

THE FUNERAL AND REPAST

PLANNING
EXPERIENCE



BY SHARON SARGEANT



I am honored that you have chosen this funeral reception planning guide to support you during this deeply emotional time. Saying goodbye to a loved one is one of life's most profound moments, and gathering with friends and family afterward can bring much-needed comfort, reflection, and connection. A funeral repast provides a space to share memories, offer support, and celebrate a life that touched many.

With years of experience in organizing heartfelt and meaningful events—including memorials, milestone celebrations, and intimate gatherings—I created this guide to help ease the burden of planning during a difficult time. Inside, you'll find helpful tips for organizing the details, from food and seating to thoughtful touches that honor your loved one's life.

Let's begin this journey together, creating a peaceful and memorable experience that offers comfort to those who attend and pays tribute to the one you hold dear.

Sharon Sargeant

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FUNERAL RECEPTION AND REPAST PLANNING EXPERIENCE

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SECTIONS

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION TO PLANNING A FUNERAL AND RECEPTION

This planning guide was created specifically to assist with organizing funeral arrangements and a funeral reception, also known as a repast. While this is a more solemn occasion, there are still many thoughtful and meaningful ways to honor your loved one's life and provide comfort to those who gather. This guide serves as a supplement to The Party Planning Experience guides, which offer additional insights for planning all types of events. This guide is our "FREE" gift to you and your family during this time of need. It provides the resources that you need to successfully to coordinate a respectful and heartfelt repast.

HOW TO PLAN A FUNERAL AND RECEPTION

This is a comprehensive planning guide to assist anyone who needs to organize a funeral repast, also known as a funeral reception. While this gathering may not be a traditional “celebration,” it is still a meaningful occasion that deserves thoughtful planning and a touch of grace. A funeral repast provides family and friends with the opportunity to come together after a service to reflect, comfort one another, and honor the memory of a loved one.

Even during somber times, organization is key. Planning a repast can be overwhelming, especially while managing the emotions that follow a loss. That’s why this guide was created—to ease the burden by providing a clear structure, thoughtful suggestions, and helpful checklists to guide you through the process.

Within this guide, you’ll find ideas for venue selection, menu planning, guest accommodations, memory displays, and more. Whether you’re hosting a small gathering at home or a larger event at a community center or church hall, the principles remain the same: simplicity, respect, and comfort.

As with all events, seeking assistance is encouraged. While loved ones may offer to help, consider identifying a few key individuals or hiring help for setup and service so you can be fully present with your guests. A well-organized plan allows you to spend more time connecting and less time coordinating.

The goal of this guide is to help you create a meaningful, peaceful repast that honors your loved one and provides comfort to all who attend. We’re here to walk alongside you, step-by-step.

Let’s begin this journey together—with care, compassion, and purpose.

Would you like help with the layout or sections of the guide next?

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FUNERAL RECEPTION TIMELINE

ONE WEEK PLAN

DAY ONE

01

Gather Necessary Paperwork
Family and Friends Connections
Guest List

DAY TWO

02

Visit Funeral Home
Choose A Date
Funeral Planning Checklist

DAY THREE

03

Choose Officiant
Plan Funeral Reception
Plan for Visitors

DAY FOUR

04

Meeting of the Minds
Last Minute Details

DAY

FIVE - SEVEN

05

Funeral
Funeral Reception
Post Planning

This is just a guide to be altered as time permits for your family and loved ones to gather to pay respect.

THE FUNERAL PLANNING CHECKLIST

Most funeral homes will give you a checklist to assist with planning the funeral for your loved one. However, we have decided to add this section so that you have everything in one place. Please use the worksheets provided to keep track of items that need to be completed.

1. Choose an officiant or speaker
2. Select pallbearers
3. Choose scripture readings or poems
4. Pick musical selections or hymns
5. Arrange for a eulogy or tributes from family/friends
6. Create and print funeral programs or bulletins
7. Order flowers for the casket, altar, or venue

THE OFFICIANT

Use the worksheet below to write down the names and contact details of the officiant who will lead the funeral or memorial service. Having this information organized will help coordinate the service smoothly and ensure everyone involved is informed.

Once you have chosen the officiant, gather the following information to share with the family, funeral home, or other key participants:

You will need to have the following information before to talk to the officiant:

- Service Date and Time _____
- Service Location _____

OFFICIANT	INFORMATION
TITLE/POSITION	
PHONE	
EMAIL	
NOTES	

OFFICIANT	INFORMATION
TITLE/POSITION	
PHONE	
EMAIL	
NOTES	

THE PALLBEARERS

Here are a few respectful and heartfelt ways to ask someone to be a pallbearer, whether by text or in conversation. You can choose the tone that best fits your relationship with the person.

Formal & Respectful

"Hello [Name],

As we prepare to honor the life of [Loved One's Name], we would be deeply honored if you would serve as a pallbearer for the service. Your presence would mean a great deal to our family. Please let me know if you're able to accept this role."

Warm & Personal

"Hi [Name],

I wanted to ask if you'd be willing to be a pallbearer at [Loved One's Name]'s funeral. You meant a lot to them, and it would mean a lot to us to have you help carry them to their final resting place. Please let me know if you're comfortable with this."

Simple & Sincere

"Hey [Name],

Would you be willing to be a pallbearer at [Loved One's Name]'s funeral? We'd really appreciate it."

"We're putting together the service for [Loved One's Name], and I was wondering if you would consider being a pallbearer. It would mean a lot to us."

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THE READINGS/SCRIPTURES/POEMS

This is a sample of bible scriptures that are often used in memorial or funeral services to offer peace, hope, and reassurance:

1. Psalm 23:1–4 (KJV or NIV) “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want... Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.”
2. Psalm 34:18 (NIV) “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”
3. John 14:1–3 (NIV) “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms... I am going there to prepare a place for you.”
4. 2 Corinthians 5:1 (NIV) “For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God... eternal in heaven.”
5. Isaiah 57:1–2 (NIV) “The righteous perish, and no one takes it to heart... those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death.”
6. Revelation 21:4 (NIV) ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”
7. Matthew 5:4 (NIV) “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”
8. Romans 14:8 (NIV) “If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.”
9. Psalm 121:1–2 (KJV or NIV) “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord...”
10. Lamentations 3:22–23 (NIV) “Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning...”
11. Job 19:25–26 (NIV) “I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth... yet in my flesh I will see God.”
12. Psalm 46:1–2 (NIV) “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear...”
13. 2 Timothy 4:7–8 (NIV) “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness...”
14. John 11:25–26 (NIV) “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die...”

THE READINGS/SCRIPTURES/POEMS

This is a sample of poems that are often used in memorial or funeral services to offer peace, hope, and reassurance:

"In Gentle Memory"
We gather now with hearts so full,
Of love, of tears, of stories told.
Your light, though gone from here today,
Still warms the paths along our way.
You taught us grace in every stride,
With quiet strength you walked beside.
A laugh, a hug, a guiding hand—
Small gifts we now more deeply understand.
Though silence fills your chair and place,
We feel your love, we see your face.
In every dawn, in stars at night,
You shine beyond our earthly sight.
Your journey's done, your soul at peace,
From pain and worry, full release.
We'll carry you in all we do,
Our hearts forever tied to you.

Safely Home
by Author Unknown
I am home in heaven, dear ones;
Oh, so happy and so bright.
There is a perfect joy and beauty
in this everlasting light.

All the pain and grief is over,
every restless tossing passed;
I am now at peace forever,
safely home in heaven at last.

Did you wonder I so calmly
Trod the valley of the shade?
Oh, but Jesus' love illuminated
Every dark and fearful glade.

And He came Himself to meet me
in the way so hard to tread;
And with Jesus' arm to lean on
could I have one doubt or dread?

Then you must not grieve so sorely,
for I love you dearly still.
Try to look beyond death's shadows;
Pray to trust our Father's will.

There is work still waiting for you,
so you must not idly stand.
Do it now, while life remaineth;
you shall rest in Jesus' land.

When that work is all completed,
He will gently call you home;
Oh, the rapture of that meeting;
Oh, the joy to see you come!

-
- This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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[illegible]

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THE FLORIST

Use the worksheet below to write down the names of local florists near the funeral home or family's residence. This will be helpful when selecting floral arrangements for the service, graveside, or home. Flowers are a traditional expression of sympathy and can bring comfort and beauty during the time of bereavement.

Once you have chosen a florist, gather the following information to place your order or share with others who may wish to send flowers:

- Service Date and Time _____
- Service Location _____

FLORIST	INFORMATION
PRICE/QUOTE	
PHONE	
EMAIL	
NOTES	

FLORIST	INFORMATION
PRICE/QUOTE	
PHONE	
EMAIL	
NOTES	

SECTION 2

GUEST LIST HONORING CONNECTIONS

Just like any other meaningful gathering, a funeral and repast benefits from a thoughtfully prepared guest list. While the tone of this event is more reflective than celebratory, the purpose remains the same—to bring people together. Friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, and members of the community all play a role in remembering a life well-lived.

Creating a guest list helps you prepare the right space, food, and seating arrangements. It ensures that everyone who wishes to pay their respects and support the family is included. During times of grief, it can be easy to overlook someone unintentionally. That's why it's helpful to sit down with close relatives and go through names together—this task becomes lighter when shared.

Whether you're expecting 20 guests or 200, the guest list will serve as the foundation for your planning. It will help guide decisions about your venue, catering, and keepsakes or memorial items. Remember, this isn't just a list—it's a reflection of the relationships and love that surrounded your loved one during their life.

This section is preserved for writing down those names and making calls. Being with immediate family, then add friends, co-workers, and neighbors. With a little preparation, you'll be able to provide a welcoming space for guests to gather, share stories, and find comfort in community.

GUEST LIST

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GUEST LIST

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SECTION

3

VENDORS FOR FUNERAL RECEPTION

In this section, we help ease your planning process by guiding you through the thoughtful selection of vendors for your funeral repast. From compassionate caterers to venue setup support, working with reliable professionals can help lighten your load during this emotional time. The goal is to create a peaceful, well-organized gathering that allows guests to share memories, find comfort, and honor your loved one.

Entrusting parts of the planning process to vendors, family and friends ensures that important details—like the food, seating, and overall flow of the event—are handled with care and respect.

This section has a planning sheet to help with gathering those names and phone numbers for quick reference. You will also find sample menu options and checklist to help with planning.

THE VENUE FOR FUNERAL REPAST/RECEPTION

Use the worksheet below to write down the names of rentals spaces that may be available in your area. On occasion the funeral home may have a space that can be used for this part of the program. We suggest VFW Posts, Masonic Lodges, bingo halls, church halls, community centers or the family home or home of a close friend who can accommodate guest and food preparation. As soon as you have a date for the funeral you will need to begin to call around the find a suitable place.

- Once you have found a space gather the information to place on the program

VENUE	INFORMATION
PRICE/QUOTE	
PHONE	
EMAIL	
NOTES	

VENUE	INFORMATION
PRICE/QUOTE	
PHONE	
EMAIL	
NOTES	

THE FUNERAL RECEPTION CATERING EXPERIENCE

The person hosting the funeral repast should plan this part of the gathering in a way that allows them to be present and find moments of peace alongside their guests. Food and beverages should be set up by a caterer or friends and family who would like to volunteer to assist. These people will serve guest at the reception hall.

The following pages include thoughtful menu options suitable for a funeral repast

ITEMS

UTENSILS	PAPER PRODUCTS	MENU
• sterno serving sets • two sterno per dish • water pans • food serving pans • foil • serving utensils • condiments	• plates (dinner and dessert) • drinking cups • forks, knives, spoons • napkins	• Entrée(s) 2 • sides (2) • bread • lemonade or tea/water • dessert display with cakes and pies) • Many of your favorite restaurants cater if you would like to order food

SAMPLE MENU #1

SOUTHERN STYLE MEAL

This page gives an old standard Southern Style Menu that is often used for these events. The food should be served by “helping hands” and there should be a drink station with cups of ice and tea/lemonade already poured. This drink station should be at a separate table to keep the good buffet line moving.

MENU	PAPER PRODUCTS	MENU
• Chicken -legs, thighs and wings • string beans • potato salad • bread • lemonade or tea/water • dessert display with cakes and pies) • KFC • Popeyes • Church’s Chicken • Bojangles • You local grocery store usually cooks chicken in the deli section • purchase gallons of Turkey Hill Sweet Tea • Family and friends will bring dessert	• plates (dinner and dessert) • drinking cups • forks, knives, spoons • napkins	• Chicken -legs, thighs and wings • Spiral Ham • collard greens • macaroni and cheese • potato salad • bread • lemonade or tea/water • dessert display with cakes and pies) • KFC • Popeyes • Church’s Chicken • Bojangles • You local grocery store usually cooks chicken in the deli section • Sam’s or Costo for ham • purchase gallons of Turkey Hill Sweet Tea

TIPS

- You can get potato salad from your local grocery store and add condiments to make it taste like homemade (i.e. Miracle Whip or Duke’s Salad dressing, pickle relish, onion powder, mustard, sugar)
- You can cook the string beans from the can. (boil smoked turkey necks and add seasoning like bouillon, salt, pepper, garlic powder, onion powder; pour off the water from the cans and place them in the pot.
- The serving dishes and display should be set up based on the items that you will be serving

SAMPLE MENU #2

ITALIAN MEAL

This menu is another crowd pleaser. Most people like Italian food. This a warm and filling meal. Call your local (chain) Italian restaurants or your local mom and pop restaurant's that cater large quantities.

CATERING VENDOR SUGGESTIONS	MENU	PAPER PRODUCTS
• Buca di Beppo • Carrabba's • Fazoli's • Maggiano's • Olive Garden • Romano's Macaroni Grill • The Old Spaghetti Factory • Call your local Italian Restaurant for catering information	• Lasagna • Spaghetti • salad • bread sticks • lemonade or tea/water • dessert display with cakes and pies)	• plates (dinner and dessert) • drinking cups • forks, knives, spoons • napkins

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SET UP AND SERVING

- Use the buffet layout provided in the guide to assist with flow
- The family is served first and then others
- Someone will need to pick up the food and place it in the warmers
- The beverages should be on a separate table from the food.
- The desserts should be on a separate table. Precut slices and place them on a dessert plates.
- The tables should have tablecloths

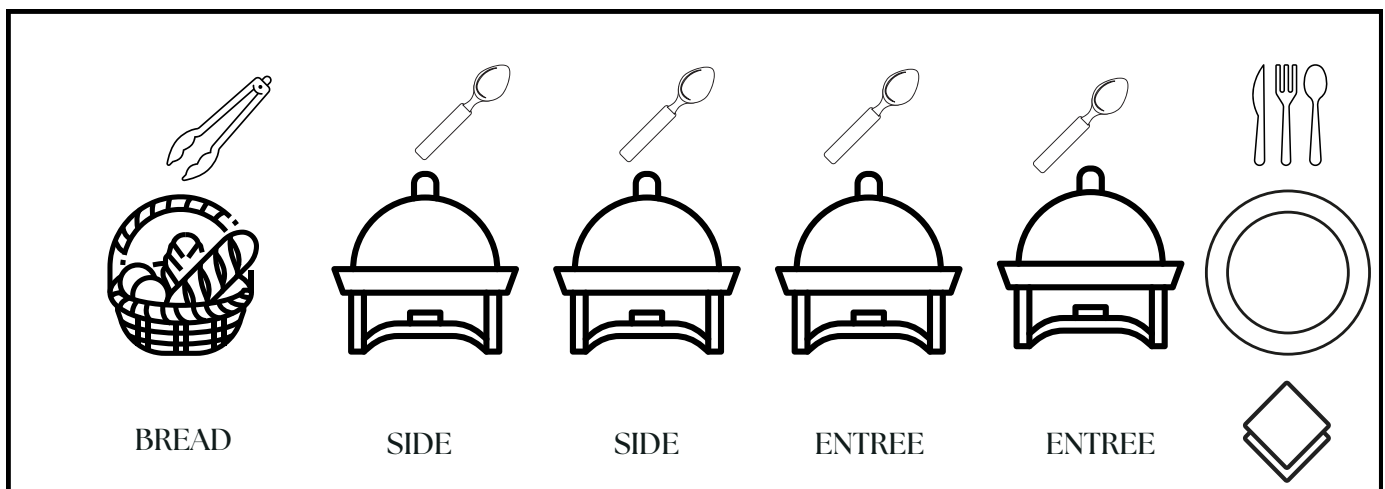
HELPERS

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THE FUNERAL RECEPTION BUFFET LAYOUT

This is a sample chart to show you how to organize and plan for your buffet table. Think about using the resource page for suggestions on serving pieces and utensils that need to be purchased for your display. Go to the thrift store and find a few unique items for food display. There is a blank worksheet provided for you to use to set up your buffet.

ITEMS	SERVING DISH CONTAINER	UTENSILS
ENTREE #1	CHAFING DISH	TONGS/SPOON
ENTREE #2	CHAFING DISH	TONGS/SPOON
SIDE	CHAFING DISH	SPOON
SIDE	CHAFING DISH	SPOON
BREAD	BASKET	TONGS
UTENSILS/NAPKINS	CADDY	----
PLATES	ON BUFFET TABLE	----
DESSERTS	READY TO PICK UP ON DESSERT PLATES	PLACE ON A SEPARATE TABLE
BEVERAGES	READY TO PICK UP IN THE CUP	PLACE ON A SEPARATE TABLE



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CATERING ORDER FORM

Use this worksheet if you decide to purchase food for your guest. If you don't have the skills needed to cook for large groups, this is a better option. Make a list and/or modify the menus given. Think about ordering the entree's from the suggested menu's and then cook the sides at home.

- Once you have made a choice on which caterer to call, collect the needed information below. If a family member is cooking a side- dish place their name in one of the spaces below.
- Ask questions during the call about food choices like, how it is packaged and if they offer delivery.
- Get a contact name and place the order. You may need to visit the establishment. Ask them to email you a receipt or make sure that you get the receipt if this is an in person visit.
- Connect with the caterer as you get closer to the event date to confirm your date, time of deliveries and payment arrangements.

NO. OF GUESTS _____

CATERER	INFORMATION
PRICE/QUOTE	
PHONE	
EMAIL	
NOTES	

CATERER	INFORMATION
PRICE/QUOTE	
PHONE	
EMAIL	
NOTES	

SHOPPING CHECKLIST MENU #1

Use the checklist below to create a shopping list for the menu that you have chosen. You will be purchasing the entree(s) (chicken and/or ham) from a grocery store or your favorite food chain. You can always use variations of this list. Use your imagination and substitute when necessary. Make it as easy as possible without sacrificing the flavor and presentation of the food.

SIDES

- ☐ potato salad
- ☐ salad dressing (Miracle Whip or Dukes)
- ☐ mustard
- ☐ pickle relish
- ☐ sugar
- ☐ string beans
- ☐ smoked turkey necks
- ☐ bouillon chicken (Better Than Bouillon)
- ☐ salt and pepper
- ☐ hot sauce
- ☐ hawaiian rolls

DESSERTS

- ☐ cakes
- ☐ pies
- ☐ cake and pie serving utensils

DRINKS

- ☐ tea or lemonade (Turkey Hill)
- ☐ ice
- ☐ lemons
- ☐ cooler for ice

SERVING AND PAPER PRODUCTS

- ☐ serving utensils - tongs and spoons (disposable)
- ☐ chafing dishes (disposable)
- ☐ chafing dish racks
- ☐ sterno cans (two for each set)
- ☐ matches
- ☐ tables clothes (disposable)
- ☐ cups
- ☐ dinner plates
- ☐ dessert plates
- ☐ forks and knives
- ☐ napkins
- ☐ centerpieces - use fresh flowers (see tutorial)
- ☐ plastic gloves for serving
- ☐ foil
- ☐ ziploc bags

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SHOPPING CHECKLIST MENU #2

Use the checklist below to create a shopping list for the menu that you have chosen. You will be purchasing the entree(s) (lasagna or spaghetti) from a reputable food chain. You can always use variations of this list. Use your imagination and substitute when necessary. Make it as easy as possible without sacrificing the flavor and presentation of the food.

SIDES

- ☐ garden salad mix bags
- ☐ roma tomatoes
- ☐ pepperoncini (jar)
- ☐ red onion
- ☐ large black olives
- ☐ croutons
- ☐ shredded parmesan cheese
- ☐ Olive Garden Salad Dressing
- ☐ salt and pepper
- ☐ italian bread or bread sticks

DESSERTS

- ☐ cakes
- ☐ pies
- ☐ cake and pie serving utensils

DRINKS

- ☐ tea or lemonade (Turkey Hill)
- ☐ ice
- ☐ lemons
- ☐ cooler for ice

SERVING AND PAPER PRODUCTS

- ☐ serving utensils - tongs and spoons (disposable)
- ☐ chafing dishes (disposable)
- ☐ chafing dish racks
- ☐ sterno cans (two for each set)
- ☐ matches
- ☐ tables clothes (disposable)
- ☐ cups
- ☐ dinner plates
- ☐ dessert plates
- ☐ forks and knives
- ☐ napkins
- ☐ centerpieces - use fresh flowers (see tutorial)
- ☐ plastic gloves for serving
- ☐ foil
- ☐ ziploc bags

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THE FUNERAL GUESTS HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS

Use the worksheet below to write down the names of hotels near the family or funeral home. This will be of assistance for those who need to be accommodated during bereavement after traveling from their home. It's best to let guest stay in a comfortable space if you do not have space to accommodate them.

- Once you have made a hotel choice gather the information to send to your guest. (hotel name and address)
- Make sure that it is moderately priced
- Get the names of two moderately priced hotels and send it in text form

HOTEL	INFORMATION
PRICE/QUOTE	
PHONE	
EMAIL	
NOTES	

HOTEL	INFORMATION
PRICE/QUOTE	
PHONE	
EMAIL	
NOTES	

SECTION

4

DIGITAL CORRESPONDENCE FOR FUNERALS

Many people today have decided to go green and use the option of digital correspondence to communicate with their guest. This digital correspondence includes: sending family and friends hotel accommodations, directions, funeral arrangements and funeral reception information. It is easy to accomplish if you are tech savvy and know how to use creative software like Canva. You have an array of options to choose from so lets get started.

DIGITAL CORRESPONDENCE

ANNOUNCEMENT

Once you have made arrangements with the funeral home this is the time to professionally disseminate the information to family and friends. It is best to create a digital announcement about the arrangements that can be texted to everyone. You will choose one of our free templates that can be updated in Canva. There are instructions below on how to send the announcement through text messaging.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED . . .

- Color scheme and theme
- date of your event
- place of event
- loved one's name
- loved one's sunrise (date) and sunset (date)
- rsvp (yes)
- guest list sheet
- digital invitation (png version) 4" x 6"

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SENDING DIGITAL STATIONERY

- Create the announcement and download it as a png. file to your computer
- Open your email and attach the announcement and send it to yourself (email)
- Open the email on your phone and download the attachment to your camera roll
- You will now be able to send this to family and friends as a text message (Please see the example wording to add to the announcement on the pages that follow)

DIGITAL CORRESPONDENCE

PHOTO COLLECTING

You will begin collecting photos after you have made arrangements at the funeral home. Some of these may be hard copy or digital. Create a folder in Google Drive that you can share and upload photos to send to the funeral home. Most establishments create these slide shows for you.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED . . .

- Create a folder in you Google Drive (You will need a yourname@gmail.com account)
- digital and hard copy photos

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SENDING DIGITAL STATIONERY

- Make a list of people that you want to include
- scan photos with your phone and upload them to your Google Drive
- Get family members or friends to assist
- Follow the instructions that the funeral home has given (number of photos, send by, etc)

PHOTO LIST

NO.	NAME	FOUND A PHOTO
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
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9		
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11		
12		
13		
14		
15		

PHOTO LIST

NO.	NAME	FOUND A PHOTO
16		
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30		

DIGITAL CORRESPONDENCE

WORDING FOR FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

Use this as a guide and change it to fit your families arrangements. Using social media to get the word out quickly will assist in raising the anxiety levels for those who are mourning. As soon as you have information about the arrangements create an announcement like the one below.

ANNOUNCEMENT #1

- I would like to share the “Homegoing Service”, “Memorial Service” or “Funeral Service Arrangements” for Mr. South on June 1, 2030. 1000 East Street, Anywhere, US. Viewing is from 10:00 am - 11:00 am. The service is at 11:00 AM. Interment to held at Garden Memorial at 123 State Street, Anywhere, US. Funeral Reception to follow in the church dining hall.

ANNOUNCEMENT #2

- We gather to honor the life and legacy of Ms. Hickman at 1000 East Street, Anywhere, US. The service will take place on Saturday, June 1, 2030, at 10:00 AM, with a viewing from 9:30 AM to 10:00 AM. Following the service, please join the family for the Funeral Reception at the family home immediately after the service.

THANK YOU #1

- The family of Mr. South would like to thank you for sharing in this Homegoing Service. Please keep us in your thoughts and prayers in the days and weeks to come.

THANK YOU #2

- Hello [Name],

On behalf of our family, thank you so much for your support during the funeral services for Ms. Hickman. Your presence, prayers, kind words, and thoughtful gestures meant more than we can express. We are truly grateful to have you in our lives during this time of remembrance and healing.

With heartfelt thanks,

[Your Name or "The Hickman Family"]

SECTION

5

THE MUSICAL SELECTIONS FOR FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS AND FOOD RECEPTION

"Welcome to Section 5, where we explore the thoughtful role of music in honoring a loved one's life. Whether you're planning a solemn funeral service or a reflective funeral reception, music serves as a powerful tribute—offering comfort, evoking memories, and setting the tone for a meaningful farewell. We've curated a respectful and heartfelt Spotify playlist for those who use the service, blending traditional hymns, instrumental selections, and gentle soul-stirring melodies. For those arranging larger gatherings, the addition of live music, such as a solo vocalist or instrumentalist, can bring a deeply personal touch. In this chapter, you'll find expert tips on choosing the right musical arrangements to honor your loved one's legacy with grace.

THE FUNERAL MUSIC EXPERIENCE

LIVE

The gentle presence of live piano or organ music during a funeral viewing offers a comforting and reverent atmosphere that supports reflection and emotional connection. This type of music provides a soothing backdrop that honors the solemnity of the moment, allowing guests to quietly gather their thoughts and pay their respects. The soft melodies help create a peaceful environment, offering comfort without overpowering the space. Just as a live band energizes a celebration, live instrumental music at a viewing adds a human touch that fosters a sense of warmth, dignity, and shared remembrance. The subtle artistry of the musician can adapt to the tone of the occasion, leaving a lasting impression through the healing power of music.

SOLO

For many African American churches, selecting a soloist to sing during the funeral service or repast is a time-honored tradition that brings a deeply personal and spiritual dimension to the occasion. A heartfelt vocal performance can offer comfort in grief, stir meaningful memories, and create a sacred space for reflection and healing.

Whether it's a beloved hymn, a gospel classic, or a song that held special significance to the departed, the soloist's voice can express emotions that words often cannot. This musical tribute not only honors the life being remembered but also uplifts the hearts of those gathered, weaving together sorrow and celebration through the powerful gift of song.

DIGITAL

To help lift the spirits and celebrate the life of a loved one, many families choose to play some of their favorite songs during the funeral reception. Music has a unique way of evoking cherished memories, sparking heartfelt conversations, and creating a warm, comforting atmosphere among guests.

In addition to digital music, a slideshow of photos showcasing meaningful moments from the person's life can serve as a powerful visual tribute. These images offer a window into their journey—capturing the love, laughter, and legacy they leave behind.

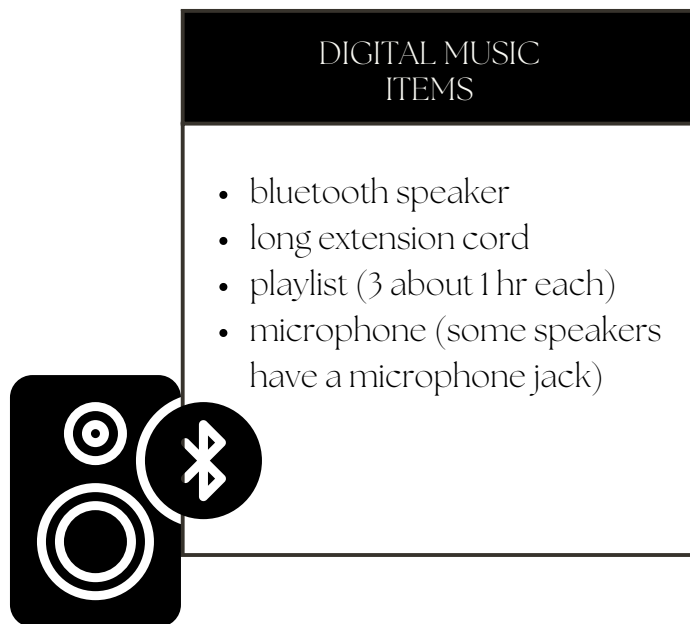
Many venues today are equipped with audio-visual systems that support both music and slideshow presentations. However, if these amenities aren't available, a Bluetooth speaker paired with a laptop or tablet can create the same heartfelt experience.

These thoughtful, personal touches help transform the repast into a time of remembrance, reflection, and shared joy—a celebration of life that lives on in memory.

THE DIGITAL MUSIC EXPERIENCE

This information will assist you with getting your digital music organized for your special event.

- You will begin by creating a music playlist for this event on your platform of choice
- If you have Spotify there is a starter list of songs under “The Party Planning Experience”
- Name your playlist (Example: Mr. Hickman, funeral services, repast music, etc)
- TIP: If you borrow a Bluetooth speaker make sure it has all of the parts when you pick it up. Make sure that you pick it up early enough to learn the system and how you will connect it to your phone’s system.



SECTION

6

APPENDIX FOR FINAL ARRANGEMENTS

This appendix is designed to help families manage the thoughtful gestures, final preparations, and follow-up responsibilities that often arise after a funeral or memorial service. Inside this section, you'll find practical worksheets to help you track cards, notes, and donations received from family, friends, and colleagues. These tools make it easier to send personalized thank-you messages and acknowledge each act of kindness. We've also included a "Last-Minute Tips" checklist for final items like confirming the arrival time of the officiant, ensuring flowers are in place, and preparing the guest book.

Additionally, you'll find a simple "Things to Do" list that outlines common post-funeral tasks—such as notifying insurance companies, collecting death certificates and arranging for leftover food or flowers. To assist with etiquette, sample thank-you messages are provided for those who attended the service or contributed gifts or monetary donations. These expressions of gratitude can be sent via card, text, or email, and help families recognize the love and support shown during their time of loss.

DAY BEFORE SCHEDULE

8:00 am

9:00 am

10:00 am

11:00 am

12:00 n

1:00 pm

2:00 pm

3:00 pm

4:00 pm

5:00 pm

6:00 pm

7:00 pm

DAY OF SCHEDULE

8:00 am

9:00 am

10:00 am

11:00 am

12:00 n

1:00 pm

2:00 pm

3:00 pm

4:00 pm

5:00 pm

6:00 pm

7:00 pm

THANK YOU CARD RESPONSES

Here are several thoughtful and appropriate ways to express gratitude if someone gives you a card with money (often called a sympathy gift or memorial offering) during or after a funeral. It is suggested to send a thank-you card, text, or message depending on your relationship with the sender.

Thank You Card (Formal):

Dear [Name],

Thank you so much for your kind card and generous gift during this difficult time. Your thoughtfulness and support truly mean the world to our family. We are grateful for your kindness as we celebrate and remember [Loved One's Name]'s life.

With heartfelt appreciation,
[Your Name/Family Name]

Text Message (Warm & Personal):

Hi [Name], thank you so much for the thoughtful card and generous gift. It really touched our hearts during this tough time. We truly appreciate your support and kindness.

Short & Sincere (Card or Text):

Thank you for your generous gift and kind words. Your support means more than you know as we mourn and honor [Loved One's Name].

Faith-Based Option (if appropriate):

Thank you for your generous gift and heartfelt card. Your kindness is a true blessing to our family, and we are grateful for your prayers and support during this time.

CARDS

[illegible]

CARDS

[illegible]

CARDS

[illegible]

FINAL CHECKLIST

HELPER

[illegible]

FOOD

[illegible]

MUSIC

[illegible]

THINGS TO DO

[illegible]

FINAL CHECKLIST

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

- [illegible]

GETTING READY

- Many cultures have different honored traditions during this time that should be respected.
- If your family plans to wear a special color begin shopping early
- Take a small satin bag to gather cards from friends and family.
- If you are hosting the reception at home, set up things the night before
- If hosting the reception at home, clear all items off of the counter top to set up the buffet.
Make sure that you have toilet paper, poo-pourri spray and small napkins in the restroom (use cocktail size)
- Home Depot sells a portable trash can that uses 13 gal. trash bags.
- Take plastic zip bags and containers to pack leftovers.
- Take foil and plastic bags to wrap the leftovers or for those who want to take their food home
- Purchase plastic containers and use a small cart with wheels to move heavy items.
- Pack all of your items in a container and place near the door
- Purchase a plastic shoe box from the discount store to place small items inside so that you can find them (place packing tape on each end so that items do not spill out during travel)

AFTER THE FUNERAL

- Send thank-you notes to guests and contributors
- Notify Social Security Administration and other agencies
- Set up probate if needed with your court system
- Set up a will reading if needed (Meet with an attorney to review the will or estate)
- Contact life insurance companies
- Update banking, bills, and accounts of the deceased
- Close or memorialize social media accounts
- Distribute personal belongings as appropriate
- Organize and store important documents
- Consider grief support or counseling
- Plan a future memorial or anniversary observance, if desired

THE PARTY

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BY SHARON SARGEANT