

Your Kick-off Event

One of the best ways to get the word out that you are beginning a widows' ministry is to begin with a Kick-off Event. You can choose to make it either a banquet, luncheon or a simple tea. This gives you an avenue to invite widows from your church, from surrounding churches, and within the community. Many times, there are not many widows within a church so they get looked over. This is a wonderful opportunity to bring together the family of God while reaching your "Jerusalem". After the banquet you can then begin regular meetings. Some churches have decided to continue to have a yearly banquet. It is a great opportunity to bring in new widows.

The main reason for the banquet is to help the widows know they are loved by Christ and the church. That is accomplished through honoring, encouraging, and loving on them.

We will show you how to plan the event and give some suggestions for the banquet. Please keep in mind that these are ideas that you can do to help make the widows feel special. Don't become overwhelmed thinking you have to do all these things. They are "ideas" to help you. Pick and choose the ones that work best for your community. You can always add more things each year. Thank you for your heart to bless widows. I know the Lord will give you ideas and favor as you work together to show forth the Lord's love to the widows of your community.

PLANNING THE KICKOFF EVENT

Decide if you will have a banquet, where you serve your guests; a luncheon where they go through a line; or a tea, with tea and cookies. Here are some steps to help in the planning.

1. Decide on a location
2. Choose possible dates and time of event
3. Food
 - a. Menu
 - b. Who will cook?
 - c. Cost
4. Choose if you'd like a speaker/singer/program/games
 - a. Cost/Accommodations/Transportation
 - b. Sound system/Podium
5. Decorations
 - a. Theme/your cost
 - b. Table ware
 - c. Name tags-VERY Important
 - i. If they RSVP, you can pre-make their name tags
6. Publicity
 - a. Social Media
 - b. Flyers
 - i. It is good to convey in the flyer that widows are being honored.
 - ii. Include: Place, Date, Time, RSVP with phone number, Dress (Casual works well and is all inclusive), Phone number for questions and if transportation is needed. (You can have an on-line form for them to fill out or to send in to register)

iii. I would advise to keep the invitations for women only. Inviting widowers can add tension to the event. You want the widows to relax and enjoy themselves.

- c. Bring flyers to:
 - i. Senior Centers
 - ii. Retirement Villages
 - iii. Other Churches
 - iv. YMCA
 - v. Grocery Stores
 - d. News Releases - Paper, Radio Stations, Senior Magazines
 - i. You can contact your local paper; they may even come out and take pictures for an article in the paper.
 - e. Personal Invitations (if you want to)
 - f. Widows can sign up by a phone call or email or on your church website.
7. Volunteers – Involve the church
- a. Several Greeters – those who love to hug and love on people
 - b. Servers – can be deacons, elders, youth, scouts, etc.
 - c. Valet Parking is an option
 - d. Red Carpet always makes them feel special
 - e. Photographer
 - f. Sound person
 - g. Clean up crew
 - h. (It is a good idea to plan food for volunteers, i.e. pizza or the banquet food.)
8. Door Prizes and/or gifts at the table and flowers
- a. This is an important part because widows miss getting gifts and flowers.

- b. Door Prizes can be gathered from around the community. Churches have found that businesses love the idea of helping widows.
 - c. Gifts at the table can be anything, from being homemade to small bought gifts.
 - d. Flowers is an option and you can always use them as center pieces.
9. Program
- a. Having a written program for yourself and those who are helping will assist to keep you on track.

10. Plan ahead for your first meeting following the Kick-off event. That way you can tell the ladies at the event when the next meeting will be. It is a good idea to have in printed up so they can put it on their refrigerator as a reminder. Later using the “Widows Information Sheet” you will be able to decide on a time that may work best for everyone for your future meetings.

Remember that not all banquets will look the same. You put the banquet together as bests fits your church and community and budget. As you work together, you are fulfilling God’s command to “care for the widows”. Your main purpose is to bring the widows together to honor, uplift, and love them in Christ.

IDEAS FOR DURING THE EVENT

1. Getting information on widows
 - a. Have paper at each place setting for widows to fill out basic info. (Widows Information Sheet for Banquets) You want to be able to get back in touch with them to invite them to your upcoming events.
 - b. You can pass around several sign-up sheets on clipboards.
 - c. Some churches have them write their addresses on an envelope so they can send them an invitation to next year's banquet. (These days, getting emails and cell phone numbers are a big help.)
2. Playing a couple of games to get them talking to one another. It also creates a fun, relaxing atmosphere.
3. Speaker:
 - a. Comedian
 - b. Widow with a special testimony
 - c. Funny stories/sayings
 - d. Band
4. Gift/Flower – one or more of these ideas
 - a. A flower for them, either real or plastic
 - b. A small gift that just lets them know they are remembered
 - c. Door Prizes are fun – you can use tickets or the Widows Information Sheets
 - d. Candy is always a nice treat – CHOCOLATE!!!
5. Pictures
 - a. It's a nice idea to take pictures.
 - b. You may want to set up a "picture area" with a nice background setting.

(MAKE SURE AT THE END OF THE EVENT TO GATHER ALL THE INFORMATION SHEETS.)