

Special Events Ministry

Florida Baptist Convention

“Then he [Jesus] said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find’” (Matt. 22:8-9, NIV).

A special event is an attraction, sporting event, or happening that brings people together for the purpose of entertainment, education, competition, enjoyment or leisure. Examples: football games, auto races, fairs, parades, festivals, Special Olympics, boat races, arts/ crafts fairs, shuttle launches, seafood festivals, sporting events, and others.

Why Minister?

There are many needs for ministry at special events. These involve a high percentage of unchurched people and those who are trying to escape their loneliness, problems, and pain. There is also a need for alternatives to worldly pleasures. And, people are often more open in this type of setting.

Relating in the World

As in every area of life, relationships are important in the leisure setting. The Christian must take the initiative to build meaningful relationships within the leisure community. A balanced relationship with special events personnel will open doors to ministries and build good relations between the church and community.

As you approach management, relate to *their needs*. Seek to gain an understanding of their goals and offer to help meet these through the services you can provide to event participants and workers. Avoid “church” language and spiritual clichés; speak their language so that a clear understanding exists. For example, offer a children’s day camp rather than Backyard Bible Club or a service rather than a ministry. Make a list of “church words” and translate them into everyday language. Be honest, but in the language they will understand. Be accepting, courteous and appreciative. Remember Christ’s admonition to “love your neighbor as yourself.”

Steps in beginning:

- Elect a person, committee, or organization in the church to take leadership in this ministry.
- Attend the event and experience it. What are the unmet needs? Are there any present ministries? What ministries will meet the discovered needs?
- Meet with the committee to brainstorm ideas for ministries to meet discovered needs.
- Determine personnel, financial, and material resources needed to carry out the ministry.
- Write a ministry proposal describing the name of the project, to whom it is directed, time allotment, and the responsibilities of the organizers and the church.
- Make a personal visit with the event organizers to share the project proposal. Be sure to contract 2-6 months prior to the starting date for the ministry project.
- Recruit volunteers for the ministry project.

- Train volunteers for the ministry project. Include training in skills needed such as clowning, mime, puppets, music, balloon sculpturing, face painting, recreation, and personal evangelism. Make expectations and tasks as specific and clear as possible.
- Promote the ministry through the event brochures, newspapers, flyers, signs, radio, and word of mouth. Promotional materials should reflect quality, telling what, when, where, and by whom.
- Carry out the ministry project as planned. Provide supervision for the volunteers. Do everything that was promised to management. Be flexible and always maintain a positive attitude.
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the ministry project. Ask feedback from the management and volunteers. Follow up on any professions of faith or recommitments to Christ.
- Write thank you notes to volunteers and event organizers.
- Make plans for next ministry project.

Meeting the Needs

Hospitality Booth

Rent a booth space and offer your ministry as a service to the guests and organizers. Use attention getters such as clowns. A table may offer free literature and scripture portions, face painting, balloon animals, and stickers. Volunteers should be available to witness to people that come through the booth. Free water can also be given away if it presents no problem to concessions. Puppet shows can also be used if space permits.

Entertainment

Provide free entertainment involving puppet shows, clowns, magic, mime, and music groups. Puppet shows should be music-oriented, instead of dialogues. The music should be carefully selected in order to minister to the people who attend the special event. Music groups should provide a variety program that would appeal to most age groups. Upbeat 50's, 60's, beach, pop, country, patriotic, and mixture of secular and sacred provide a good variety. Clowns can be used to provide a few skits that involve audience participation as well as walk around entertainment giving out balloons and stickers.

Information Booth

This provides a great service to the organizers as well as the guests by providing information to assist in enjoying the event. Literature and scripture portions can be made available also.

First-Aid Station

Your Baptist state convention may have a mobile medical or dental unit that can serve as a first-aid station. A tent or fun wagon may also be used. Professional medical people should be used as volunteers for such a ministry.

Event Volunteer

Become a volunteer of a special event. Many opportunities may arise to share your faith. Volunteering may open a door for future ministry.

Worship

A creative worship service will vary for each special event. The length should be 30 minutes. The service could include any of the following: Singing (hymns/choruses and/or solos or groups), welcome, prayer, and Scripture readings. Audience participation is encouraged through responsive readings, testimonies, or saying the Lord's Prayer in unison. Provide song sheets and Bibles. Do not solicit an offering. Give an invitation for individual counseling rather than an altar call. This service must be non-denominational in nature. For some special events a musical worship service is appropriate where the Gospel is presented entirely through music.

Giveaways

Giveaways may be specially designed for the special event. Giveaways could be buttons, stickers, wooden nickels, or balloons. A specialized brochure featuring the testimony of a Christian in the event works well. Be knowledgeable about regulations for distribution of tracts. Always secure permission to give any of these items away.

Counseling/Chaplaincy

A pastor or volunteer chaplain can be named as chaplain for the special event. This person would make themselves available to the organizers and participants' families. The chaplain has to take initiative to get to know people and take advantage of times needed to counsel. This person may also be available to lead in a prayer of invocation to start the event.

Evangelism

The heart of leisure missions is evangelism. The leisure setting is secular. People's understanding of reality is what they can see and touch. Leisure evangelism is communicating in the vernacular the message of the Gospel to secular society. This requires an understanding of the hearer's thought patterns. Our words are interpreted according to his existing frame of reference.

Leisure evangelism involves being sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and earning the right to be heard. Tourists or resort employees must realize that we as Christians care before they will be open to the Gospel. Personal openness, common interests and a listening ear help build trust in relationships.

The first step in building a witnessing relationship is to be friendly and sincerely care. Secondly, the Christian must be at ease or "laid back." Next, the Christian should listen to where the person is coming from — what do they believe and why? Once we've taken time to truly listen, the right to be heard has been earned. Then with a balance between urgency and sensitivity, the Christian shares his personal testimony. A low-keyed approach is preferable for leisure evangelism. The task is to get the Gospel to all who do not know Christ, recognizing not every person is at the same level of preparedness. In obedience, we share the Good News, and the outcome is left to God.

Summary

Prayerfully determine available resources and immediate needs in the setting. Don't be afraid to start small. It is of utmost importance that integrity is *always* maintained. Whatever is promised must be fulfilled. Be careful to find the balance of *all* that can be done and done *well*. Good planning is a key to success. Be over prepared, anticipating all that might occur. See all those out in the world and invite them to join the King's wedding banquet. Remember, limitations exist only in lack of imagination and creativity. Pray for open eyes to see — then do it.

“Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’”

John 20:21b NIV

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