeral, and writing a will ([www.EpiscopalFoundation.org](http://www.EpiscopalFoundation.org)).*

Helping people face death is one of the most sacred responsibilities of the church and clergy. When death is near, many people seek guidance from their spiritual leaders to help prepare their soul and provide support to their families. Often, they also need practical help navigating complex end of life issues, such as medical directives, long term care options or estate planning.

The fact that about 50% of Americans die without a will suggests that churches could do more to help their members consider end of life issues from a Christian perspective. By failing to engage parishioners on these topics, churches also miss the opportunity to present the ministry of planned giving, which is vital to the long-term financial viability of the church. With an estimated \$41 trillion transfer of wealth anticipated in the next forty-three years, churches should be providing guidance on thoughtful Christian stewardship.

However, it can be difficult to start conversations about preparing for the end of life. The *Final Affairs Fair* is a simple way to open the discussion and provide important information, assistance and resources to your parishioners.

### **What exactly is a *Final Affairs Fair*?**

A *Final Affairs Fair* is an event to help parishioners think about the importance of planning for the end of life. It is similar to a ministry fair, with resource people available to share information and expertise on specific issues. Participants have the opportunity to ask questions, take home relevant information, and arrange follow-up appointments if desired.

### **Why should our church hold a *Final Affairs Fair*?**

Helping parishioners prepare for end of life issues is a profound pastoral opportunity. Most clergy have seen how the lack of preparation for death causes undue suffering. Advanced planning on end of life issues can save untold anguish, pain, money and stress on the individual and the family.

A *Final Affairs Fair* also helps parishioners consider their own legacy to the church. It opens the conversation about planned giving and reinforces the idea of remembering the church in one's estate plans.

## What is required to hold a *Final Affairs Fair*?

A *Final Affairs Fair* is a simple event. The bulk of the planning involves securing resource people and publicizing the event to parishioners. The set up is minimal and can be accomplished with a small group of volunteers. The requirements include:

- A suitable venue, such as the parish hall
- Appropriate resource people (see next page)
- Volunteer hosts

## Important Considerations

Timing:

- Choose a date with minimal potential conflicts (not around holidays, etc)
- Optimal time may be following church service on Sunday afternoon

Audience:

- Most likely to be mature parishioners and those with aging parents and relatives
- Consider option of co-hosting with another parish, or inviting members of other parishes

Publicity:

- Give significant advance notice in church bulletin or newsletter
- Consider benefits/costs of sending personalized letters of invitation to parishioners

Space:

- Make sure there is enough room for people to circulate among tables
- Consider the special needs of elderly and disabled persons
- Provide adequate seating around the room for people to sit between visits to resource people

Ambience:

- Ask volunteer hosts to greet and direct people
- Consider providing coffee and refreshments

## Suggested Table Topics and Resource People

### **Living Arrangements for the Elderly: Making the Right Choice**

Alternative institutional settings and support services

Home care services

*Resource people\*:*

Planner, Aging Services Division, Atlanta Regional Commission

Manager, Sixty-plus Program, Piedmont Hospital

*\* Note: Position titles and agency names are specific to the Atlanta area. You will need to explore similar local agencies to locate the appropriate person.*

### **Long-Term Care: Financial and Legal Questions**

Financing Options: Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance, etc.

Advanced Health Directives: Living will, durable power of attorney for health care

#### *Resource People:*

Attorney specializing in elder law

Insurance representative

### **Estate Planning: Financial Preparations for the Final Years**

Organizing investments and assets for income and security

The role of insurance

#### *Resource people:*

Financial planner

Insurance representative

### **Advance Planning for Funerals: Church Matters**

Types of funerals and services

Cremation vs. conventional burial

Appropriate hymns and scripture

Funeral vs. memorial services

Arranging for interment

#### *Resource people:*

Clergy

Musical director

### **Advance Planning for Funerals: Services of a Funeral Director**

Costs: How to keep them in line with your wishes

Pre-arrangements by entering into a contract in life

#### *Resource people:*

Funeral director/representative

### **Final Arrangements: Legal Questions**

Preparation of a will

Probate process

Appropriate use of a living trust

#### *Resource people:*

Attorneys

## **Organ Donation**

How can arrangements be made? How are one's wishes carried out?

The needs: organ transplant vs. medical research

### *Resource people:*

Representatives from organ donation groups or disease advocacy organizations  
(e.g. National Kidney Foundation, Alzheimer's Disease Center)

## **Gift Planning: Preparing for the Distribution of Assets to Family, Charities and Church**

Legacy Society (use official name of your Legacy Society)

Planned Giving options

Memorial gifts

### *Resource people:*

Director of Stewardship (if applicable)

Legacy Society Committee Members (if applicable)

Planned Giving Committee Members (if applicable)

## **The Grieving Process: Care of Self and Others in Grief**

### *Resource people:*

Clergy

Hospital/Hospice Chaplain

## **Recording Plans and Preferences: Informing the Appropriate Persons**

Use of booklets, checklists, etc.

Other information sources

### *Resource people:*

Clergy

Church administrative staff

## *Final Affairs Fair Check List*

| <b>Task</b>   | <b>Completed</b> | <b>Date</b> |
|---|------------------|-------------|
| <b>Preliminary Planning</b>   |                  |             |
| Select date and venue   |                  |             |
| Secure resource people  |                  |             |
| Recruit volunteer hosts   |                  |             |
| Publicize event: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Church bulletin</li> <li>• Church newsletter</li> <li>• Invitation letters (if applicable)</li> </ul> |                  |             |
| <b>Preparing resource people</b>  |                  |             |
| Hold preparatory briefing with all resource people  |                  |             |
| Ask resource people to bring business cards   |                  |             |
| Encourage resource people to provide hand outs  |                  |             |
| Ask resource people to take notes to assist in any follow-up appointments   |                  |             |
| <b>Setting up for event</b>   |                  |             |
| Arrange hall with round tables in a horseshoe configuration   |                  |             |
| Assign one topic per table; place chairs for resource people and visitors   |                  |             |
| Prominently display signs with each table topic   |                  |             |
| Supply nametags for resource people   |                  |             |
| <b>Follow-Up</b>  |                  |             |
| Ask resource people to pass on requests for follow-up appointments  |                  |             |
| Hold debriefing after the fair to record ideas and suggestions for improvement  |                  |             |