

## **WUMC MEMORIAL TASKS**

### **(from Congregational Care)**

*We know that Grief is a very hard and confusing time for people. Our intent is to offer comfort to loved ones.*

*This is what is currently happening or being considered. Names included in this document reflect those currently involved. There are suggestions for improvements included. And suggestions would be appreciated from others. Some actions may have to be modified to reflect family choice, volunteers available, and budget. The intent is to document what it takes to best serve those in grief.*

#### **Day One, of Knowledge of a Death:**

*(Does not matter if the death is local or out of town.)*

Notify Pastors, church office, all staff, and key friends by phone, and/or email or in person. Or receive the notice from one of those sources. Congregational Care Chair tries to call those whom are known to be key friends in the church family, before a group email goes out.

Contact the family, by phone and email, to express personal and the church family's sympathy. Many cannot attend to the phone at this point, but they can hear the message when they can.

Give Audrey or Shevawn, Volunteer Coordinators, currently, the details, by email, as known, in case a Volunteer Signup will be needed. They are excellent to create this tool for connection, but want things written, instead of phoning. Most details are not known on this day.

A church-wide email of notification should be considered.

#### **Day Two:**

Obtain more information from Pastors from their visit with the loved ones of the deceased.

Whether or not the first answer is "yes" or "no," to the questions of meals for the local family during these beginning days, food at the reception, or help with rides/babysitting needed, Congregational Care Chair follows up with an additional phone call or email, and explains what can be offered and that it is at no cost to them. Sometimes the shock of the first day or two does not let them say "yes," but as a couple of days pass, they begin to see how many jobs there are and the help this can provide.

Find out the family's wishes for Memorial Donations. Offer to provide memorial donation envelopes at the service for friends and family to use. Congregational Care Chair has made these or asked for them from particular non-profits, if time allows.

Send an email to the congregation of the death, if the church office has not all ready. Or at least by Wednesday, for out of town and if the deceased is not a member, send the congregational prayer to let others know. If the deceased is a member, the email to notify the church family should go quickly, so it can let others, whom we may not even know were connected to this person, begin to share acts of kindness. This may happen "before details for final rites/reception for the family," are known.

### **Day Three or Later:**

Give Volunteer Coordinators, Audrey or Shevawn, the information shared from the family and needed, to create a Volunteer Signup for the reception jobs and more. They may send it to the Sunday school class, the choir, or other special groups, the family is involved with. Or Congregational Care Chair sends it to groups. And if the sign-ups are not full in 24 hours, Congregational Care Chair sends it to additional groups or the greater congregation.

For one family reception, there were 48 jobs created. That was using Rudy's Barbecue for catering. We like to use "What's for Lunch," catering by Jessica and Kevin Wright, when possible. A member had made his wishes known that we should have Rudy's barbecue at his reception. It was 1/3 higher in price than What's for Lunch. Congregational Care Chair applied, online, for a donation, from Rudy's, and the corporate office matched the price that would have been offered from What's for Lunch.

Volunteers as Ushers and Helpers in the Parking lot.

If we are having less than a meal, such as desserts only, or light snacks only, depending on the family's wishes and the time of day, we still use Volunteer Signup, and have volunteers bring the foods on the list.

Any foods left-over from a reception are packaged and sent home with the family, if they choose; two boxes are created, for our Facilities Maintenance Crew and their families, since they will be the last out after clean-up; and a door code is given for a volunteer to deliver extra foods to Mobile Loaves & Fishes. The family likes this option, as well. (Sometimes, depending upon the food, it may be kept and offered to the staff for the next day.)

Volunteer Sign up may also create the listing of tasks for delivery of meals to the family at their home, during the day(days) before a service, as family gather, as they are consumed with tasks to honor and bury their dead, and/or as the family gathers before leaving town. We get numbers and food allergies/likes/dislikes to make this meal(s) be what is most helpful. Sometimes it is a meal, ordered from a local restaurant, near the family, or sometimes it involves several dishes to be delivered. This can be facilitated for the individual volunteers by arranging a meeting time and place, such as the big church kitchen refrigerator before 5 pm, on the day, so only one person may deliver, with many people contributing to the meal, but not going to the house.

### **Additional Days of that waiting/caring time:**

Light memorial candle on altar in sanctuary, on first Sunday, after the death, if a member of WUMC. (Specific candle for this is stored in the pulpit. Can be lit by acolyte.)

Get URL from Technology Communications, to give to family, before the service, for the link to the memorial live streamed broadcast, especially helpful for those who cannot attend. It will also be how family can watch the service, at any later time, and give family the explanation of church website and clicks to the live streaming and saved video/audio broadcast for later.

Typical tasks for funeral receptions:

Assist family with creating/proof-reading the memorial bulletin, usually, but not always, created in the office.

Meet family in narthex to show easels and spaces for photos and mementos they may bring. And to show reception space. (This has probably been explained by email and phone by Congregational Care chair person. Family may choose to come a day before the service, or early before the service.)

Offer a sign-in guest book, from the office, or they may bring one they choose. Our Office Manager creates a nice one of these, with removable pages, so there can be multiple sign in areas. It has an opening in the front cover, for a photo or a copy of the memorial bulletin.

Provide a pen/pens.

Buy and arrange flowers for reception tables, can be a day earlier than the event. Using jars/small vases we supply for each turn.

Facilities Maintenance Crew prepare the tables, as directed by the room reservation and set up form, created by Congregational Care Chair person, for the reception, in the gym or the 400 rooms or the library. Use white tablecloths, purchased for this specific use. (Can be done a day ahead, unless other events scheduled during the time.) Day of event: set up coffee, hot water, ice water and ice tea, as decided/listed with room reservation form, with cups and condiments for these drinks.

Receive food from volunteers or caterers, before and during a memorial service, so not attending the service.

Set up paper goods or plates, as chosen for the event. (We only use real plates and silverware if the Kitchen Chair is available and has 3-5 dish washing volunteers.)

Get ice into glasses ready. And additional ice available from ice machine in small kitchen.

Platter and set out foods, first those that do not need refrigeration; lastly, those that need refrigeration. Some will also be on warmers from the caterers. May need some food to be kept at warming temperature in the ovens in the big kitchen. Provide all foods with serving

tongs/pieces. Hold second round of food in an area nearby, such as a counter near the windows in the 400 rooms, to replenish during the serving time.

Volunteers to help carry plates and drinks for those that are less mobile. Keep ice supplied in cups in drink serving area. Replenish food supplies, as needed. Offer to take plates and trash for those who sit and visit.

Bring a beverage and a plate to the bereaved, who may not get a chance to get their own.

After reception finishes, package left over food, if any: first for the family, second for Facilities Maintenance Staff, third for staff and/or ML&F. Help family to car with food. Deliver extra food to ML&F. Notify staff, by email to [office@westlake-umc.org](mailto:office@westlake-umc.org), if food left for them. Leave note on custodian closet in hallway near gym, for Facilities Maintenance about food in the refrigerator for them. Wash all utensils and serving pieces, put away. Clean all counter tops in kitchen. Unplug coffee pots.

Assist family in getting flowers to their cars, if wanted, from the memorial, or from the reception.

Facilities Maintenance remove/clean serving pieces from ice water, tea, coffee and hot water pots and the cups and condiments associated with them. They take down chairs, tables, table cloths, and remove trash. They wash the table cloths.

Transfer reception flowers from decorated jar/vases to extra vases in the flower team's supplies, found in the drawer of the tan filing cabinet in the hall by the gym. Save the decorated jars/vases, for the next turn at the church, by replacing them in the wooden cabinet in the hallway by the gym. Either deliver the individual vases around the church offices to staff, or place all together on the gym counter, for flower ministry team to take to Unwillingly Absent. Notify Flower Ministry Team. (Each covers a different week of the month, and they travel, so I do not know which week is whose.)

Help Facilities Maintenance see where any additional bouquets, left from the family, need to be set for Sunday services in the sanctuary or enjoyment during the weekdays, in the narthex. These can also be part of the notice for the flower ministry team, to make into smaller bouquets for further gifts to Unwillingly Absent or staff.

Save/send home the additional memorial bulletins for family, to send to others who could not be here.

### **Follow up, later days/weeks/months:**

Make sure deceased's name is printed in blue prayer insert, for first 30 days, of grieving. Proof read blue prayer insert, in case name had been in a different category of prayer need before now and remove from that.

Congregational Care Chair person has been assisting our Financial Administrator in writing acknowledgement notes to family and friends who have given memorial donations to WUMC. There are two notes written per donation, to the family of the deceased, and to the donor. This is usually, but not always, in the first weeks/month.

Congregational Care Chair or additional friends, will see if the loved ones want to receive the set of 4 Grief booklets, during the first year. A record card is kept, to know when the 4 deliveries are in the first 11 months after a death, and to keep track of delivery, in person or by mail. Uses 3 postage stamps. (Booklet sets are ordered by Congregational Care Chair, as needed, in bulk, from Stephen Ministries, and stored in bottom drawer in church library closet.) Can be delivered by Congregational Care Chair, staff, friends.

Deceased's name is carried in prayer, for the family and friends, in that name, for one year after the death, by the Prayer Team every Wednesday. Congregational Care Chair notifies the family of this ministry for them.

A sympathy card, including the blue prayer insert with the deceased's name on it in the grief category, is created by the Care Notes ministry, signed by the congregation at The Tent, and mailed within the first week to the family. (This is done, whether the deceased was a member, part of the family, or friend. Usually, the card is sent to the WUMC member, but if they have given a specific mailing address, it is sent to that home instead. If this happens, the Congregational Care Chair takes a photo and emails it to the WUMC member, so they know this was done on their behalf.)

Around the 11<sup>th</sup> month after the death, Prayer Team members or Congregational Care Chair may send an email or paper copy of a Remembrance prayer note, that honors their "loved one as bringing light into their lives and may they bring light into the lives of others, to honor that memory." We acknowledge that the one-year anniversary is coming and we know that brings new feelings. We try to give the pastors reminder of this, as possible. A one-year file is created by Congregational Care Chair that holds all the names and anniversary dates. A Prayer Team member helps with this, for the Wednesday prayers.

**All Saint's Sunday:**

The greater congregation honors the memory/names of those members who have died in the past year, on the First Sunday after Halloween, All Saints' Day, in worship. Our Worship Director creates a beautiful memorial, used in both services, with modifications for the Children First service.

The Congregational Care ministry offers a chance for any and all to provide a photo or the name of their loved one for the Remembrance Wall, a set of posters displayed on the outside wall of the sanctuary, and two additional posters placed near the entrances/exits of the narthex.

Congregational Care Chair has been notifying the 80-100+ members, by email, of this opportunity to honor their deceased, during the weeks before All Saints' Sunday. It is sometimes not possible for the member to do this, and the Congregational Care Chair offers to help with a photo they may send. Members mark on the back of the photo, if it is to be returned or kept for additional years. Most are left at WUMC.

Congregational Care Chair usually arranges for speakers to provide a Sunday school program to any adults and teens that want to learn more about Grief assistance. We have used people from The Christi Center and New Life Institute. Sometimes an honorarium is given to the presenter, from the Congregational Care budget. The presenter may leave materials for later use in the congregation.

## **Grief Support Seminar:**

In its fourth year of provision, since 5 women took training for this program from NWHUMC. They co-led the first year, and others' who have taken the program and felt its benefits, were co-leaders. In 2017, each pastor took one session to co-lead with the Congregational Care Chair, and one session was also co-led by a counselor from New Life Institute. A workbook approach is used, with 6 sessions. Some years, there is enough interest for a morning group and an evening group. Congregational Care Chair invites by email, all who shared their loss of a loved one in the past year. 4 people took the course in 2017.

Congregational Care Chair offers a memorial candle, and a prayer, to each participant. Candles can be purchased at HEB for around a dollar. They burn for 24 hours. It is an offer to be used on a birthday of their loved one, anniversary of the passing of a loved one, a holiday, or any special day.

"Dear God, help me to use his/her memory to inspire me to live well and to do a little better each day. May I always cherish and reflect to the world all that was admirable and beautiful in his/her character. Help me, God, to keep my faith that we cannot go where You are not, and to remember that were You are, all is well." And light the 24-hour candle.

Congregational Care Chair hopes for others to be involved in staying in connection with those in grief. It would be a blessing if there were a system to have one-to-one contact, through the first year. Stephen Ministry provides that, one-to-one caring, but that is limited to a small number in the congregation, due to the small number of trained Stephen Ministers. (And some of the Stephen Ministers are assigned/caring for individuals whose need is something other than grief currently.) The Grief Booklets can provide some of that basis, but the core of volunteers to be available per individual is unknown/undetermined. Other systems of caring could be devised.

Certainly, we have a well-trained and compassionate staff, fulfilling many roles immediately, before, and after a death, for the family members. Congregational Care does not try to represent those tasks here.

Thank you,

Congregational Care Chair

WUMC

4/18/2017