

THE FIRST MONDAY REPORT

Thoughts on Fund Raising for Campus Ministry

November, 2006

Planning a Celebration Event

It's time for a celebration! The centennial of ELCA campus ministry in 2007 is just around the corner (as if you haven't noticed by now). All across the country local campus ministries are preparing to participate in the festivities. It will be a time to remember—and to look forward. It will be a time to lift up what has been good and what continues to be faithful. It is also a time to stretch imaginations, plan strategically, and share our visions with all those who support and cheer on our ministries on campus.

As you plan the centennial celebration your ministry will host, here are some considerations to share with your leadership.

Focus more on the future than on the past. Like a family pulling out all of the old photo albums and memorabilia at a reunion, it's comfortably nostalgic to reminisce about the good old days and remark about how young everyone looked and how funny Uncle Charlie looked back in 1950. At times like these we are reminded that we have a history, that we come from somewhere, and that many who have gone before us have worked with great dedication and creativity to get us to this place in time. However, if the reunion gets locked in times past, no one ever gets a chance to talk about what's happening now. It's knowing about days present and days to come that enlivens the conversation. We want to know about dreams and ventures and about the future as it builds on the past. At your celebration event, you will certainly want to bring out the old pictures and honor former staff and leadership of the ministry. Be sure to lift up your ministry vision as well. Let participants know how you plan to expand your programs, renovate your facilities, or add new initiatives. Give them a sense that the ministry is faithful to the past and that it has great energy and vision to move into the future.

Give participants an opportunity to give. While you may not decide to have fund raising as a major focus of your event, this is certainly a time when your supporters are expecting to be asked for a gift for your ministry. This is a time to ask them to consider a "stretch gift," one that goes beyond an annual fund contribution or a nominal door charge for the event. Once you are clear about your vision with your supporters, ask them to move this vision forward with a substantial gift, including a pledge over an extended period of time.

If you expect to ask a supporter for a gift of some size, you will need to prepare them for the challenge. Small gifts can be solicited on the spot; larger ones need advanced notice. The giver will have to "stop and think" about what they are able to do and how they are going to

do it. Give them the space they need to do what is possible. For example, if the celebration event is to be a time when gifts are gathered, make sure that invitees come with checkbook or pledge card in hand. They will give more if they can prepare beforehand. Pre-event communications will let them know your expectations.

One suggestion often mentioned is to make the centennial event a combination of fun and fundraiser. Have a catered meal¹ with entertainment, interwoven by introductions and celebratory words. You might ask every attendee to contribute \$100 for 100 years, or focus on your own history and ask for a comparable amount. Or challenge them to give a certain amount for each year ($\$5.00 \times 100 = \500.00). You might have a silent auction with items donated by individuals and local merchants. Award door prizes. Give everyone a memento to take home. Print CDs with music or photos of the ministry. Put your vision on the CD as well. Use every means to tell your story and invite your supporters into that story.

Contact individuals who are not able to be present at your event. Give them an opportunity to make a gift. Send them a followup note with pictures. Let them know that they were missed and share the celebration with them.

Say thank you early and often. Find a way to show special appreciation to those who worked hard to make the event a success. Hold a volunteer appreciation luncheon. Send flowers to the chair of the committee. Send a note to those who attended. Thank them for their presence and their gifts or pledges. Tuck in a picture. Once again, state how important their support is to the future of your ministry.

A successful celebration event will require careful planning on the part of your leadership. You may want to appoint a special event committee, which would include board members and others from the community. Think about who you might ask to be an “honorary chair” to give you high visibility, such as an important alum or community leader. Talk with other groups in the area who have pulled off similar events successfully. Ask them for advice and an outline of their planning process. Seek the advice of persons who do event planning professionally. Hire a media specialist to take pictures and record the event.

Speaking of specialists, here are ten tips on how to market a special event Carol Weisman²:

1. **Commitment.** Be sure that your leadership buys in to the event. If they don't support it, why should an outsider? Ask for their commitment to be there and to make an advance gift. See if they will buy a table (multiple tickets) and invite their friends. Keep track of promises and expect them to be fulfilled. Encourage good-spirited competition.
2. **Never sell a ticket, always sell a table.** Show a benefit to buying more than one ticket, for example, a table gets preferred parking, extra raffle tickets, or mention in the program booklet. Offer different levels of sponsorship. Give a deduction for buying multiple tickets.

¹ The cost of the meal has to be deducted from the gift total for IRS purposes. So if the meal cost \$20 and the gift was \$100, the donor could only claim \$80 as a deduction.

² Carol Weisman was president of *Board Builders* at the time of writing in June, 2000.

3. **Community fluency.** Check out what else is being done in your community around the time of your event. Who else is holding a golf tournament or a cook-off? What other dates might be in conflict? Who else might be seeking challenge gifts? Might there be a way to piggyback your event with one that the university is hosting, for example?
4. **Find an unusual venue.** While you will want to hold an open house at your campus ministry center/congregation, consider holding the dinner and program at a special place, perhaps on the university campus. Rent a local hall or mansion. Put up a tent. Create a stir about the location and some people will come just to be a part of it.
5. **Find a corporate underwriter** (and treat them like gold.) The local Thrivent Chapter comes quickly to mind for many of us, but there are other businesses who might like their name on the event, such as the construction company that recently completed a renovation of your facility.
6. **Visual aids.** Select a high-visibility item to promote the event, such as shirts, posters, or crystal stemware. See if you can find an individual to contribute the cost of the item and the imprint. If possible, send the item to your core supporters who were unable to attend the event. Create a special banner. Be bold and advertise on a billboard.
7. **Wholesale is good, but free is better.** With the right person asking, everything from invitations to food can be found for free or at little cost. Board members often have well-placed connections. Ask other organizations who you might contact.
8. **Identify media contacts.** Find those special people who can make media connections for you. Then, find interesting people for the media to interview. Students are especially newsworthy, so are unique board members. See if the synod bishop will agree to be interviewed, likewise standout representatives of the university. Identify those who have something worth saying and who your public will be interested in hearing. Remember to involve both the secular and the religious press. Be sure that your synod newsletter carries an article in advance.
9. **Short slogan.** A special event needs a special slogan. Create something just for this event that gets attention and is festive. This is a celebration—be bold, not bashful.
10. **Say thank you.** Keep a list of those whom you need to thank once the event is over. Don't wait until the event is recent history—say it while it still fresh in their minds. They will want to be reminded once again what a great event it was and to be thanked for their part in making it so. If you have a cadre of special volunteers, find a way to offer them special thanks, such as flowers or a photo album.

While we are in the category of good advice, an article about *Effective Delegation*³ comes to mind. While the authors are focused on larger congregations, there is something to be learned by those of us in smaller shops, especially when it comes to working with leadership and volunteers. They advocate for a healthy balance among three critical organizational elements—authority (the legitimate right of a person to make a decision or allocate resources), responsibility (an assigned duty to perform a task), and accountability (the requirement to report and justify outcomes, along with appropriate rewards or corrections).

³ Alban Weekly © 2005 The Alban Institute, Inc. These remarks were further developed by Gil Rendle and Susan Beaumont, senior Alban consultants, in a resource on staffing and supervision in larger congregations.

The article indicates that “delegation is effective when a person who is given responsibility for the performance of a task is also given the proper level of authority to execute the task and is appropriately held accountable for outcomes.” Delegation can go wrong if: 1. not enough or too much authority is assigned; 2. the responsibility is not defined; or 3. accountability is not maintained.

It follows, also, that effective delegation is jeopardized if the “right” tasks are not assigned. Those “right” tasks include:

- tasks that can be done better by someone else
- tasks that are time critical, but not a high priority
- tasks of appropriate difficulty
- both pleasant and unpleasant tasks
- tasks that are not central to your role within the organization.

How tasks are delegated is equally important. Be sure that volunteers or leadership know what is expected of them. The learning curve will be steep at first as they learn what is expected of them. Be patient, even though it may seem like you are spending more time supervising than doing it yourself. When tasks are assigned, make certain everyone knows the limits of their authority to make decisions or spend money. Monitor progress and have periodic check-in times. Hold to high standards and expect learning from mistakes. Be ready with appropriate praise.

Have a great centennial celebration!

Galen Hora
Office of Lutheran Campus Ministry Advancement
331 17th Avenue SE
Minneapolis, MN 55414