Memorial Receptions  
(Rev 1, 9/30/08)

General and Planning

• Get attendance estimate from Verne; then tailor with your own judgment. Be prepared with a contingency plan if the attendance is greater than estimated.
• For typical (50-70 people) attendance, the social hall is sufficient. If the attendance estimate is for more than 100 people, plan to open up the choir room also. Up to about 100 can fit into the social hall, but it gets pretty packed.
• Check with Jane Hustvedt or Ruth Duncan regarding flowers for the reception.
• Sort of like the Sunday coffee hours, but classier
  o clean cloth tablecloths – confirm that they’re ready
  o Plan to use the ceramic/glass washable dishes and cups, not disposable ones. Use the “fancy” punchbowl and punch glasses. (The punchbowl and two glass serving trays are stored in the room 8 closet, which is locked.)
  o Put the trash cans and the dirty dish bin in the back hall, rather than in the social hall. Plan on bussing dirty dishes back to the back hall.
• Plan to use the dishwasher. Ask someone for the 2-minute instructional briefing if you are not familiar with it.
• Know where the disposal is in the kitchen and how to use it.
• Recruit assistance from Neighbors, Friends, Deacons. (Note that for memorials for Greenspring residents, the neighbors and friends available to help are not numerous.)
• Ideal numbers of volunteers depends on reception size:
  o For typical (50-70 people) attendance
    ▪ Setup – 3 to 4 for an hour
    ▪ Food – 4 or 5 people bringing two things each is plenty. You can count on those people to array their food ready for placement on the tables.
    ▪ Serving (during the reception) – No fewer than 3, however 4 or 5 is better and will allow some rotation of duties and mingling with family and guests.
    ▪ Cleanup – 2 to 3 can handle it in 1 to 1_ hours
  o For large (100-150 people) or very large (200 or more people) attendance
    ▪ Setup – 3 to 4 for at least 2-3 hours.
    ▪ Food (providing)
      ▪ Large – 8 to 10 people bringing two things (i.e., double the “typical” numbers.
      ▪ Very Large – enough people to bring at least 30-35 servings of food other than nuts, mints, etc. This probably requires very active solicitation and coordination.
    ▪ Food (serving) – plan to have 2 – 3 people in the kitchen for an hour arraying the food, placing it on the tables, and staging the remainder for replenishment during the reception
    ▪ Serving (during the reception)
      ▪ Large – No fewer than 4. One or two more is better for the reasons as discussed above.
      ▪ Very Large – No fewer than 5. They will be kept pretty busy. One or two more is desirable to allow for rotation.
For very large receptions, you may need to have someone running the dishwasher fairly continuously to keep down the stack of bussed dirty dishes and to allow replenishment of dishes, punch glasses, and coffee cups on the serving tables.

- Cleanup – 3 to 4 can do it. Plan on it taking at least a couple of hours. The larger the reception and the fewer the volunteers, the longer it will take. Very large with few volunteers could be 2-3 hours.

**Food & Drink** – If there are no specific requests from the family, plan on the following

- **Food Types** (finger food) – some variety is good. Possibilities include:
  - Sweets – e.g. cookies, brownies, pound cake, or similar (generally this food group is about _ the total food)
  - Veggies/Dip
  - Fruit – in chunks that can be picked up or eaten with toothpicks
  - Crackers/Cheese
  - Tea sandwiches
  - Other hors d’oeuvres type finger food. (Hot hors d’oeuvres are a hassle because of last minute prep and should be discouraged.)
  - Nuts, mints, olives, etc. – don’t get too much of this category

- **Drink**
  - Coffee – both regular and decaf
  - Tea
  - Punch – or similar
  - Water – use pitchers with ice and water and the hard plastic (washable) “glasses” found in the kitchen cabinets – plan on ~20 lbs of ice per hundred guests.
  - Remember that you also need cream, sugar, sweetener, etc for the coffee & tea

**Cost** – The most typical arrangement is for donors of food, or for the organizer(s) of the reception who may be buying some supplies (e.g., fancy napkins, coffee, cream, punch making materials, ice, etc.), not to expect any reimbursement. If the costs are nonnegligible and you save the documentation, they can be claimed as a charitable deduction for income tax purposes. Sometimes the family of the deceased will offer to pay for the reception. Play that by ear. If the family has made special requests about costly reception provisions, it is OK to have them reimburse those costs. That is rare, though. If the costs are only incidental but the family wants to pay something, I’d turn it in to the church (either operating or one of the special funds). If the costs are appreciable and the family doesn’t offer to pay, then the documented costs for supplies can be claimed against the Deacons’ budget by submitting a voucher, but this is rarely done.

**Setup**

- Get the coffee started about an hour before the service – you can do other things while it’s perking. While you’re at it, remember to start water heating for the tea.
- **Hall preparation**
  - Check the thermostat to ensure appropriate temperature
  - Leave the bulletin board alone but remove any extraneous material (e.g., easels with sheets to sign up for this, that, or the other thing).
- Move the coffee cup bookcase to the back hall.
- Plan to have the family have a receiving line in front of the windows at the far end of the social hall. Put a box of tissues on the window ledge behind where the family will be.
- If you’re using just the social hall, two food tables, end-to-end, in the center is OK and leaves enough room for people. If you are expanding into the choir room for a larger reception, three tables, end-to-end, are probably needed for food.
- Have sufficient comfortable seating. Bring some in from the narthex, to supplement normal social hall seating, if it seems appropriate.
- Plan to have 1 or 2 tables and for memorabilia from the family – this works well in corner where the Sunday coffee hour punch is served. Be prepared to supplement this with an easel, if requested by the family.
- Turn lights on, but probably don’t need for them to be bright. Depending on ambient conditions, you can probably cut back with the dimmers at the switches. If you need to use the choir room, use only the incandescent fixtures (1 of the 3 switches).
- If you are using the choir room for a large reception,  that takes some additional set up, including, but not limited to:
  - Move the piano to the wall under the windows (make sure the wheels aren’t locked, or you’ll scuff the floor).
  - Have additional seating around the periphery of the room
  - Place 4 to 6 card tables and sufficient folding chairs around so that some people can sit, eat, and talk. (Card tables are usually in the maintenance room at the narthex end of the main hall, but you may have to hunt them up from around the church.). Flowers on these tables add a nice touch.

**Tables** – (cloth tablecloths on all)
- Two or three tables for food, end-to-end, in the center of the social hall
  - Put at least two flower arrangements on them
  - Put two stacks of dessert size plates on each end – so people can take a plate from either end and work along either side of the table.
  - Put small stacks (or a fancy array) of beverage napkins near the plates at each end of the tables
  - Fill the rest of the tables with food
- Coffee/Tea serving table in usual location – perhaps with an arrangement of flowers – standard setup, (except it’s cooler to have the coffee cups inverted on the tablecloth, rather than in the rolling stack of cup holders.)
- Table for punch (or similar) and water near the doors to the back hall.
- One or two (check with family of deceased) tables for pictures and memorabilia in the corner where the punch is for Sunday coffee hours. (Sometimes they will request an easel also.) Depending on the space needed this can be a small rectangular table, the 5’ diameter round table, one standard table, or two standard tables in an “L” in the corner.
- A small table where people can put dirty dishes. (Placing an empty tray on this table gives a signal to people of it’s purpose.)

**Chairs** – very important – take all of the padded narthex chairs and, together with the padded seats that normally live in the social hall, line as much of the periphery of the social hall as possible, except leaving space along the folding door to the
choir room for the family to stand and receive guests. Have some other (folding metal?) chairs available as stand-by.

- **Dishes and Serving Things**
  - Small ceramic plates – in cupboard in kitchen
  - Ceramic coffee/tea mugs – normally these live in the rolling stack of cup holders. As noted above, I prefer to put these on the coffee serving table, perhaps with reserves discretely out of sight.
  - Fancy punchbowl – this lives on the shelf in the (locked) closet in room 8
  - Glass serving trays – a few live in the same closet as the punchbowl
  - Glass punch glasses – these live on the top left shelf in the kitchen. (Even Steve or I need to use the stepstool to get these down.)
  - (If you have only finger food, you don’t need to worry about much silverware.)

- At least 5 min before the end of the memorial service, check the coffee strength – if it’s too weak, fill a metal pitcher from the urn and pour it back through the grounds. After that has gone through the grounds, check it again, and repeat, as necessary.

**During the Reception**

- You need one person serving coffee and a second one serving punch.
- The other people helping can circulate to keep the food plates stocked, relieve people of dirty dishes they are through using or trash, clear dirty dishes and trash from the tables discretely placed to receive them, consolidate food items as appropriate to keep the presentation looking classy, and generally attend to the needs of the guests. Circulate with the guests and greet the family, but don’t get sidetracked into protracted conversations with people that take you out of operation. It is nice for these floating people to take a turn at the coffee or punch stations to relieve those folks.
- Depending on the situation, you might want to have one person run the dishwasher to have plates, mugs, or punch glasses ready to bring out.
- Toward the end of the reception, offer to the family to provide the leftover food from the reception for consumption by the extended family gathered for the service.

**Clean up** – pretty straightforward

- Package the food to give to the family. (There are usually plastic food bags over the small sink in the kitchen.)
- Wash and put away dishes, serving pieces, coffee pots, etc….
  - Use the dishwasher for coffee cups, small plates, silverware, punch glasses, etc. It’s useful to pre-rinse off any stuck on food, but the dishwasher provides the sanitary wash. Do not use it for hard plastic drinking glasses used for water (they get tossed around), for anything that you don’t want possibly banged around, or for things too big to fit. Wash those by hand.
  - Remember to return the things to the Room 8 closet that belong there (need a key)
  - If people have brought food on plates from home and leave before the plates have been empties, ensure the people know where they can later recover their serving pieces.
• Take down tables, return narthex chairs to narthex, and card tables to the maintenance room
• Restore choir room, if it has been used
• Take tablecloths home and launder them
• Take out trash
• Check thermostat, turn out lights, … all the normal stuff…