

Preparing for Revival

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Events are very important in the life of a church. In ancient times God instructed Israel to have three major events each year. These events in ancient Israel met important needs in the lives of the people. Today, we have the same needs. The church has always had times when people come together for renewal, outreach, and spiritual growth. We may use different names, but times of refreshing are essential for continued spiritual vitality. So, whatever you call these events: Revivals, Times of Refreshing, Fresh Fire Conference, Campaigns, or some other term, they need to be well planned! A lot of resources will be invested in the event. The greater the preparation, the greater the results! Here are a few things to consider. Hopefully these will spark other creative ideas to make your event even more successful!

Annual Planning

Here are three items that need to be a part of your annual planning cycle:

1. Calendar scheduling. A last minute decision to have a revival probably won't yield the fullest results. Do your calendar scheduling for the coming year in the summer or fall of the preceding year. Get the event on the calendar! Sometimes you may even need to plan a couple of years in advance get a speaker who is in great demand. Somehow, get the name of the event on the calendar and make the calendar available to the church! Again, be creative in what you call the event. Use an "event" name that will build excitement!

2. Booking the evangelist. There may be those special "God encounters" when an evangelist shows up at the last minute, but that's not the way it usually happens. A pastor should pray and seek God about when to schedule the revival and also who to call to lead the revival. Other pastors are one of the best sources of finding evangelists. Often valuable contacts can be made at district and General Council events. The Evangelist Directory published by the National Evangelists Office is a very good tool! Most of all, pray and allow God to lead you. He will give you a sense of what He's wanting to do in your church and help you find the evangelist to make it happen. Not all meetings will have the same focus, so always pray about whom to call! Sometimes it's very beneficial to have the same evangelist back each year for a meeting. If he connects well with the people, the event will grow from year to year, and the people will have a "ready-made" trust in that particular evangelist.

3. Budgeting for revival. This is a major event! Make sure it is written into the budget. Money for advertising and other revival expenses should be set aside in advance. Set a minimum amount for the evangelist's honorarium, but don't limit it! God may want to use your church to make up for some lean times in the evangelist's ministry. Let the offerings all go to the evangelist!

Before the Meeting

1. Rule of four. I've found that attendance at an event will often be about four times the number of people involved in the event. The more people that are a part of the event, the better the attendance!

2. Prayer teams or prayer task force. This is vital! Appoint a team to prepare the church for revival through prayer. The team can promote special prayer emphasis, a certain day for prayer and fasting, a prayer clock (each person signing up to pray for a 30-minute period so that prayer is going up to God for 24 hours), prayer services, prayer partners, bulletin inserts on prayer, and maybe an occasional video clip promoting prayer. Ways to promote prayer are unlimited!

3. Train workers for the revival. Think of all the little things that can make a meeting special! Some ministries are invaluable! Organize and train people to work in the altars, to serve as greeters, ushers, parking lot attendants, nursery workers, and other meaningful services.

4. Plan for child care. Provide a quality nursery operated in a professional manner! A children's revival could also be conducted along with the adult revival. Something for the kids would make it more conducive for younger adults to attend.

5. Plan for special music during the meeting. If the evangelist is musical, it may be best if the evangelist does the special music rather than have two ministries seeming to compete. If special groups are to be a part of the revival, make an impact each night with a different group. Advertising these groups can also help promote the event! Make sure that the singers know how long they have for their ministry, usually not more than ten or fifteen minutes. Remember that the singers are not the star performance. If you want to feature a group as the main event, have them back for a special service other than the revival! Try to keep the church's part of the service limited to thirty minutes, not more than forty-five. The evangelist will need about an hour and a half for his ministry – from introduction to altar time.

6. Start outreach before the meeting begins. Organize ministries like Operation Andrew (Andrew is always presented in scripture as bringing people to Jesus). Promote building relationships and inviting friends to the revival. Maybe have a "Friends Night" encouraging everyone to bring a friend to the revival. Plant the seed thought of everyone bringing someone to the revival. Be sure the evangelist is aware of what you are doing so he can be prepared and work with you.

7. Train follow-up teams. Recruit those with the best "people skills" to do the follow-up. Excellent discipleship material is available from Gospel Publishing House. We must move people from the altars into discipleship groups. When a baby is born, mom's work is just beginning!

8. Develop a good follow-up record system. Systems need to work smoothly. They need to be in the background, not predominate. The ones collecting information must be very relational and un-offensive. Record guests' names, addresses, phone numbers, emails if possible. Follow-up teams should submit reports on responses to the pastor. The object is to assimilate the individual into the church.

Note on Three Conversions: Each individual must experience (1) Conversion from sin to Christ, (2) Conversion from the world into the church (this is often the most difficult), and (3) Conversion from the church back into the world as witnesses for Christ.

9. Prepare to welcome guests. Have a nice gift packet for visitors. You can include information about the church, a gift like a pen, key chain, or other items as a memento of the visit to the church or revival. Think of ways to make guests feel comfortable and welcomed without being put on the spot. The greeters and ushers are key people in making guest want to return.

10. Promote, Promote, Promote! Appoint an individual or teams to promote the revival. Give them a budget and turn them loose! Often radio stations, cable channels, newspapers, local advertising papers, and other media will announce the event free. Make a list of free advertising available. Paid ads can also help. Get the word out! Promote the event at least six ways, more if possible: tv, radio, newspaper, posters/flyers, newsletters, bulletins, announcements or promotions, phone a friend campaign, etc. The youth group may be enlisted to distribute promotional material to homes. Ask other pastors to help and announce the meeting. After a while, some people will start to get interested, or at least curious!

11. Communicate with the evangelist. The pastor and evangelist must both have clear expectations of what each expects from the other. Some items to consider are expenses and honorariums (let the evangelist know that you will take good care of him), how offerings are to be received (is the evangelist allowed to receive his own offerings?), and policies concerning a ministry resource table for sales of CDs, books, and various items. A good rule of thumb is to try to pay an evangelist twice what a pastor is paid. The evangelist has a lot of extra expenses that he must cover himself, like insurance, maintaining an office, travel expenses, conferences, dates he can't fill, (like Christmas, graduation time, etc.), and maintaining a home while he travels. It takes a lot to stay on the field. Some evangelists may want to promote special projects or mission work, take their own offerings, collect names for a mailing list or other promotions. Ask about accountability of how any special offering is used. I try to discourage the evangelist from collecting names for a mailing list. Make sure that the pastor and the evangelist are in agreement on these things! Arrangements for lodging and meals should also be communicated. Find out the evangelist's preferences for music during the altar time and how altar workers can help. Let these workers know that they will be working for the evangelist during the revival and must follow his lead!

12. Make arrangements for lodging and meal. A nice fruit basket with snacks is a wonderful welcome!

During the Meeting

1. When the meeting begins, the pastor must give his people to the evangelist. At the close of the meeting, the evangelist must give the people back to the pastor. Try to build confidence in the evangelist so the people will be open to his ministry. Toward the end, the evangelist must put the pastor back in the spotlight so that the people, especially the new converts, are connected with the church and pastor, not just the evangelist.

2. Provide an opportunity for the evangelist to instruct and interact with the altar workers and music teams. He may or may not want their involvement in the service. For the altar time, he may prefer playing CD instead of having live music which sometimes is distracting. The evangelist's wife may provide the music. If he wants to use the church music team, honor his wishes and work with him. If the evangelist has a strong ministry of praying for people, he may prefer for the prayer team to be in the background. Remember that these teams are in a support role. They should provide undergirding prayer support while the evangelist ministers. If needed, they can do follow-up prayer after the evangelist has prayed for the individual. They must be very sensitive not to undo what God has ministered through the evangelist. They should encourage and reinforce what God is doing. It will be different in different revivals or with different evangelists. Just keep in mind that you are there in a support role, not to be the star.

3. Don't preach before and after the evangelist. The purpose of the first part of the service is to prepare the people for the ministry of the evangelist. You're the warm-up!

4. Don't bring the service to a crescendo and then let it crest. Keep it lively and upbeat, but hand it off to the evangelist before it peaks! Otherwise, the evangelist will have to do a lot of rebuilding to bring the people back to where he can minister. Give the service to him with the people anxious for his ministry, not ready to go home. Build the service to the right point, then step aside.

5. Give the evangelist plenty of time. Evangelists do much more than preach. He will share revival reports and stories of what God is doing in other churches, maybe share testimonies, some humor, and if musical, songs or lead some worship choruses. He must interact and connect with the congregation. An evangelist needs an hour and a half or more to do his best work. Work with him so that his gift can be used effectively.

After the meeting

1. Do the follow-up ministry for the converts, those who have received the Holy Spirit baptism, those who have rededicated their lives to Christ, and those who have had special experiences. The enemy comes to steal what God has given. A little encouragement can go a long way in preserving the fruit of the meeting.

2. Remember your evangelist at Christmas with a special monetary love gift! It's good to build a relationship with your evangelist outside the revival. Pray for your evangelist! He is God's gift to the church!