

## SPECIAL EVENTS ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Throughout an annual cycle most churches conduct special events beyond the usual Sunday services. At some of them meals are served: church anniversary, Missions Conference, Ladies' Mother's Day banquet, Christmas parties, youth events and more. The ideas offered here can also be applied to church *work days* where cleaning, maintenance and other work is to be done. To one degree or another these require (1) food preparation – either prepared by members or purchased, (2) table set-up and break-down, (3) food serving and sometimes warming, (4) trash and garbage management and (5) post event clean-up often involving leftover food disposal, dish washing and floor mopping. Additionally there is the task of (6) insuring and purchasing adequate supplies such as paper goods, table spread, tea, coffee, ice, etc. Another area is (7) decorations both installed and removed.

It is not uncommon for these events to go poorly. Sometimes churches are obviously not prepared to host such events. (1) There is not enough food. (2) Food is not prepared well. (3) There are not enough servers. (4) There are not enough tables and chairs. (5) Serving lines are poorly planned and create long lines and bottle-necks. (6) There are not enough waste cans and nobody responsible for keeping them from overflowing. (7) There are no readily available mops and buckets to take care of spills and trash and no one in charge of this detail. (8) There is no one on hand with overall responsibility to monitor and assure that problems are addressed and things flow smoothly. (9) No one knows what to do with leftover food. (10) No one knows what to do with dirty dishes. (11) There's not enough help to prepare for the event or to clean up the mess once it's over. (12) No one is in charge of getting the supplies, assuring adequate food preparation, serving, table set-up and break-down or clean-up detail. (13) No one is in charge of decorating or decorations removal. (14) There is no clear chain of financial responsibilities. It is quite common for different ones to simply take it upon themselves to buy things. They are notorious for getting no receipt, overrunning the budget and then go to the treasurer for reimbursement.

Things like these make people really unhappy. A little handful of the most committed members has most of the *dirty work* dropped on them while most of the folks bask in the light of the event, glad-hand and then walk off leaving the mess to whosoever will. Good people get *burned out* and do not look forward to these glamorous special church events. They know what's coming and realize they are going to be used and taken-for-granted. It's not the hard work that does it to them; it's getting *dumped and assumed on*, taken for granted and left by default to do all of the hard work. A not-too-godly feeling can enter their hearts about the smiling faces who *just enjoy and walk off*. It's pretty common for good people to burn out and quit. To avoid being abused in this way, some even join another church where things are better organized and where they will not be known and assumed on as much. Treasures can become pretty negative when *good members* fail to follow proper financial policies and procedures, do not produce substantiating documents such as receipts, ask for cash advances and fail to produce the required paper-work. It is also quite common for members (especially long-time or influential) to expect special treatment. This puts any treasurer in a terribly awkward position.

The following organizational ideas are offered with the hope of strengthening churches in this area. This document is not in concrete. It is recognized that churches of differing sizes and personnel face varying situations; however, regardless of the size or location of a church some things remain the same. For an event to be successful there is a certain amount of work that must be done by someone. In any scenario (1) good planning and (2) organization will help ensure success. Plan and organize well in advance.

## **I. SELECT ONE KEY PERSON TO BE IN OVERALL CHARGE.**

### **A. From A to Z this person will be responsible to make it happen. He/she will:**

1. Oversee the event from preparations to clean-up.
2. Be a part of the planning.
3. Thoroughly understand the event and what is expected.
4. Establish a time-line flow chart and know where developments are and should be at any given time.
5. Understand the organizational structure and see that needed personnel is recruited.
6. Closely monitor progress and make sure that all personnel is assuring his or her area of work.
7. Coordinate with all of the workers and help them to do the work smoothly and in harmony.
8. Give progress reports to the pastor or others who might need them.
9. Give an especially careful eye to expenses, and to coordination between the event and the treasurer's office. All purchases (1) should be approved in advance by this person, and (2) he should sign all receipts before they are submitted to the treasurer. Where a church has a general ledger system, he should include the GL number.

### **B. This person must be given proper authority.**

1. All involved with the event must recognize his/her authority and work accordingly.
  - a) No central, definitive authority is a major breakdown and source of dissention and division in churches. This is sure to generate mixed signals, and mixed (especially conflicting) signals confuse and often anger people.
  - b) Everybody's business is nobody's business. Feelings get hurt. Offences occur. Conflicts arise. Rather than cause trouble, good people back off and often withdraw from involvement.
2. This person becomes the *go-to person*. The chain of command should be followed (many may be involved as key persons in the chain of command), but this is the person who will make final decisions and establish direction. If

this person has questions or needs advice, he should check with the pastor as needed.

3. It is vitally important that the pastor support this person in charge.
  - a) He should not go over the head of this person.
  - b) He should not go behind his back and supplant the work of the person in charge.
  - c) If the pastor has an issue with what the person in charge is doing, he should deal directly with the person in charge in private. He should never go over or around the person in charge, and he should not address grievances in public.
  - d) The pastor may actually serve in some role under the authority of the person in overall charge. If so, he should behave like all others are expected to submit and behave. This does not mean the pastor is not in control; it does mean that in this area he will submit and serve like any other member.
4. Be assured that mixed signals can seriously hurt people, ruin an event and damage a church. For example, the pastor puts a person in charge of an event, but then proceeds to make the calls and decisions that should be made by the person in charge. Another way it happens is for a person in charge of one area of the event to intrude into and exercise authority and direction over the person who is in charge of a second area. Sometimes people just move in, do things and take over areas that are not their own. The work should be conducted by those in charge of given areas; and before one area intrudes into another area, the person in charge of that area should be consulted. The *go-to person* in general charge should also be consulted and kept in the loop. He/she might have to make an executive decision.

**C. This person in charge should:**

1. Regularly consult with and report to the pastor
2. Stay close to and communicate with those who serve under him, especially heads of different areas.
3. Stay on top of all facets of the event from planning to completion.

**II. PUT IN PLACE KEY LEADERS TO HEAD DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE WORK UNDER THE PERSON IN CHARGE.**

**A. Recommended areas that should have a person in charge and brief job descriptions for that area.**

1. **Food and supplies.** One person should be assigned the task of making sure adequate supplies and equipment are secured to conduct the event. Paper goods, table spread, utensils, trash can liners, vacuum bags, brooms, mops, buckets, dish and other soaps, tea, coffee and other supplies should be

secured in advance in proper quantities. This will require coordination with the pastor, food preparations chairman and others. The person over this area should coordinate closely with the treasurer and follow proper guidelines in making purchases including means of payment. This person should be responsible for arranging for ice.

2. **Food preparations.** This should include but be not limited to arranging food to be provided by members, arranging food to be purchased or catered, receiving food at the church and getting food ready to serve (cutting meats, cutting cakes and pies, etc.). It also includes making arrangement for payment for purchased foods. It includes making the tea and coffee, getting the ice ready for use and making these items ready to serve.
3. **Food serving.** This should include but not be limited to preparing tables with table spread or other covering, arranging serving tables and foods where people will either be served or serve themselves, manning serving lines as needed and keeping food tables supplied. This also includes drinks such as tea, coffee, water and soft drinks. In this area should fall the responsibility of setting out plates, cups, eating utensils, napkins, salt, pepper, etc. **EXTREMELY IMPORTANT** is thinking through and arranging the serving line. Food events are often tarnished by serving lines in narrow corners, boxed-in places and other arrangements where people are narrowed to one serving line. Drinks and desserts at different locations can often relieve stress especially where quarters are close and space is limited. Also using both sides of a table in a self-serve line can help.
4. **Table and chair set-up and take-down.** The person in charge should work with the **food serving** chairman and his people to (1) establish the correct configuration of both serving tables and tables where people sit. Chairs are a part of this consideration. He should also (2) find out when tables and chairs are to be set up. These tables and chairs should be (3) located and a crew should be recruited to (4) both set up and take down the tables and chairs at the appointed time. For special events often tables and chairs are borrowed from classrooms and other places in the church facilities. This requires foresight and coordination with those working on the event and Sunday school teachers, youth leaders and possibly others. The move should not disrupt regular church activities, and tables and chairs should be returned to their normal places in time for regularly scheduled uses. *It is very important that the person in charge of this detail pay attention to how classrooms are arranged and see that the tables and chairs are restored to the normal arrangement.*
5. **Trash and mop detail.** The person in charge of this area should prepare for all eventualities. He should see that plenty of brooms, mops and buckets are both (1) on hand and (2) readily available. He should also make sure plenty of trash cans and liners are on hand. He should recruit a sufficient crew to attend this area of the work. During the event as they fill, trash cans should be regularly emptied and new liners should be installed. Those on this crew should watch for spills and trash on the floors. They should immediately

clean up spills. They should routinely pick up trash and keep the appearance of the facilities as clean and attractive as possible. After the event is over, these should sweep, mop or vacuum the entire event area; and make sure all trash is prepared for disposal or pick-up.

6. **Decorations.** Depending on the event and abilities of the church, decorations can be elaborate or few. The person in charge of this detail should learn from the overall person in charge both (1) what the theme and plans are and (2) what the budget is. The person over this aspect of the work should plan the decorating. He should also recruit an adequate crew to assist in this work. This person should (1) purchase or otherwise acquire necessary decoration materials and (2) see that the decorating is done. It is always helpful to have a creative person lead this area of the work. After the event the decorations should be taken down in a timely manner and replaced with the regular decorations.
7. **Post event clean-up.** This could be a department of its own, but it could be covered in the other areas discussed here. The overall person in charge or *go to* person should definitely see that the facility is cleaned, the trash is properly addressed, all things are back in order for routine operations and the bills are all paid. He may head a team to assist him in this. Obviously that team may be made up of the department heads who serve under him/her.

**B. Those in charge of areas of the work should.**

1. Work together as a team.
2. Work under the leadership of the overall person in charge, communicate well and often; and work in harmony and coordination with each other.
3. Always stay connected to the person in charge and work under his/her leadership.

**III. SUGGESTIONS.**

**A. Start event planning well in advance.**

**B. Always keep the pastor in the loop and seek his guidance and input.**

**C. Count the cost. Make a budget.**

**D. Choose leaders carefully.** The wrong person in a position can cause enormous grief. Leaders should be:

1. Faithful.
2. Qualified.
3. Kind and gentle, yet sufficiently decisive to get a job done.
4. Proven in the area where they will serve.
5. Of a cooperative disposition.
6. And have people skills.