A death is the loss of a soul and the beginning of a long and involved mourning for the survivors. The decisions regarding funeral arrangements add stress to an already stressful time. What is often more difficult to deal with is how to remember the loved one after they have passed on. Each family chooses their own way of remembering their loved ones. Some choose a simple funeral and internment. However, more and more often the remembrance of a life is equal to the event of the death.

Boulger Funeral Home of Fargo, N.D., is offering a new and fast-growing service called electronic memorials or e-memorials. Grief Support Coordinator Julie Twight, explains that a funeral is becoming less a burial and more a memorial. “They focus is no longer on the death of the individual. It’s about celebrating their life.” E-memorials are steadily growing in the Fargo/Moorhead area. Ten to 20 percent of all funerals at Boulger Funeral Home request the e-memorials. Baby Boomers are especially requesting the service. “What’s so great is that each memorial is unique to the individual. We’ve had songs from Johnny Cash to John Denver to Eminem,” Twight said. “Locations of services are equally as varied. We’ve even had them a golf courses. Some are just like a rock concert.”

Clients of Boulger’s e-memorials get the services of Phil Peterson. He creates the memorials by having the family bring in the desired photos and sets them to the music they choose. “Most people bring in too many photos, and some are old, faded or
scratched. I don’t try and alter the order, but if I do, I contact the family first.” If the family prefers they can further personalize the e-memorial. “The family and friends can come in and record their own message.” Peterson created his company, Peterson Productions, after working on similar movies for special occasions, but not funerals. He came to work closely with funeral e-memorials after producing his father’s. “It had a healing effect for me.”

With a total running time of about 10 to 12 minutes for the memorial, each picture displays for about six to eight seconds depending on the timing of the song and the emotional emphasis of the photo. Most of the time the funeral home shows the memorial at the visitation, but it is becoming more popular to show it during the funeral as well. After the service there is the option for the family to receive a copy of the memorial on DVD. Twight explains, as a part of grieving, some families don’t want to see the memorial again. “Most of the time they don’t think they want it or need it, but about a week later they call back. This is why we keep the memorial forever. We know that the one we lose or get rid of is the one that will call the next day asking for a copy.” As this option of remembering is used and shown around the area and around the country, more families will request e-memorials both for remembrance and closure.