

Planning

Target audience

One of the first decisions needed is to define the target audience. If your primary audience is the current members of your congregation then planning is a little easier but the impact of the event will be less as well. If you are planning a broader outreach then you may want to consider inviting other churches in your area to join in the planning and preparation for this event. The principle of 2 Corinthians 9:6 applies to this decision, "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously."

Count the cost

For my services I am asking \$500.00 per service. I would like to be reimbursed for my travel expenses. If I am driving, we can use the standard IRS rate for miles driving in service of charitable organizations (currently \$.14 per mile) calculated from Elkhorn NE to your location. If an overnight stay is required then you can either provide a place to stay or provide reimbursement for lodging expenses and meals. Other costs might include charges for the use of the venue, advertising, printing, etc. When setting up planning committees, each committee should be told early on if they have a budget to work with.

Participation by other churches

If you want to invite other churches in your area to participate in this event you will need to decide what level of participation you want to offer. It could be as little as asking them to put an announcement in their bulletin or as much as providing members to participate in one or more of your planning committees.

Venue

Another question that needs to be answered early on is, "Where do you plan to hold this event?" According to George Barna's research, if you want to attract un-churched and nominally church people you may want to consider holding the event in a location other than a church. An outdoor venue in a well-used public place like a park can add effectiveness since people who just happen to be there may be attracted by the music. However, an outdoor venue adds an element of risk since weather could cause problems for attendance. Whatever venue is chosen I will need reliable electrical power for the PA system and, if the event is scheduled for evening hours, we will need some lights so people can see what is going on and not trip over things if they need to get up and move during the event. The venue should also be large enough to accommodate the size of audience you hope to attract. I have a portable PA system that I can bring but if the venue has a PA system that you plan to use I will need one microphone and to be able to connect my laptop's headphone jack into that PA system so I can play my recordings during the event.

Planning Committees

It is possible to plan one of these events using one committee to do all the planning and preparation. I recommend using as many committees as possible and using as many people as possible on those committees. Nothing helps ensure participation like many people feeling they have a stake in the event itself. Below is a list of committees you may want to consider. There is a link to separate instructions for each committee.

- Event Planning Staff – These are the people who make the primary decisions about the event. They recruit committee chairpersons and answer questions from the committees. Each committee chairperson should recruit their own committee members and be encouraged to include as many people as is practical on their committee.
- Prayer Committee – The people on this committee would commit to praying regularly and often for the success of this event. They may also want to organize one or more church-wide prayer vigils over a significant period of time and invite other church members to be part of the vigils.
- Venue Committee – This committee would be responsible for locating, securing, setting up, and cleaning up the venue after the event.
- Technology Committee – If your venue has technology that you wish to use (PA system and/or projection screens), then this committee would be responsible for co-ordination with me.
- Program Committee – If you decide to print programs for this event then this committee would be responsible for designing and printing them.
- Advertising Committee – This committee would be responsible for getting the word out about this event. They should try to use every media available considering the budget they have to work with. Some media to consider include web sites, social media, radio, television, newspapers, flyers in the windows of local businesses, notices in other church bulletins, etc.
- Invitation Committee – This committee would be responsible for designing, printing, and distribution of invitation cards for church members to use for inviting people to attend. They are also responsible for encouraging church members to invite their friends, family members, neighbors, co-workers, and acquaintances.
- Refreshment Committee – Food is certainly not required for an event like this, however it can be a powerful enticement for people to attend. It could be as simple as cookies and drinks after the event or anything up to a full meal like a pot-luck or even a catered dinner.
- Counseling Committee – Counselors should be available during and immediately after the event in case anyone had questions or were struggling with spiritual issues and needed someone to talk to.
- Follow-up Committee – The Follow-up committee would do its work a couple of weeks after the event. They would try to contact anyone who made a commitment during the event to see how that commitment is going, offer encouragement, and see if they need any additional resources. In order for this committee to do its work, you need to develop a way to gather contact information from anyone who attends the event and makes a commitment during the event. One way to do that is to use some kind of attendance registry or card and at the end of the event, ask all those who made a commitment to put an “X” beside their name on the registry or card.

- Child Care Committee – Being able to offer child care to families with young children could make a big difference.
- Transportation Committee – This committee would be the ones to arrange transportation for anyone who would like to attend but needs a way to get to and from the event.

You should start holding monthly meetings with your committee chairpersons beginning several months in advance of the event so they can coordinate their plans, actions and progress. For instance, the Advertising and Invitation Committees should try to make sure any printed materials have a similar look and feel. Also the Venue Committee may be impacted by the plans of the Refreshment Committee.

Remember, the amount of work you are willing to put into the planning and preparation for this event will significantly affect the impact this event can have on your church and community.