

Planning Your Church Anniversary



By R. Steven Norman, III
Director of Archives, South Central Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

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Ideas

Planning Notes

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Begin Planning Early

Begin planning at least one year in advance. If a history is to be written it is best to start two years in advance to allow time for extensive research, interviews, correspondence with former pastors and members, gathering photos, writing and editing the history.

Determine How Long the Celebration Should Be?

The length of the celebration may be as short as one day and last as long a year. How much time you spend celebrating will be determined by your calendar, budget, and the size of your congregation.

The most important thing is to take the time to celebrate God's blessing. Experience indicates that congregations enjoy a weekend celebration just as much as those that last a month or even an entire year.

Year long celebrations normally include a monthly focus and then have a major celebration for a week or weekend.

Select a Date

The date of the anniversary can coincide with the birth of the congregation, the dedication date of the current church building, or some other event that is important in your congregation's history. Make sure the date does not conflict with other major events in the conference. When the date is selected stick with it and encourage all departments to work around the anniversary date.

Set Some Goals

It is important to know why you want to celebrate and set some expected outcomes.

Anniversary celebrations provide an opportunity to ...

- a. Celebrate God for His blessings to your church
- b. Share the history and mission of your church to the future generations

- c. Communicate the mission of your church to your community
- d. Reclaim, restore, reconcile and heal relationships with former and disciplined members
- e. Launch a capital development campaign
- f. Review lessons from your congregation and denomination's history
- g. Plan and pray for the future of your church
- h. Establish a Church Archives or Heritage Room to preserve your history

Committees

Anniversary Steering Committee

The steering committee is an ad hoc committee that serves under and reports to the church board. The duties of this committee include planning the celebration, as well as giving general oversight and coordination to the sub-committees. It should meet at least once per month and include a broad cross-section of the church members.

Sub-committees

Involve as many people as possible in the church anniversary by letting them serve on various committees. These committees will divide the work and make the responsibility lighter for everyone.

Suggested sub-committees include:

Publicity Committee
History Committee
Program Committee
Souvenir Book Committee
Music Committee
Exhibit Committee
Drama Committee
Decoration Committee
Invitation Committee
Oral History Committee

The Anniversary Budget

How Much You Can Afford

Determine what you want to spend for the event and then stay

within your budget. Anniversaries will cost something, but if wise planning is done they should not weaken the church's financial position.

The budget should include:

- Honorariums and travel expenses for speakers
- Food
- Advertising
- Awards
- Decorations
- Souvenir Book
- Photography
- Printing
- Bulletins
- Postage

There are many ways to help recover your cost during the event through sales, fundraisers, etc.

Ideas for Anniversary Celebrations**Evangelism and Mission Ideas**

- Identify a nearby small Seventh-day Adventist Church that your congregation can adopt for special financial or evangelistic assistance.
- Invite the public
- Involve pastors and choirs from neighbor churches of other faith groups

Fundraising Ideas

- Sell souvenirs such as mugs, T-shirts, bumper stickers, ribbons, bookmarks, postcards, a commissioned drawing or painting of the church building, plate, facsimiles of the original deed, or ballpoint pens.
- Sponsor a fundraiser such as a concert
- Sell sermon video and audio tapes

Ideas for Children, Youth and all Ages*Baby Photo Contest*

Collect the baby and adult photos of the church leaders and place them on the bulletin board or print in bulletin. Ask the children and youth to match the baby photo with the adult photo. Winners may get a prize.

Anniversary Picnic

Have old and young join together in playing old-school games like horseshoes, hop scotch, etc.

Anniversary Publication Ideas*Anniversary Church Bulletins*

- Design a special anniversary program for use during the anniversary year. It could include a 25th, 50th, 75th, 100th or 125th anniversary logo on the cover.

- Include weekly or monthly historical highlights or church history trivia.

Souvenir Books

The souvenir book is the official worship and commemorative publication of the event. It should include the order of service for each program, greetings from the current and former pastors, greetings from conference and community leaders, memorial pages, a brief history of the church, a statement of the mission and description of the ministries of the church, photos, autograph pages and ads.

How to Increase Your Profits from Souvenir Book Ads

Two popular formulas for selling souvenir book ads are the 50% and 75% formulas.

The 50% Formula is the most widely used formula. This pricing formula sells each ad for 50% or half the price of the next larger size. (Example: Full page - \$100, Half page - \$50, Quarter page - \$25, Business card size - \$12.50) The maximum sales potential per page using the 50% Formula is \$100.

The 75% Formula is the most profitable and almost always covers all the printing costs if you use at least half your pages for ads.

Each ad sells for 75% of the price of the next larger size. Example: Full-page ad - \$100, half-page ad - \$75, quarter page ad

- \$50, and business card ads - \$37.50

The sales potentials for pages are as follows:

1 Full-page ad - \$100

2 half-page ads - \$150

4 quarter page ads - \$200

8 business card ads - \$300

If you use this formula and focus most of your attention on the smaller ads you can dramatically increase your sales potential.

Charge Higher Rates for Back Covers and Diamond Pages - Another way to increase your profit is to sell the back inside and outside cover pages at a higher rate. You can also sell diamond pages that include a diamond at the top of the page for a higher rate.

Church Scrap Book

Give each family of the church a scrapbook page and them to paste a family photo on the page and write how they joined the church and what the church means to them. Place all of the pages in a scrapbook for display in the church foyer.

Church Family Tree Scrapbook

Have each family prepare a scrapbook page showing their family tree and include a family photo. Identify the persons on their tree that are members of your congregation. Each week of the year feature one or more families and have them come forward during the pastoral prayer. Each family should be encouraged to invite their relatives to attend church on the day their family will be prayed for during a period called "Families at the Altar."

Church Department and Ministry Histories

Encourage each department and ministry of the church to prepare a brief history of their department for publication in the church bulletin.

Worship Ideas

- Begin with a two-hour prayer vigil. This may be scheduled for Wednesday night. The program may be prepared as follows:

- 40 minutes - Praise / Thanks for God's goodness to congregation

- 40 minutes - Seeking a Vision for Future Ministry

- 40 minutes - Commitment to the Mission of the Church
- Invite former pastors to speak or share memories of their ministry.
- Write a psalm based on Psalm 107 that reviews critical points in your congregation's history and celebrates how God intervened.
- Have a musician compose a hymn of praise or theme song for the event.
- Remember to carry video or audio- tapes of the services to the sick and shut-in. Former pastors can be carried along to visit some of the sick and shut-in that they remember.
- Sponsor a preach-out where several former pastors are asked to preach of the same text. The selected text should be one that is central to the church's mission or evangelistic focus.
- Have special Sabbath services honoring various segments of the congregation.
 - a. Honor all pastors who grew up in the congregation. Example: "Sons of Ephesus Day"
 - b. Honor all members baptized in this church building
 - c. Honor all members married in this church building
 - d. Honor all charter members

Preparing Your History

- Form a permanent Historical Committee and appoint a church historian
- Research and collect your History. For more information about researching your church's history you may contact the South Central Conference Archives.
- Gather portrait photos of the current and former pastors, former church buildings, and features of the church such as the steeple, stained glass window, etc.
- Gather biographical sketches and Christian testimonies of current and former pastors

- Collect the list and photos of the charter members
- Take a photo of your congregation
- Have a "I Remember When...." meeting when members can share their memories. A timeline of the congregation should be prepared so that the memories can be shared by time periods. One congregation made a list of the pastors and allowed each member to share memories that occurred during each pastor's tenure. Be sure to record these memories on video and audio tape. The audio tapes may be transcribed and published as a memory book.
- Write your history. Sample church histories are available from the South Central Conference Archives.

Presenting Your Church's History

Internet Presentation

- Place history of church and photos on church website

Oral History Presentations

Prepare audio or video taped interviews of former pastor and old members, etc.

Visual History Presentations

- Photograph displays
- Mural
- Timeline
- PowerPoint Show
- Video

Enacted or Dramatic History Presentation

- Write and perform plays or skits portraying the story of your church

Publicizing Your Celebration

- Place street pole banners along your block.
- Place a large banner or sign outside your church announcing the anniversary

Ideas**Planning Notes**

- Articles in local newspapers, church newsletter and denominational magazines
- Ask the conference president to include the dates on the conference calendar
- Radio announcements
- Hire professional photographer to photograph event

Follow-up

- Establish a Church Archives
- Collect all minutes, photos, video footage, and other anniversary memorabilia and place it in the archives.
- Send a thank you card to all who helped to make the anniversary a success.
- Gather the names of all visitors. Send them a thank you card for attending, invite them to attend again and place them on the church prayer and prospect lists.
- Send copies of bulletins, newspaper clippings, souvenir book and other mementoes to the Conference Archives and communication Departments.
- Submit article and photos to Conference Communication Department for publication in appropriate church papers.

Ideas Solicited

If you have other ideas please send them to the South Central Conference Archives, 715 Youngs Lane, Nashville, TN 37207