



STAND IN THE GAP FOR WIDOWS

SOCIAL MINISTRY GUIDE

*****A special thank you to our partner organizations, Balcony Women and Asbury United Methodist Church of Tulsa who contributed to the creation of this guide.***

"No one can comfort a widow like another widow. When we see another woman enter this experience, we want to comfort her. While the need for financial support and help is common, the need for connections is more pressing. We need believing friends near us."-Miriam Neff

Widows typically do not like to talk about their pain and try to cover it up. It's devastating to them. When they are able to talk about their hurts, great healing comes about, and can allow freedom from the pain. Widows can make friends with other widows and have fun and may find that they can share experiences that they could not share with anyone else.

A widow's social ministry is an extension of the public ministry of Christ. Christ frequently reminds His followers to care for one another and to support those in need.

A widow's social ministry gives us the opportunity to live our faith and radiate the love and light of our Lord Jesus Christ with our precious widows. Many widows feel alone and that no one understands.

Having a strong network of support and a strong community bond fosters both emotional and physical health. There is a positive relationship between social support and the quality of physical and psychological health.

Identifying

It is important to first identify the widows in your church and community. Our research shows that widows need to socialize with other widows. We strongly recommend that you only invite widows to your socials. Begin by creating a widow's ministry flyer explaining your ministry and ways to contact the ministry. Our Coffee, Cake & Conversation Best-Case Practice is a great way to identify the widows in your church.

- Deliver your flyers to local senior citizen centers, senior community groups, funeral homes (many funeral homes create a strong bond with the widows they serve and look for ways to help them following their loss).
- Ask to speak at your church's women's group and senior group meetings to explain the ministry and hand out flyers.
- Ask your pastor to mention the ministry from the pulpit. This is also a great way to recruit your volunteers.
- Using companies such as Alesco Data (www.alescodata.com) you can purchase the mailing addresses of all the single women households within identified zip codes. You can mail your flyer to all the single

women households in your area. You could identify the widows and single women in need of a ministry.

- Word of mouth from your volunteers, family and friends will go a long way. Have them post on their social media accounts, share with their church communities, and other social groups.

Social Ministry Volunteers

- Identify women within your community that have a heart to serve widows. Our Coffee, Cake & Conversation Best-Case Practice is a great way to identify volunteers.
- Widow social ministry volunteers can be any age. Merging the seasons of life is valuable in creating a bond among the widows and volunteers.
- You can place the sample flyer in your church as a means to find volunteers.
- Once you have identified volunteers, spend the time to learn what gifts and talents they possess and utilize their gifts for the ministry.
- Assign each volunteer a position within the ministry.
- Volunteers should be easily identified at the social events. An apron, a t-shirt, or special name tag for example.

Widow Helper Volunteer

Invitations

- Invitations should be mailed 2 weeks prior to the event. Events usually last two hours.
- If you know when the next event will take place, it is a good idea to both mention the next event in the closing of the present social event and have a Save the Date handout.

RSVP

RSVP's can be taken via phone or email. Keep in mind the population you are ministering too. Some may not email or text. Provide several options to RSVP. Names of attendees will be provided to the name tag volunteer.

Decorations

Table centerpieces and room décor.

Printing

- An agenda for the event will be created and placed at every table setting.
- Signage for the event will need to be provided. For example, directing attendees where the event is located, registration table, and where to park.
- A Widow Ministry response/comment card will need to be created with important information needed to be collected about the widow on one side: name, phone number, address, email, church home, birthday, husband's heavenly birthday etc. and room for comments and suggestions on the other. A great way to encourage the widows to fill out the cards is use them as a means to give out door prizes at the end of the event. If they don't fill out a card, they can't win a prize.

Information collected will help you reach out to the widows with invitations for future events, learn how to improve or expand the ministry, or start a card & book ministry.

Name Tags

- Name tags will be provided to both attendees and volunteers. Name tags for volunteers should be distinguishable from the attendee's name tags. Blank name tags should be provided too in case of a misspelling or for those who may show up without an RSVP.
- RSVP volunteer will provide names of those attending.

Venue Planner

The venue planner will work with the church or venue to plan the menu and site planning (tables, chairs, tableware, Audio Visual needs etc.)

Social Host

Social hosts will greet the widows at the church or venue door and escort them to the event location. Some widows may need help getting from their car. This is a great volunteer opportunity for any men wanting to help with the event.

Registration Table

- Attendees will "sign in" by picking up their name tags at the table.
- Some churches have now implemented seating charts and having name tags on the tables as guests arrive due to COVID-19 protocols. To avoid guests congregating in the main lobby, you may want to email your guests their table number prior to the event.

Photography

Photographer will take pictures of the event. If you plan to post any photos to social media, please make sure to let the guests know of your intentions.

Table Volunteers

Volunteers will be assigned to specific tables. They will serve the meal to the table, make sure everyone at the table has been greeted and made to feel special (a hug, handshake, personal greeting).

WIDOW SOCIAL EVENT PLAN

The Day Before

- Decorate the venue the day prior the event.
- Set up the registration table with the name tags.
- Place signage
- Identify the door you wish the widows to use when entering to ensure your volunteers will be posted to greet them. Have signage informing attendees which door to use. Place agenda, menu, response/comment card at each place setting.

Morning of the Event

- Have your volunteers arrive early to receive instructions from the kitchen staff and to be in their volunteer post prior to the attendee's arrival. Keep in mind many attendees will arrive early. It is a good idea to add a "doors open time" on the invitation.
- Volunteers pray over the room and over the women attending. Prayer focuses the volunteers and reminds them that the event is not about the meal, but rather it is about loving on the ladies the way Jesus would.
- Have ice water at each place setting.

Event

- Volunteers will greet the widows at the door or their car depending on the needs of the widow. They will escort the widow to the venue.
- Attendees will visit the registration table to receive their name tag.
- Table volunteers will greet each person at their assigned table. It is helpful to put the assigned table number on the volunteer's name tag.
- Table volunteers will serve their table and make an effort to engage each person at the table.
- A volunteer will welcome all those in attendance and introduce the pastor that will be blessing the food and the event.
- The food will be served.
- There will be a special presentation following the meal. Presentation ideas include: a speaker, special music, theater presentation, etc. Note: Special presentations are nice, but the main objective of the event is to give the widows the opportunity to share with the other widows at their table.
- The event is closed by a volunteer thanking those in attendance, inviting everyone to the next event, and requesting everyone RVSP a week prior to the event.

Following the Event

Volunteers assist the attendees to their car and clean up the event venue. This is another great opportunity to utilize any male volunteers wishing to assist the ministry.

Attention to Detail

Every effort should be made to pay attention to details. Details set the mood for a personal and meaningful event for the widows. For example, the décor will speak to the women without saying a word. It will show them how special they are because you took the effort to go above and beyond for them.

Every event ministry will be different depending on the number of volunteers and widows you are serving. Stand in the Gap has provided the social event ministry outline as a guide with successfully proven examples. You will need to manipulate the outline to fit your ministry. If you successfully implement other ideas into your social ministry, please share them with SITGM so that we may make that information available to other ministries.

You can visit our Ministry Partner, Balcony Women's website at balconywomen.com (click on the Widow Event Tab) to view photos from their past events.

Stand in the Gap believes we are called to serve as protectors of widows (Psalms 68:5), we are to honor widows (1 Timothy 5:3), and we are to look after widows in their distress (James 1:27).

Questions? Contact:

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