



First African Methodist Episcopal Church

2045 Massachusetts St. • Gary, Indiana 46407

Phone: 219-886-7561 • Email: FAMEGary@gmail.com

www.firstamechurch.org

Funeral Services Information Packet



Honoring Every Life with Compassion, Dignity, and Grace

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted...” — Psalm 34:18 (NIV)

1	Welcome Letter	<i>A personal letter from our Senior Pastor, Reverend Dr. Virgil Woods</i>
2	Example Worship Guide	<i>A standard order of service to help guide your planning</i>
3	Funeral Services Fee Schedule	<i>A transparent overview of all fees and payment policies</i>
4	Funeral Services Guide & Policy	<i>A comprehensive guide to our policies, procedures, and expectations</i>
5	Reception & Repast Policy	<i>A complete guide to our repast reception services, menu, and policies</i>

Please read all enclosed documents carefully before beginning the arrangement process.

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Dear Friend,

On behalf of the entire First African Methodist Episcopal Church family, I want to extend to you our deepest and most heartfelt condolences during this season of grief. The loss of a loved one is one of life's most profound experiences, and it is our prayer that you find comfort, strength, and peace in the arms of our loving God.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”

— Matthew 5:4 (NIV)

It is a sacred privilege for us at FAME to walk alongside you during this time. We believe that the church is not simply a building — it is a community of faith, a family bound together by love, and a place where the presence of God is felt most deeply in our moments of need. We are honored that you have chosen to allow us to share in this moment with you and your family.

Enclosed in this packet, you will find everything you need to help plan a meaningful and dignified service. We have included an outline of available services and associated fees, a sample worship guide to assist you in designing the order of service, and our funeral policies and guidelines. These documents are intended to make this process as clear and stress-free as possible, so that you can focus on what matters most — honoring the life of your loved one and being present with your family.

Please know that our doors, our hearts, and our prayers are open to you. Do not hesitate to reach out to our church office with any questions or concerns. We are here to serve you, and it is our deepest desire that the service we provide brings a measure of peace and comfort during this difficult time.

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”

— Psalm 34:18 (NIV)

May God's grace sustain you, His peace surround you, and His love carry you through. You are not alone.

In His Service,

Rev. Dr. Virgil Woods

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Example Worship Guide

In Loving Memory of

[Full Name]

[Date of Birth] – [Date of Passing]

[Date of Service] • [Time of Service]

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“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.”

— John 11:25–26 (NIV)

Order of Service

1. Prelude Music
2. Processional
3. Opening Hymn — [Hymn Title]
4. Scripture Reading — [Scripture Reference] — Read by: [Name]
5. Prayer — Offered by: [Name]
6. Musical Selection — [Selection Title] — Performed by: [Name or Group]
7. Obituary and Acknowledgments Reading — Read by: [Family Designee, Church Secretary, or Church Officer]
8. **Remarks & Tributes**
 - Option A:** Open remarks — attendees are welcome to share. Speakers are kindly asked to observe a two-minute limit.
 - Option B:** Designated speakers only — listed on the program. The service will not be opened to the public for general remarks.
9. Musical Selection — [Selection Title] — Performed by: [Name or Group]
10. Eulogy — Rev. Dr. Virgil Woods, Senior Pastor
11. Committal & Benediction — Rev. Dr. Virgil Woods, Senior Pastor
12. Recessional

Please Note: *The order of service above represents our standard funeral service at First AME Church. We understand that every life is unique, and we warmly invite families to adjust this order in whatever way best honors and celebrates the life of their loved one. This guide is a starting point, not a requirement — we are here to serve you.*

Prior Approval Required: If your family chooses to deviate from the standard order of service in any way, please ensure that the revised order of service is submitted to and approved by the church office prior to going to print. This helps ensure that the service flows smoothly and honors both the family's wishes and the reverence of the occasion.

For questions or to submit your order of service for approval, please contact the church office at 219-886-7561 or FAMEGary@gmail.com.

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Funeral Services Fee Schedule

Serving Families with Compassion, Dignity, and Grace

Standard Funeral Service

The following represents a complete standard funeral service at First AME Church. This package reflects what a typical service includes and is designed to provide families with a dignified, well-supported experience from beginning to end.

Service	Fee
Sanctuary Use & Clean Up	\$500.00
Musician	\$100.00
Pastor's Honorarium — <i>A customary expression of gratitude to the officiant, graciously given at the family's discretion</i>	\$200.00
Standard Total	\$800.00

Optional Adjustments

Depending on your family's specific needs, the following adjustments may apply to your total:

Item	Adjustment	Condition
Musician Fee Waiver	-\$100.00	Applicable if the family provides a musician who will handle the entire service
Additional Day	+\$200.00	Applicable if the viewing and funeral service are held on separate days

Additional Information

- **Sanctuary Capacity:** Sanctuary Capacity: The FAME sanctuary accommodates approximately 380 guests. Families planning larger services are encouraged to plan accordingly.
- **Live Streaming:** Live Streaming: FAME does not provide live streaming for funeral services. Families are welcome to bring a personal device and tripod to self-stream.
- **Printed Programs:** Printed Programs: Printed programs and bulletins are not provided by FAME. Families are encouraged to coordinate printed materials through their funeral home.
- **Graveside Services:** Graveside Services: Graveside-only services are available and handled on a case-by-case basis. Please contact the church office for more information.
- **Outside Musicians:** Outside Musicians: Families are welcome to bring outside musicians. The musician fee is waived only if the outside musician will handle the entire service. If the outside musician is performing one or a select number of selections, the standard musician fee still applies.

Payment Policy

- **Deposit:** Deposit: A deposit of 50% of the total fee is required at the time of booking to secure your desired date.
- **Remaining Balance:** Remaining Balance: The remaining balance of 50% is due no later than 24 hours prior to the service.
- **Accepted Payment Methods:** Accepted Payment Methods: Cash, check (payable to First AME Church), or online via www.firstamechurch.org.
- **Non-Payment:** Non-Payment: First AME Church reserves the right to postpone or cancel a service for any reason it deems necessary, including non-payment of fees by the established due dates.

For questions regarding fees or services, please contact the church office at 219-886-7561 or FAMEGary@gmail.com.

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Funeral Services Guide & Policy

Honoring Every Life with Compassion, Dignity, and Grace

First African Methodist Episcopal Church • Gary, Indiana

At First African Methodist Episcopal Church (FAME), we believe that every life is sacred and deserving of a dignified, loving farewell. It is a profound privilege to walk alongside families during one of life's most tender and difficult moments. This guide has been prepared to help families understand our policies, procedures, and expectations so that the process of planning a funeral service is as clear, smooth, and stress-free as possible.

We ask that all families, funeral homes, and individuals involved in the planning and execution of a funeral service at First African Methodist Episcopal Church read this document carefully and in its entirety. By engaging our services, all parties agree to abide by the policies set forth herein.

Section 1: Eligibility & Right to Serve

First African Methodist Episcopal Church strives to serve the broader public community to the best of its ability. We welcome families of all backgrounds, faiths, and walks of life and consider it an honor to provide a place of comfort and worship during times of loss.

However, First African Methodist Episcopal Church reserves the right to deny funeral services to any individual, family, or organization at its sole discretion and for any reason it deems appropriate. This reservation exists to protect the integrity, safety, and sanctity of our church, our congregation, and our facility.

Licensed Funeral Home Requirement

All funeral services involving the body or cremated remains (urn) of the deceased must be coordinated through a licensed funeral home. First African Methodist Episcopal Church will not process arrangements directly with families in the absence of a licensed funeral home for such services.

An exception may be made for memorial services where no body or urn is present. Such services may be discussed directly with the church office on a case-by-case basis.

If a family does not have a funeral home in mind, they are encouraged to contact the church office or Pastor. We are happy to provide recommendations for trusted local funeral home partners.

Section 2: Scheduling & Arrangements

Families wishing to schedule a funeral service at First African Methodist Episcopal Church should begin by contacting the church office. There is no formal advance notice requirement, as we understand that loss is often sudden and unexpected. The church will work with the family and their funeral home to identify an available date as promptly as possible.

The official point of contact for all funeral arrangements is the church office, specifically our Executive Assistant, Lauren Person. She will guide families through the process and coordinate all necessary details.

Family Disputes

In situations where two or more parties are in dispute over the right to make funeral arrangements, First African Methodist Episcopal Church will not proceed with the planning process until the matter has been resolved. We are unable to serve as arbiters in legal or familial disputes regarding authority over arrangements.

If families require assistance in reaching a resolution, Pastor Virgil Woods is available to meet with all involved parties in an effort to help mediate a solution that honors the life of the deceased. Families wishing to request pastoral mediation should contact the church office to schedule a time.

Section 3: The Sanctuary

Capacity

The First African Methodist Episcopal Church sanctuary accommodates approximately 380 guests. Families planning larger services are encouraged to plan accordingly.

Casket & Urn Placement

The placement, staging, and removal of the casket or urn is the sole responsibility of the licensed funeral home. The casket or urn will be staged front and center before the pulpit area and prayer altar rail. No church staff or volunteers will be responsible for moving, handling, or repositioning the casket or urn at any time.

The general practice at First African Methodist Episcopal Church is that the casket remains open during the viewing period and is closed prior to the beginning of the funeral service. Final decisions regarding open or closed casket are made between the family and their funeral home.

Flowers & Floral Arrangements

Floral arrangements are permitted in the sanctuary and are a beautiful way to honor the life of a loved one. The arrangement and removal of flowers is the responsibility of the funeral home. Flowers remaining in the sanctuary after the service are welcome to stay and will be used as sanctuary décor until they are no longer aesthetically presentable, at which time they will be respectfully discarded by church staff.

Facility Protection

To protect the integrity and appearance of our facility, the following restrictions apply to all funeral services and related gatherings at First African Methodist Episcopal Church:

- Nothing may be taped, nailed, stapled, pinned, or otherwise affixed to the walls, pews, doors, windows, or any surface within the sanctuary or church facility.
- All decorative items, signage, and displays must be freestanding or arranged by the funeral home in a manner that does not damage, mark, or alter any surface of the facility.
- Balloons, candles, doves, food, beverages, and firearms are strictly prohibited inside the sanctuary at all times, without exception.
- Flowers are permitted as outlined above.
- Photography and videography are permitted throughout the service.

First African Methodist Episcopal Church assumes no responsibility for any personal property, artifacts, photographs, display items, or belongings of any kind brought into the facility for a funeral service or any other occasion. Families and their representatives bring personal items at their own risk.

The family of the deceased assumes full financial responsibility for any damage to church property — including but not limited to pews, walls, flooring, windows, audio-visual equipment, or any other fixture — resulting from a funeral service or related gathering. Damages will be assessed and communicated to the family and handled on a case-by-case basis.

Section 4: The Funeral Service

Officiant

All funeral services at First African Methodist Episcopal Church are officiated by our Senior Pastor, Reverend Dr. Virgil Woods. If a family wishes to have another clergy person deliver the eulogy or participate in the service in an official capacity, this must be discussed with and approved by Reverend Dr. Woods in advance of the service.

Service Duration

Funeral services at First African Methodist Episcopal Church are designed to be meaningful, unhurried, and honoring of the life being celebrated. We strongly encourage families to plan a service that falls within one hour to one and a half hours in length. This allows ample time to celebrate your loved one fully while honoring the schedules of all attendees, including graveside committal appointments.

Please Note: A service that reaches two hours in length is considered to have gone significantly long. While we extend grace to all families during this difficult time and will not impose financial penalties for exceeding the target, we lovingly and strongly encourage all families to plan thoughtfully and keep remarks, tributes, and musical selections within reasonable time frames. A well-paced service is a gift to everyone in attendance.

The two-hour maximum begins at the designated start time of the service as confirmed with the church office, regardless of whether all participants or attendees are present at that time. Late arrivals do not extend the allotted service window.

Order of Service

A standard order of service is provided in the Example Worship Guide included in this packet. Families are warmly invited to adjust the order of service to best reflect and celebrate the life of their loved one.

Any deviations from the standard order of service must be submitted to and approved by the church office prior to the order of service going to print. This ensures that the service flows smoothly, honors the family's wishes, and remains consistent with the values and standards of First African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Remarks & Tributes

Families may choose one of two options for remarks and tributes during the service:

- **Option A — Open Remarks:** Option A — Open Remarks: The service is opened to the public for comments. All speakers are kindly asked to observe a two-minute time limit out of respect for other attendees and the overall flow of the service.

- **Option B — Designated Speakers:** Option B — Designated Speakers: Specific individuals are named on the program and the service is not opened to the public for general remarks. Families choosing this option are strongly encouraged to inform all designated speakers that others are also on the program, so that each person may plan their remarks accordingly. Uncoordinated designated remarks are among the most common reasons services exceed their allotted time.

Music

Families are free to select music that they feel best honors and celebrates the life of their loved one. There are no formal restrictions on musical selections, as we trust families to choose music appropriate for a worship setting and the reverence of the occasion.

The standard musician fee of \$100.00 applies to all services. This fee is waived only if the family provides an outside musician who will handle the entirety of the musical selections throughout the service. If an outside musician is brought in for one or a select number of selections, the standard musician fee still applies.

Outside Musicians

Families are welcome to bring outside musicians to participate in the service. Please notify the church office in advance so that appropriate accommodations can be made.

Military Honors

First African Methodist Episcopal Church is honored to accommodate military funeral honors for our veterans and their families. Flag presentations, military pallbearers, and other military honors are fully welcomed as part of the service.

Out of respect for the safety of all attendees and the sanctity of our worship space, the discharge of firearms — including ceremonial rifle salutes — is strictly prohibited inside the sanctuary.

All Faith Walks Welcome

Reverend Dr. Virgil Woods and First African Methodist Episcopal Church welcome and are honored to serve families of all faith backgrounds. We are committed to providing a dignified and compassionate service that honors the life and legacy of your loved one, regardless of religious affiliation.

Services for Those Who Died by Suicide

First African Methodist Episcopal Church extends its full compassion and pastoral care to families who have experienced the loss of a loved one to suicide. We will provide funeral services with the same dignity, grace, and love afforded to all families we serve.

Section 5: Conduct & Safety

First African Methodist Episcopal Church is a place of worship, reverence, and peace. All attendees of funeral services are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the dignity of the occasion and the sanctity of our space.

First African Methodist Episcopal Church does not maintain an official security staff. In the event of a physical altercation, a threatening situation, or any conduct that disrupts the peace and safety of the service or the facility, law enforcement will be contacted immediately. All parties involved in the disturbance will be removed from the premises and trespassed against the church.

The church reserves the right to take any action necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of its staff, congregation, guests, and facility.

Section 6: Live Streaming & Printed Programs

Live Streaming

First African Methodist Episcopal Church does not provide live streaming services for funeral services at this time. Families who wish to share the service with those unable to attend in person are welcome to bring a personal device and tripod to self-stream the service. The church assumes no responsibility for the quality, reliability, or distribution of any self-managed stream.

Printed Programs

Printed programs and bulletins are not provided by First African Methodist Episcopal Church. Families are encouraged to coordinate all printed materials through their licensed funeral home. As noted above, any printed order of service that deviates from the standard must be approved by the church office prior to going to print.

Section 7: Graveside Committal Service

The graveside committal service is considered a natural extension of the funeral service at First African Methodist Episcopal Church. Reverend Dr. Virgil Woods will attend and officiate the graveside committal as a standard part of his pastoral role, provided the committal location is within 20 miles of the church.

For committal services located more than 20 miles from First African Methodist Episcopal Church, families should discuss the arrangement separately and directly with Reverend Dr. Woods to ensure that all aspects of the service are planned and executed well.

Families should be aware that graveside committal services are typically scheduled at appointed times by the cemetery. These scheduled times naturally help guide the pacing of the funeral service and ensure that all elements of the day proceed in an orderly and timely manner.

Section 8: Following the Service

Remaining in the Sanctuary

Following the conclusion of the funeral service, family members and guests are welcome to remain in the sanctuary. There is no formal time requirement for vacating the facility. Families who have arranged a repast are welcome to gather in the sanctuary while awaiting its commencement. The natural flow of the day, including graveside committal appointments, typically guides the departure of most attendees.

Repast Services

First African Methodist Episcopal Church offers repast services for families following a funeral service. Repast arrangements are governed by a separate policy document, which is available upon request from the church office. Please speak with our Executive Assistant, Lauren Person, for more information regarding repast availability, accommodations, and associated fees.

Memorialization

Families wishing to honor their loved one through a permanent memorial at First African Methodist Episcopal Church — such as a dedicated pew, a commemorative plaque, or any other form of lasting tribute — are invited to discuss such requests directly with the church. All memorialization decisions are made at the sole discretion of the church leadership.

Section 9: Parking

Parking is available at and around First African Methodist Episcopal Church. There is no formal parking or crowd management policy for funeral services, as our facilities have historically accommodated the natural flow of attendees. Families anticipating exceptionally large attendance are encouraged to notify the church office in advance so that any necessary accommodations may be discussed.

Section 10: Acknowledgment & Agreement

Prior to the confirmation of any funeral service at First African Methodist Episcopal Church, the family of the deceased (or their authorized representative) is required to sign an acknowledgment confirming that they have read, understood, and agree to abide by the following:

- The Funeral Services Guide & Policy of First African Methodist Episcopal Church, as outlined in this document.
- The Funeral Services Fee Schedule, including all applicable fees, the payment deposit structure, and the payment due dates.
- The approved Order of Service, as submitted to and confirmed by the church office.

This acknowledgment must be completed and returned to the church office before a service date will be formally confirmed and held on the church calendar.

Acknowledgment of Agreement

I/We, the undersigned, hereby acknowledge that I/we have read, understood, and agree to abide by the Funeral Services Guide & Policy, the Funeral Services Fee Schedule, and the approved Order of Service of First African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Family Representative (Print Name):

Signature:

Date:

Relationship to Deceased:

Contact Phone Number:

Received & Confirmed by (Church Office):

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Reception & Repast Policy

Honoring Your Loved One with a Warm and Welcoming Table

First African Methodist Episcopal Church • Gary, Indiana

At First African Methodist Episcopal Church, we understand that the time following a funeral service is sacred. It is a moment for family and friends to gather, share memories, find comfort in one another, and celebrate the life of a loved one over a shared meal. It is our honor to offer repast services as an extension of our commitment to serving families with compassion, dignity, and grace.

The following policy outlines everything families need to know about booking, planning, and enjoying a repast reception at First African Methodist Episcopal Church. We ask that all families read this document carefully before submitting a reservation.

Section 1: Eligibility

Repast services at First African Methodist Episcopal Church are available exclusively to families who have held a funeral service at the church. Repast receptions are not available as standalone events and may not be booked independently of a funeral service.

Section 2: Venue & Capacity

First African Methodist Episcopal Church offers two venue options for repast receptions, depending on the size of your gathering:

- **Grace Hall:** Grace Hall: Accommodates up to 80 guests. Ideal for smaller, more intimate gatherings.
- **The Gymnasium:** The Gymnasium: Accommodates up to 200 guests. Recommended for larger services and gatherings.

Both venues are set up and prepared by the church on behalf of the family at no additional cost. Families do not need to provide any décor, linens, serving equipment, or supplies. The church handles all setup as part of the repast service.

For gatherings that may exceed 200 guests, please contact the church office to discuss available accommodations on a case-by-case basis.

Section 3: The Repast Menu

All repast meals are prepared and provided by Strack & Van Til Deli Catering Service, a trusted and well-regarded catering provider in the Northwest Indiana community. The standard repast menu is as follows:

- ✓ Fried or baked chicken — 2 pieces per guest
- ✓ Mashed potatoes & gravy
- ✓ Green beans or corn — guest's choice
- ✓ Salad
- ✓ Dessert
- ✓ Roll
- ✓ Fruit punch

The repast menu is standard and has been carefully selected to provide a complete, satisfying, and dignified meal for all guests. Outside food, beverages, and catering services are not permitted at repast receptions.

Exception: Families who wish to use a licensed and certified outside catering business in lieu of or in addition to the standard menu are welcome to discuss that option with the church office. Any outside catering arrangements must involve a verifiably licensed and certified operating business. All such requests are subject to approval by the church.

Section 4: Pricing

Clean-Up Fee

A clean-up fee of \$100.00 will be assessed for all repast receptions. This fee covers post-repast cleanup of the reception venue and is separate from the custodial and cleanup fee included in the funeral service fee schedule.

Minimum Headcount

A minimum package of 35 guests is required to book a repast reception. The minimum charge is \$580.00, which corresponds to the 35-guest minimum. Families may not book a repast for fewer than 35 guests.

Repat Cost Reference Guide

The following table is provided to help families estimate the cost of their repast based on expected attendance. Each guest package is a whole and cannot be purchased in part.

Number of Guests	Total Cost Including Clean Up Fee
35 (minimum)	\$580.00
70	\$1,000.00
105	\$1,420.00
140	\$1,840.00
175	\$2,260.00
200	\$2,560.00

For groups exceeding 200 guests, please contact the church office to discuss accommodations.

Section 5: Payment Policy

The full repast balance is due no later than 4 days prior to the repast reception. Unlike the funeral service payment structure, the repast requires payment in full upfront — no deposit or split payment option is available.

- **Accepted Payment Methods:** Accepted Payment Methods: Cash, check (payable to First AME Church), for online call the church office at 219-886-7561.
- **Payment Deadline:** Payment Deadline: Full payment must be received no later than 4 days before the scheduled repast.
- **Non-Payment:** Non-Payment: First African Methodist Episcopal Church reserves the right to cancel a repast reservation for non-payment by the established deadline.

Section 6: Headcount Policy

Families are required to designate and pay for a specific number of guests at the time of payment. This headcount is used to determine the quantity of food ordered and prepared for the repast.

- **Attendance Exceeds Paid Headcount:** Attendance Exceeds Paid Headcount: First African Methodist Episcopal Church is not responsible for providing food or accommodations beyond the number of guests designated and paid for. If actual attendance exceeds the paid headcount, the church cannot guarantee that all guests will be served.
- **Attendance Falls Below Paid Headcount:** Attendance Falls Below Paid Headcount: If actual attendance is lower than the number paid for, any remaining food belongs to the family. Families may choose to take the remaining food home or leave it behind at their discretion.

Families are strongly encouraged to provide their best estimate of expected attendance and to communicate any significant changes in expected headcount to the church office as early as possible, and no later than the payment deadline.

Section 7: Church Responsibilities

First African Methodist Episcopal Church is committed to providing a warm, welcoming, and well-organized repast experience for every family we serve. The following services are included in the repast fee at no additional cost:

- Full venue setup, including tables, chairs, tablecloths, and serving stations
- All serving utensils and supplies necessary for the meal
- Trained volunteers to assist with serving throughout the repast
- Full cleanup of the venue following the conclusion of the repast

Our volunteer service is an expression of First African Methodist Episcopal Church's commitment to ministering to families and the broader community during times of loss. Families are not expected to assist with setup, serving, or cleanup.

Section 8: Duration

Repast receptions at First African Methodist Episcopal Church are designed to last approximately one hour. Receptions may extend to a maximum of one and a half hours under appropriate circumstances.

Repast receptions may not exceed one and a half hours in duration under any circumstances. Families should plan accordingly and communicate the expected timeline to their guests.

Section 9: Conduct & Alcohol Policy

First African Methodist Episcopal Church is a place of worship and a sacred community space. All guests attending a repast reception are expected to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the dignity of the occasion and the values of our church.

- **Alcohol:** Alcohol: The possession, serving, or consumption of alcohol is strictly prohibited on church property at all times, without exception.
- **Conduct:** Conduct: Any disruptive, disrespectful, or threatening behavior will not be tolerated. First African Methodist Episcopal Church reserves the right to end a repast reception early and to contact law enforcement if necessary.

Section 10: Damages

The family of the deceased assumes full financial responsibility for any damage to church property – including but not limited to tables, chairs, flooring, walls, kitchen equipment, or any other fixture – resulting from a repast reception or related gathering. Damages will be assessed and communicated to the family and handled on a case-by-case basis.

Section 11: Booking & Contact

To book a repast reception or for any questions regarding this policy, please contact our Executive Assistant, Lauren Person, through the church office. Repast reservations are confirmed only upon receipt of full payment no later than 4 days prior to the event.



For questions or to book a repast reception, please contact:

Lauren Person, Executive Assistant

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