

2021 CUSTOM PHOTO CALENDARS

Reeves and Baskerville Funeral Homes consist of 4 physical locations in Coal City, Gardner, Morris and Wilmington, Illinois. We are located approximately 60 miles southwest of Chicago, and though not far from the urban and suburban area - continue to be relatively rural. All four locations are within a 20 mile radius, serving a total population of roughly 40,000 between all the communities and we serve on average 225 families.

When the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic hit, we like every other business were struck with increased call volumes, and difficulty in securing merchandise and product.

In July of 2020 we were notified by the vendor of our annual church calendars that because of the inability to secure the products and shut down of industry in Singapore, where our calendars were produced - they had to make the difficult decision to cancel all orders for 2021, and they had no alternative.

When we received this notification our initial instinct was to just not provide such calendars, which we have donated as promotional products for countless years prior. We then did look into alternate resources and companies, however they just were not the same quality as we were accustomed.

It was then that Matt Baskerville, our owner decided to take this situation on himself... What families always loved about our calendars in all years previous were the picturesque photography. For the Roman Catholic Church, it was also the content which included the church seasons, holy days, saints' feasts and seasonal/liturgical colors.

Matt acquired the "Catholic Calendar" and started putting together the content. It was much easier for the protestant churches because we could utilize a stock

calendar with legal holidays and observances. Most importantly however for both versions was the photography and monthly pictures, which adorned the calendars. That is when Matt started setting appointments with the local church. With iPhone in hand and his eye for photography, Matt went church to church taking photographs of the buildings, sanctuaries, stained glass windows and anything of interest from both Protestant and Catholic churches.

Within just a few days, Matt then purchased and downloaded a black customizable photo calendar, and proceeded to make personalized calendars for all of the churches. Once completed, he saved the calendars on a flash drive and just took it to a local printer, who proceeded to print the calendars on nice quality glossy paper, stapled them, and made grommet holes to hang them.

Perfect! The churches were literally overwhelmed with the calendars! We were able to print them as we needed them, which alleviated waste of excess calendars not taken, and there was a record number of calendars taken because they were personalized for each church.

We have never received so many thank you notes and acknowledgment cards for these calendars. Some of the notes truly heartwarming! Even with restrictions in place as 2021 rolled in, we had people calling the funeral homes asking for calendars to be mailed, and we had stacks available to pick up at the funeral homes.

At the end of the day, a negative situation could not have turned out more positive. We created what many people were calling a “Keepsake”; we gave work to a local printer, and overall it was a tremendous amazing public relations project. We even created non church calendars with just beautiful travel photos from Matt’s personal travels around the globe, which flew out the door.

The calendars were such a success that we were called by a parish out of our diocese asking if we could create calendars for their cluster of parishes. Same situation, the local funeral homes always provided them in the past, but couldn't come through for the same reasons we created them ourselves. We went on to create another 750 calendars for parishes not even in our service area, which again we received countless accolades.

As far as the expense for the calendars, we actually spent less doing the calendars ourselves, as we were not held to minimum orders. Our longtime previous vendor required we order a minimum of 100 calendars, and some churches only needed 50-75 because of the size of their congregation.

The project was literally so easy and cost effective, hence we have already started taking photos of the local churches as we are there for services. For our 2022 calendars we are excited to be able to provide all year round seasonal photos, and we have plans possibly to even do a calendar series for some church, maybe just focusing on windows including little blurbs about meanings and significance.

