

2. Do consider a mid-day banquet; there's no rule that says it must be held in the evening. As a matter of fact, a number of churches we know are very successfully scheduling their banquets for Sunday noon immediately following the worship service. For several good reasons: 1) fewer conflicting outside engagements, 2) more appealing to members who don't like to venture out at night, and 3) very importantly, the worship service is perfect preparation for the very essence of what will follow. Think about it: one hour of creating the spiritual feeling we just discussed. With a sermon text drawn from the Great Law of Giving (Luke 6:38), for example. And, with that energy of assembly already working for you when you begin the banquet. All the pieces will be in place already! ...

3. Don't agonize about attendance as an element in determining the "worthwhileness" of a banquet for your church. Sure, it would be nice if I or anyone else could assure you that if you can expect an attendance of, say, 50% or more of the membership at the banquet, go ahead with it; if less than that, don't. Unfortunately, no one can give you a figure like this. Look at it this way: If only your ten heaviest givers show up and double their giving, your banquet could be considered super-successful. But if 90% of your members show up and sit on their wallets, you've wasted your efforts. Much more important, as we have agreed, is the enthusiasm and the feeling generated among those present -- regardless of number.

4. Don't rely on banquets to be the only technique you will use during your Stewardship Campaign. Consider a banquet to be complementary to your mailings and to the progress reports that appear in your church newsletter, for these are the only means you have to reach every member. (Even if you do broad-scale house-to-house calling, surely some members will be out-of-town or unavailable. Even talks from the pulpit and sermons are not church-wide; 100% attendance on Sunday, unfortunately, is practically unheard of.)

In short: while banquets offer powerful positive aspects that you cannot achieve via the mail, they should never be used as a substitute for, or exclude, a mail program.

5. Do, by the way, consider the banquet to be the kick-off of the campaign, not the conclusion. The energy the banquet can create will be much more valuable to you at the beginning than at the end. Of course, if you want to have a "Victory Celebration," say, or a "We did it!" party later, fine! But concentrate now on the banquet as the opening event.

6. Don't go in for surprises. Make certain, starting with the very first announcement of the banquet, that everyone understands that giving will be talked about and that they will be asked to give. One of the surest turn-offs is to reveal the purpose of the banquet between forkfuls of food.

Of course, you don't necessarily have to emphasize and hammer home in your publicity that the event is primarily to reach the budgeted goal for the coming year. No one will come simply to give money; that they can do by dropping a check in the mail. They come for fellowship, for food, for entertainment -- for a good time. The banquet must be fun in and of itself. And that's what you feature in your publicity, with the subordinate but definite mention of the giving purpose.

7. Don't sell tickets or ask for a donation to "cover expenses." Remember: you'll be asking for a great deal more than this during the course of the banquet -- and giving twice, no matter how small the first contribution, is still, psychologically, giving twice. Better to pay for the banquet out of