



STAND IN THE GAP FOR WIDOWS

1st Year MINISTRY GUIDE

Stand in the Gap for Widows is a research-based ministry that partners with churches, organizations and people of passion to fulfill God's calling found in James 1:27 to look after His widows. Stand in the Gap for Widows is designed to be volunteer driven, not clergy intensive. The model of SITGM for Widows is, "We care for you so that you can care for your widows." Partnering with SITGM for Widows means that you receive care and consultation from our staff as we walk alongside you in the development of your own widow ministry through the utilization of our research and Widow Ministry ToolKit. This is a tool kit of best-case practices, helpful suggestions and practical information that we provide to our partners for a nominal yearly Partner Consultation Subscription investment. In our Tool Kit, you will find information on how to establish and maintain a widow ministry. Our widow ministry guides include social, small group, practical needs, retreat, 1st year care and card & book ministries.

We have created this 1st year care ministry guide as a means for you to provide care for widows from the beginning of their loss. We have worked with churches who have done this ministry and have adapted and expanded it to help you best care for new widows. We also want to say a special thank you to South Tulsa Baptist in Tulsa, Oklahoma; Ron's Way Ministry in Bethany, Oklahoma and other leaders and Pastors who have contributed to the development of this practice.

The 1st year component of the ToolKit offers you an opportunity to minister to widows from the first day of loss. It also provides a roadmap for long-term care and ways to specifically and intentionally care for the widows in your church. Each church and ministry will do this event in a different way, however, we have tried to provide as much information as possible to make the assimilation of this process as seamless as possible.

The documents in our ToolKit 1st year section are by no means are all-inclusive or have to be followed to the letter. They are instead resources that may allow you to know how to do this ministry and spur on ideas for your own formation and also give you a starting point. This component will require volunteers and also the ability to connect with other resources in your church and community to help provide the most valuable support, so as you work to create this ministry, keep in mind how you can connect this to already existing ministries within your church. Depending on your church structure, this may include utilizing Sunday School Classes, Small Groups, elders or a care team that can help walk alongside your widows ministry as you care for widows in the long-term.

The most vital information we can provide, would be to make sure that you are creating an environment of love, support and community for the widows that you care for. Widows most often feel unseen and unsupported after the initial outpouring of support they receive. Many have lost their social circles and don't feel comfortable attending church alone. Others may need help knowing how to take care of financial needs, estate planning, home maintenance and even simple physical needs. Through this ministry, we hope you will be able to recognize and assess those needs and connect the widows with these resources and most importantly, provide them with a community that sees and loves them.

We have developed the following documents for your use as you implement this ministry. If you need help with design or have any questions or issues downloading and using these documents, our widows team would be happy to assist you as you prepare for your ministry.

Our training video will also be available to answer some questions and we are also willing to help in meeting with you as you plan and pray about this ministry. These documents are not intended to be all-encompassing, but we are hopeful that they will give you a starting point and ideas to get you started.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS:

Developing your 1st Response Team

This is an example of how to set-up and prepare to start this ministry. We also recommend that you start from the beginning of your widows ministry in creating this team (when possible). There will be widows farther along in their journey that will most likely want to be involved. They will be invaluable to the success of this ministry.

1st Response Team Supplies

Depending on your church structure, we recommend having these supplies ready to go on a moment's notice. Most churches will keep these in a supply closet and you can add items that you think would be helpful. This will be the box/package you initially take to the widows home at the very beginning of care.

1st Response Team Steps Checklist

This section provides the steps to take when utilizing the 1st Response Team. We included helpful information for each section. These can be adapted to your particular needs and outline, but we hope they are a helpful starting point.

Basket Supply List

This care basket is an optional part of the 1st year ministry. Often widows have people bring food and show care in support in those first few weeks or months and then the care drops off. This care basket has been done by one of our church partners and has been a very effective way to provide both some practical gift cards, emotional support and also just remind the widows you are ministering to, that they are seen and loved.

Month By Month Overview and Roadmap

This will give you an overview of what this section will look like and some helpful information for doing this 1st year ministry. This guide will also give you ideas and helpful things to do and say in the first twelve months. It is important to note that this is not all encompassing, it is simply a starting point. Depending on the way your church is structured, you may utilize other people to provide support, however, we have learned it is important to have a point of contact (or two) that work with widows from the beginning of their loss. This will help to build trust and openness, so you can learn what the true needs are. The important part of this first 12 months is having consistency to build the sense of community that many widows do not feel after a loss.

Going Forward After The 1st Year

Often the care for widows stops after the initial first few weeks or months. We also recognize that for many the second year is even harder than the first. We provided you this section to give you insight on how to continue to help and support your widows.

Training for Volunteers - 1st Year Training Overview and Document - Training - 1st year

We have provided multiple sections with some helpful information for training your volunteers in these two ministries, 1st Response and 1st year. These trainings were set-up to be simple and effective for you to give

some information to the volunteers who will be serving in these ministries. Some of your volunteers may be widows, so some of these areas will be less important to cover, but we wrote the training knowing that you will have both widows and non-widows in your ministry.

Other Resources

You will note that we have referenced resources in the 1st year section. All of these resources are found in the additional resources tab on our main ToolKit page. You will find links to documents and also organizations that will help resource you with these important resources to help widows in their first year.

How can Stand in the Gap for Widows help you?

- We are here to provide needed support as you implement this ministry. We are also happy to set-up meetings with you to help you plan and start this ministry.

How can you help Stand in the Gap for Widows & our partners?

- If you enhance or modify our materials, please let us know so we can share your ideas with our partners.
- If you create a new best-case practice for your widows, we would love to add it to our ToolKit. We are happy to give you and your church full credit.
- Celebrate your successes with us. We love to share photos and quotes from widows and volunteers on our Facebook page and website.

Please contact our widows team at widows@sitgm.org for assistance or to share your ideas. Thank you for helping us fulfill our mission to connect people in need with people who care!

Documents Included:

Developing your 1st Response Team

1st Response Team Supplies

1st Response Team Steps Checklist

Basket Supply List

Month By Month Overview and Roadmap

Going Forward After The 1st Year

Training for Volunteers - 1st Year Training Overview and Document - Training - 1st year