

GEORGIA CHRISTIAN SCHOOL



ALUMNI REUNION PLANNING GUIDE



Introduction

Reunions can be the perfect way to get together with your former classmates from Dasher Bible School, Georgia Christian Institute, or Georgia Christian School, and catch up with one another while sharing fond memories of your time spent here. It's also a great time to visit the campus and see how it has changed.

This guide can help you put together a reunion to remember. As you plan, you may have questions or need some help. If so, please don't hesitate to call the school at 229-559-5131 and ask for the Director of Alumni Affairs, email us at gcsalumni@georgiachristian.org, or reach out via social media. We are here to help.

Why have a reunion?

It can be a lot of work to plan a reunion, but it's worth it!

Having and attending a reunion of your classmates is a perfect occasion for:

- Renewing friendships with classmates you might have lost touch with
- Touching base with classmates on memories and traditions that are still important to you
- Networking with other professionals that are in your industry or in adjacent industries
- Re-acquainting with former instructors and staff members about program/school changes

What's involved in planning a reunion?

This guide can help you plan a reunion by providing a checklist to follow, a budget worksheet, ideas on activities, food, and more. Find a couple of former classmates to help you form a committee and a few dedicated volunteers and your reunion will be a great success.

We are excited to see how we can help you put together a memorable reunion for you and your class!

Getting Started

The Director of Alumni Relations can help you get started on planning your reunion. Let us know you are planning to host a reunion, and we can provide a class list to you with contact information. We can also provide you with:

- Event-planning advice
- Promote your reunion in the Alumni newsletter, on the GCS school website, and on the GCS Alumni Facebook page
- Liaise between the Reunion Planning Committee and GCS personnel

Georgia Christian School Director of Alumni Affairs

Julie Dykes

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<https://www.georgiachristian.org/alumni/>

Reunion Organizers: Who Will Be In Charge of This Event?

Reunion organizers play an important role in making reunions happen. The reunion organizer, along with a small committee of classmates (if possible) will liaise with the Director of Alumni Relations to make plans, and get the reunion plans started.

Forming a committee of local alumni is a good first step. A successful reunion depends on a strong committee with committed members who will work throughout the year to get the job done. This group will share in the planning and promotion of the reunion. Having excellent reunion leaders and a hard-working committee who organize and begin their work early in the planning process will ensure a successful reunion.

Most reunion committees have a chair or co-chairs who oversee all aspects of planning the reunion event. Typically, you should plan to have 3-5 individuals (depending on the size of your reunion) that would make up your planning team. Schedule your meeting times in consideration of your committee's daily routines and, if necessary, hold a conference call or Zoom meeting. Regular emails are important to keep all members up-to-date on the progress of the reunion-planning. Your committee members should be given designated responsibilities and time commitments should be made clear. To make the best use of your committee members, identify their strengths and assign roles appropriately.

A reunion planning committee can consist of:

A **Chairperson**, who is responsible for:

- Finding and inviting committee members to participate
- Scheduling committee meetings and notifying members of the meetings
- Presiding over meetings and keeping everyone on track
- Assisting in recruiting volunteers and developing job assignments
- Motivating people to follow through
- Working with the Director of Alumni Affairs to update contact information

The **Committee**, who are responsible for:

- Participating in finding and phoning alumni (including locating lost alumni)
- Encouraging attendance and building enthusiasm
- Assisting in all aspects of planning and executing the event, including:
 - o Finance: from the beginning stages of planning, ensure there is a treasurer who will open up the bank account, deposit registration checks (if applicable), and pay invoices
 - o Food
 - o Activities
 - o Communications
 - o Fundraising
 - o Accommodations
 - o Venue(s)
 - o Volunteers
 - o Set-up and Clean-up

Getting Started – Questions to Keep in Mind

1. Timelines: When do you want to host this event?

Recommendation: Give yourself one year

It often takes at least one year to plan a reunion weekend properly. Most people need to be notified of the event at least 12 months ahead of time to assure their attendance.

2. Reunion Styles: What type of reunion do you want to host?

Choose an event with a workload you and your committee can handle and one that suits the interest of your guests. Different types of reunions to consider include:

- Traditional single class reunion celebrating 10, 15, 25, 30, etc... year reunions
- Multiple-class/Multiple-year reunions
- Program reunions – on any occasion, or on a milestone (first basketball championship, etc.)
- Annual Benefit Dinner-based reunions
- Blue & White Weekend reunions
- Homecoming reunions
- One night or a weekend
- Networking, educational or celebration-based
- Specialty reunion – take a trip, go camping, stay at a resort, take a cruise – it all depends on the guests and the amount they are willing to spend

3. Facilities: Where do you want to host this event?

Venues

Most reunion classes have held their reunion events on campus. However, some reunion classes may choose to use restaurants or local venues for some scheduled activities. Please note that all off-campus facility bookings are the responsibility of the reunion committee.

On-campus spaces include:

- Lacy Elrod Gymnasium
- J.P. Prevatt Cafeteria

Most on-campus spaces may be used free of charge by alumni depending on availability. All requests to use any on-campus facility should be made through the Director of Alumni Affairs and the Office of the President. Every effort will be made to accommodate a reunion committee.

Budget: How much will this event cost?

When developing a budget for your reunion, remember to include all the small items. They tend to add up faster than you think. Remember to leave room in the budget for miscellaneous/backup funds to cover you in case of unexpected expenses. Please review Appendix C for a sample reunion budget.

Advertising: How will you publicize your reunion?

Mailings: Mail out your Save-The-Date invitations at least one year in advance. The first mailing may include some or all of the following: an invitation to classmates to join the reunion planning committee, a schedule of events for the reunion, local hotel info, a Lost Classmate list, and a return form to gauge classmates' intent to attend their reunion, as well as ideas/suggestions from classmates for their reunion event and other class-specific activities.

The second mailing should contain the specific details for the class reunion event (and other class activities, if applicable), a schedule for all reunion event activities, and instructions on how to register for both.

Committee members are encouraged to write both reunion letters or, at the very least, the opening paragraph. The best opening paragraphs usually evoke fond memories or talk about all that has changed on campus since graduation. Letters should be signed by at least one of the committee members, and it's helpful to list all the committee members on the letter.

Blast e-mails: It is encouraged that all mailings are also sent electronically.

Web: Your reunion event may have a link to a webpage on our Alumni website. Links to the contents of all mailings can be posted there. The page can also be used to display photos from classmates and links to pertinent sites, such as online registration and class gift goals and information.

Electronic Social Networking: With the recent explosion of social networking sites, reunion committees have found them to be valuable communication tools, particularly the social networking site, Facebook. On Facebook, for example, a reunion committee member can have their personal account and then create a group for their class (example: Georgia Christian Class of 2005). They can then use the search tool to identify fellow Georgia Christian alums from their class year who also have accounts and invite them to join their "reunion class" group. Advertising for your reunion event may also be included on Georgia Christian Alumni's existing Facebook group site.

Publications: Reunions will be advertised in Georgia Christian's publications, The General Times and General News and will be posted on Georgia Christian's on-line calendar.

Lost/Inactive Alumni: Often alumni move and the school loses contact with them. The Director of Alumni Affairs will provide a list of “lost” or “inactive” alumni. Should you find these alumni in the process of planning your reunion, please inform the Director of Alumni Affairs so that we can continue to keep them engaged with the Georgia Christian community.

Throughout the reunion planning cycle, committee members are encouraged to contact classmates and to encourage their attendance at the reunion event. Classmate-to-classmate communication is the most effective way to generate enthusiasm and interest in attending your reunion. Personal phone calls and emails are effective methods of communication as a follow-up to all mass mailings. Each reunion committee member can receive a confidential list of all classmates with their addresses, preferred telephone numbers, and email addresses. Additionally, the Director of Alumni Affairs can help you locate alumni by class year or program of study.

It is also helpful to pull out your yearbooks and flip through them to jog your memory about various events that happened during your years on campus.

Regardless of the communication method you choose, we ask that committee members always be respectful of a classmate’s privacy and not share their personal information without their consent.

Reunion Tips:

Nametags – creating nametags with a photo of your guests from when they were a students is a fun and handy way for people to get reacquainted with each other.

Displays – ask classmates to bring old yearbooks, photos, memorabilia, clothing (uniforms, jerseys, hoodies, etc.) for display.

Be prepared! – on average, 30% of your RSVPs will come to the reunion activities early!

Photos – arrange for a designated photographer for the duration of your reunion and forward copies of those photos to the Director of Alumni Affairs. Don't forget to take a group photo!

Reunion merchandise and memorabilia – decide what kind of memorabilia you would like to offer reunion attendees (mugs, books, t-shirts/hoodies); designate a committee member to be responsible for ordering and/or selling the merchandise

Reunion Post-Mortem

It is strongly recommended that each reunion committee hold a wrap-up meeting after the reunion event. This provides the committee with an opportunity to discuss what worked well or what could be improved for the next reunion. It also provides the Director of Alumni Affairs with feedback as to how it can better meet the needs of Georgia Christian's alumni.

Report for Publications

Reunion committee members are asked to write a brief, one-paragraph recap of their reunion activities for inclusion in school publications and social media. The report should be sent to the Director of Alumni Affairs no later than one month after the reunion event.

Donations

During your reunion, if your group decides to make a donation to Georgia Christian, please contact Dr. Brad Lawson, President. A reunion gift can be directed to a project your group feels passionate about such as student scholarships, a particular program, or infrastructure, or designated to the area of highest need at the President's discretion.



Appendix B: Sample Invitational Letter

Date

Dear Classmate,

We invite you to join us in celebrating our (number years) anniversary as graduates of Dasher Bible School/Georgia Christian Institute/Georgia Christian School. This will be a great opportunity to reunite with your classmates, to relive the great memories of your school days, and catch up on what your classmates have been doing since graduation. Join us on (insert date here) and show the graduating class of (insert year here) what the Generals spirit is all about! Plans are underway for a special reunion, and we hope that you and your family can attend.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestion, please feel free to contact us. We hope to see you in (insert month here).

Jane Doe
Volunteer Reunion Coordinator

Joe Hunter
Reunion Committee Member

Appendix C: Sample Budget

Revenue

\$ _____

Expenses

Communication/Marketing

Envelopes, paper & postage

\$ _____

Phone charges

\$ _____

Advertising

\$ _____

Equipment Rental or Purchases

Tent shelters

\$ _____

PA system

\$ _____

Music/video equipment

\$ _____

Lighting

\$ _____

Venue/facility fees

\$ _____

Transportation

\$ _____

Event Supplies

Decorations

\$ _____

Prizes or awards

\$ _____

Paper plates/cups/rentals

\$ _____

Plastic silverware/rentals

\$ _____

Table cloths, center pieces, napkins, name cards

\$ _____

Food

Groceries

\$ _____

Caterers

\$ _____

Restaurants

\$ _____

Taxes

\$ _____

Tips/Gratuities

\$ _____

Printing

Save-the-date cards

\$ _____

Invitations

\$ _____

Remainder mailers

\$ _____

Name tags

\$ _____

Memorabilia merchandise (t-shirts, mugs, etc...)

\$ _____

Award certificates

\$ _____

Signage

\$ _____

Misc.

\$ _____

TOTAL COST

\$ _____