

How To Plan a Missions Fest™ Conference

First, Know the Basics

What is a Missions Fest™?

Missions Fest™ is an annual three-day global missions conference that is sponsored and organized solely by congregations from Christian churches and planned for all ages (children, youth & adults).

The Festival's goal is to help individuals find the place where their interests and abilities can best be put to use in the Great Harvest.

Its three-fold purposes are

- i. to provide information about the needs (physical, spiritual) around the world and the opportunities to serve,
- ii. to celebrate what God is doing through His people around the world, and
- iii. to challenge people of all ages to become involved in the Great Commission by going, sending, praying, and giving.

What does a Missions Fest™ look like?

1. **Plenary sessions** where most of the people come together as a large group. These sessions include music, a Window on the World, and a plenary speaker.
2. **Seminars** which are smaller groups that offer a variety of topics on mission practice and issues
3. **Exhibits** provide mission organizations space to display information and explain about their work.
4. **Children's rallies and workshops** planned to introduce children to many aspects of mission.
5. **Youth and Young Adult seminars and rallies** planned to introduce young people to mission.
6. **Field trip day** for older children and youth, generally from Christian schools and home schools.
7. **Prayer room** where people come to pray throughout each hour of the festival.
8. **Food court** where food & beverage can be purchased throughout the festival.
9. **Luncheon** where city and church leaders meet to hear one of the plenary speakers.

Now the Steps

1. Form a Representative Group

- a. Gather 2 or 3 people to discuss the possibility of a Missions Fest™ being held in the city. Use the information that defines a Missions Fest™ and the expectations contained therein.
- b. Brainstorm the names of leaders from different churches who should be approached individually. They may be pastors or significant appointed leaders within churches.
- c. Meet with these individual church leaders and share the vision i.e. that churches with different backgrounds can work together to hold a Missions Fest™ conference.
- d. When 5 or 6 leaders who are favourable to this concept, have been identified, bring them together to discuss it further. As a group, brainstorm other potential leaders that are from different denominations. Consider all Christian denominations. For example: Alliance, Anglican, Baptist, Brethren, Christian Reformed, Congregational Christian, Evangelical Free, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Nazarene, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Salvation Army, etc.
- e. When the group reaches a consensus that they understand what a Missions Fest™ is, and are prepared to work together, identify the name of the group such as, "City" Planning Team.

2. Registration of a “City” Planning Team

The values of being registered include the following:

- credibility - the roots of this name provide a history of integrity
- trust - mission organizations will recognize the name and be willing to participate.
- standards – organizations will expect a high level of competence in the way the conference is managed
- world class speakers will be more likely to consider an invitation when they recognize the name
- churches will be more likely to cooperate as sponsors if they know the conference is part of a worldwide network of similar conferences
- people attending will come expecting a comprehensive conference

Registration and Benefits

- a. Apply to Missions Fest International for a License Agreement in order to use the name, MISSIONS FEST and the LOGO.
- b. Upon receiving a signed agreement, ready-made materials, forms, job descriptions and procedures will be available to be downloaded.
- c. Consultation service will be an ongoing resource.
- d. Lists of speakers who enjoyed success as conference speakers.
- e. Mission organization lists of who are familiar with Missions Fest™ would also be available.

3. Establish the Role of the Sponsoring Church.

The secret to the success of Missions Fest is found in the cooperation of the Sponsoring Churches, no matter their size, denomination or confession. When a Sponsoring Church embraces the vision and sees it as “their” conference, there is no limit to what can be accomplished. In other words, the churches must “own” the conference and clearly be in the “driver’s seat”.

Therefore, it is imperative that from the first conference planned, a significant proportion of those who attend, need to be from the Sponsoring Churches to give the conference a critical mass from which to build.

When Sponsoring Churches are committed to giving leadership to Missions Fest, pastors testify to the enormous benefits that the role Missions Fest plays in the encouragement and revitalizing of the members of their congregation.

To be identified as a **Sponsoring Church**, it is important to agree...

- a. with the Statement of Faith adopted by Missions Fest™
- b. with the Policies of Missions Fest, and to work within those guidelines
- c. to work with other Sponsoring Churches in planning and managing the Missions Fest™ conference.
- d. to appoint 1 or 2 representatives to serve on behalf of the church
- e. to recruit volunteers from the congregation to help manage the conference.
- f. to provide an annual financial gift to the Planning Team to assist with the expenses.
- g. that the conference belongs to it, that Missions Fest should be posted on the church calendar and that it will bring its congregation to the conference.
- h. to sign a Registration Form showing agreement to these principles.

4. Form a Representative Planning Team

- a. Assuming that those who have formed a Planning Team also are seen as representatives of individual churches, confirm with their church that they will serve as Church Representatives.
- b. Appointment: The person(s) is appointed by the local church to represent the congregation on the Planning Team of Missions Fest. (A maximum of two per church have voting privileges.)

5. The function of the Church Representative will vary ...

Before Missions Fest

- to maintain communication with church leadership regarding the plans and activities of Missions Fest.
- to attend the scheduled planning meetings (approximately 5 in a calendar year).
- to serve as a member of the Missions Fest registered society.
- to work with one of the departments of the Planning Team to prepare for the coming festival.
- to recruit people who will volunteer to help during conference. Plans are available that will make this job manageable and attractive.
- to advertise Missions Fest to the church; distribute brochures, and materials; arrange for opportunities to speak to the church and print information in the church bulletin.

During Missions Fest

- work with one of the departments during the conference.
- host a seminar, if possible, in order to learn firsthand information about world missions.
- be available to counsel & pray with people who respond to challenges during plenary sessions.
- step in and offer assistance during the conference to help in situations that might need assistance.
- evaluate the festival while attending and be ready to recommend changes at the first planning meeting following the conference.

Following Missions Fest

- record a personal evaluation of the conference.
- make recommendations at the next Planning Team meeting for future conferences.
- meet with own church leaders to ascertain what has been learned at Missions Fest that might be put into action.

* The history of Missions Fest provides abundant evidence of how volunteers take on responsibilities of managing the conference as “owners” with ongoing enthusiasm and commitment.

6. The First Team Planning Meetings

When Church Representatives begin meeting together, they should include the following topics. (Many recommendations for each topic are available on the website for registered cities.)

- an Executive Committee
- a proposed Date for the first Missions Fest™.
- a Venue.
- a Theme
- Plenary Speakers
- Mission Organizations
- The Planning Team – Divisions of Responsibility
- The layout of the conference plan
- Funding
- Career Planning

7. Preparation for the First Team Planning Meeting

- a. provide each Church Representative with a copy of the following:
 - i. an Agenda for the meeting.
 - ii. a Statement of Faith as adopted by Missions Fest™
 - iii. a Statement the Policies of Missions Fest™
 - iv. a Registration Form for each Sponsoring Church

- b. The Agenda should include the follow items:
- i. acceptance of an interim chairperson to chair the meeting and acceptance of the agenda. Prayer.
 - ii. the appointment of a Recorder of this meeting to take Minutes and record the names of all who is in attendance, with phone number, address and the name of their church.
 - iii. review the description of a Missions Fest™ conference and show the License Agreement.
 - iv. review the role of a Sponsoring Church.
 - v. review the role of a Church Representative.
 - vi. nomination of Executive Officers: chair, vice chair, secretary, treasurer. (each officer should be a Church Represented, appointed by his/her church, and should represent a different church and a different denomination.)
 - vii. a motion needs to be made that a bank account needs to be opened named, “Missions Fest ‘City’” and it should have three signatures, any two of which to sign when needed.
 - viii. determine the day, time and location of the next meeting. The Recorder should make arrangements with the newly appointed Secretary to have the Minutes duly prepared for making copies for each person who attends the next meeting.
Remind the Church Representatives to have the Registration Form completed, signed and brought to the next meeting with the first financial donation from their church.
 - ix. if there is no other business, pray, and adjourn the meeting.

8. **Bank Account.** The Executive Committee needs to open a Bank Account in the name of “Missions Fest ‘City’”. The Bank will likely need a copy of the Minutes and require at least three signing officers from the Executive committee.

9. **The Second Team Planning Meeting.** Here are some topics that should be on the agenda.

- a. Review the Minutes of the first planning meeting by the Secretary.
- b. Financial Report by the Treasurer. Report on the opening of a new Bank Account a statement of how much, if any, funds are deposited.
- c. The Secretary and Treasurer will make arrangements to collect the Registration Forms with the financial donations from the Sponsoring Churches. A receipt needs to be written for each donation received. The Treasurer and at least two other persons shall count all funds received and a record of it signed by two signatories. (These funds need to be deposited immediately.)
- d. A proposed DATE of the first Missions Fest™. The following considerations should be made:
 - i. not to use a date currently being used by other Missions Fest™ conferences
 - ii. a time of year that does not conflict with other major events in the city
 - iii. a time of year when most people are available; days of the week when most people are available; Sunday is one of those days.
 - iv. a time of the year when weather conditions are best.
 - v. a minimum of 3 days including Sunday is recommended.
- e. A VENUE. Consider the following:
 - i. a neutral (non-church) venue is ideal but not necessary at first. If a church, it needs to be committed to Missions Fest. Other buildings nearby can be included such as schools, halls, and other churches.
 - ii. a location where public transport is available.
 - iii. a location where there is access to food and toilets.
 - iv. a venue that can seat a large gathering, several seminar rooms that seat 75 to 150, space to have many exhibits, an area for children’s workshops, an area for youth gatherings.
- f. THEME of the conference
Many themes can be considered such as: the least reached, the city, the young world, world religions, reconciliation, an holistic approach, poverty, innovations, the lost world, etc.

10. Plenary Speakers

- i. Always select those who have heart for the spiritually lost.
- ii. Balance the team: a missionary statesman, one who gives a strong Biblical base for mission, a missionary woman, a missionary-minded expatriate, a youthful Great Commission person.
- iii. Try to have a mix of denominational backgrounds.
- iv. Because some speakers have very busy schedules, it may be necessary to invite them two years in advance. If you receive confirmations early, it is then possible to advertise their coming a year in advance at the next Missions Fest conference.
- v. When inviting them, it is usually important to state in your letter that you are “exploring” with them the possibility. Therefore, after describing to them that you are a Registered Missions Fest, ask them two questions: if they would be interested, and if they are available on the dates you have given. When you get a positive reply, then provide your invited speaker with a clear invitation along with a Speaker Policy document that outlines how you are prepared to take care of your speaker and what expectations you have for them.

11. Mission Organizations

- i. Always invite mission organizations that function in terms of the Great Commission. These organizations are involved in evangelism, church planting, discipling, translating scripture, missionary support services and theological preparation for potential missionaries. Many now see themselves as “holistic” in that they bring the Gospel + Good Works (Eph 2:10). This means that they include medical, educational, occupational, technological, business training, and providing short term loans to enable the poor to establish ways of making a living. Mission organizations can belong to associations that require standards of integrity and accountability and after examination, are given credentials. Such mission organizations ought to be suitable to participate at Missions Fest™.

However, many organizations that are doing good work, are not necessarily mission oriented. Their prime objective is not to actively reach out to the “spiritually lost” but to encourage believers and take care of their needs at home. Active evangelism is not part of their mandate. Consequently, they do not make a good fit at a Missions Fest™ although they would like the publicity.

Furthermore, some organizations are mainly involved in fundraising and do not send missionaries and teachers into other cultures. They encourage dependency on the “rich” nations to provide the needs of their workers. Some discourage the sending of missionaries. Such organizations are also, not a good fit at Missions Fest. Their presence can interfere with the overall purposes of the festival.

- ii. Questions to ask when organizations inquire about coming to participate in a Missions Fest:
 - Ask the organization to provide their published Statement of Faith.
 - Ask them for a description of their purposes, activities, and a history of their achievements.
 - It may be necessary to request references from people who do not work with the organization.
 - When satisfied with the information, an Application Form is sent. Remember that an application is not a guarantee that this organization will be accepted.
- iii. New organizations and organization without a consistent history of 4 or 5 years, are generally not accepted. Missions Fest™ is not the place to launch a new organization. Reasons. Missions Fest™ is seen by the public to have invited organizations that are reliable

and have a good history of operation, integrity and financial accountability. Much trust is placed in Missions Fest to have done its own investigation for the safety of the public. Since new organizations cannot provide a history of operation, they should not be invited.

12. The Planning Team – Divisions of Responsibility

Here is a list of most of the necessary divisions:

- Audio/Video Production
- Children
- Facilities
- * Finance
- * Hospitality
- * Office
- * Plenary Sessions
- * Prayer / Counseling
- * Publicity / Publishing
- * Seminars
- * Translation
- * Young Adults
- * Youth

Each division may have several departments. (see the flow chart) Most of these positions can be recruited from within the sponsoring churches where there are many trained and professional people, eager to participate as volunteers.

13. The layout of the conference plan – some handy tips

- Include Sunday. For many people, Sunday is the only day they can attend. Therefore, if the venue of the conference is within a city church building, it is very important that this church has embraced Missions Fest as their conference. Otherwise, the conference will be seen as an “outside event”. Sunday will not be a possibility and it may be rather expensive.
- Create a plan that alternates Seminars and Plenary Sessions. This helps to develop rhythm and variety to the event. Plenary sessions create cohesiveness, build momentum, inject the joy of coming together, and highlight parts of the conference that might be missed by those who may have just arrived. After two blocks of seminars, a break to a plenary session is recommended.
- Saturday beginning. The choice is to begin with seminars or a plenary session. Both have been tried. Since everyone has a different life style, people will not all arrive at the same time unless there is a special attraction. Having a plenary session not full at the beginning of the day is not nearly as discouraging as having a seminar with only two or three people in attendance. Beginning the day with a plenary session has proven to be best and helps to set the tone for the day.
- When should children meet? Mainly when the plenary sessions are happening. At the end of these events, it is good for the children to have a break, meet with their parents for food and visit the many interesting exhibits. Specialized workshops can also be arranged for children of different ages during the seminar blocks. Childcare would be a lost opportunity. God can call children to serve Him in mission and children can be learning about mission at Missions Fest.
- What about the youth? It is valuable to offer youth a variety of seminars designed for them. Seminar should be designed to raise important issues of life and to encourage the youth to ask questions.
- Since young people love to meet in large groups, provide several youth rallies throughout the conference. Youth rallies are not concerts. Concerts are mainly entertainment and young

people in the city, can generally find such events throughout the year. A youth rally can include participatory worship, Windows on the World, testimonies and messages that challenge young people to “give their lives totally to God and serve Him wherever He calls them”. Young people make lifetime decisions at this age.

- Young adults, ages 19 to 30, are in a stage of their lives when they are in training (university or trades), getting married and starting families. This is a time that they can begin their missionary career. Seminars and rallies are also valuable occasions to identify with the opportunities for young adults.
- Begin strong and end strong. In planning a Missions Fest, begin and end with the “strongest speakers”.

14. Funding. One of the distinctives of a Missions Fest™ is that general admission is free. This makes it possible for anyone to attend.

- However, there are real expenses that must be met when holding a Missions Fest, such as publicity, travel and hospitality of plenary speakers, rentals of venues and equipment. Every city has different resources and needs. The greatest resource are volunteers—people willing to help in many, different ways.
- Funding comes from three sources:
 - annual donations from the Sponsoring Churches
 - rental of exhibit space from mission organizations
 - donations collected during plenary sessions and in donation boxes placed in strategic locations throughout the conference.
- Every Missions Fest needs a plan for receiving and dispensing of funds
 - a budget estimates amounts expected to be received and amounts to be spent.
 - plans are needed for collecting funds during the festival, counting & documenting each offering with witnesses, and depositing them safely.
 - tellers who count the money must be appointed by the Sponsoring Churches as having a history of integrity. It is not advisable to advertise for teller volunteers.

15. Career Planning. Some of the fruit of a Missions Fest are those who feel a calling to participate in mission.

Goal: Helping people to take the Next Step

- One way to encourage people, is to provide a career planning service staffed with trained people.
- set up a station where people may meet, set up 20-minute appointments. Those providing the service should listen to clients and suggest how they can take the next step, such as...
 - selecting a number of mission organizations the client could visit during the festival
 - considering a choice of training institutions for study
 - register for the next Perspectives on the World Christian Movement course or go online.
 - make other preparations in order to confirm one’s calling
 - make plans to speak to one’s pastor and missions committee for further counsel