

PLANNING A
BRIDGE
EVENT
AFTER **ORPHAN SUNDAY**



CAFO | CHURCH *ministry*

THE CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE FOR ORPHANS

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CREATING SMALLER CIRCLES

THE HEART OF ORPHAN SUNDAY

Orphan Sunday, and its counterpart Stand Sunday, are unique opportunities set aside every November for churches around the country – and around the world – to recognize God's heart for vulnerable and orphaned children and call their people to respond in a variety of ways. While your church may choose to recognize Orphan Sunday on a different date during the year, or perhaps participate in an Orphan Sunday type service or event in a different way, the heart of Orphan Sunday remains the same – God has uniquely called and equipped the Church to care for orphans and vulnerable children – and we are better when we do that together! That's what Orphan Sunday is about.

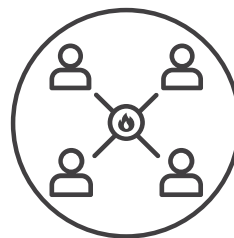
But it doesn't end there...

CASTING A VERY WIDE NET

Think of Orphan Sunday as a wide net – a very, very wide net – that you toss over your entire church. The message is clear – ***“We're not all called to do the same thing, but we are all capable of doing something.”*** That's a net that covers EVERYONE – from students to senior citizens, singles to married, empty nesters to young families, those who can bring children into their homes and those who can't. Every! Body! Now that you've done that at your church, what are the next steps? How can you begin to draw that very wide net in to see who God catches up in it? Consider creating smaller circles...

CREATING SMALLER CIRCLES

Think of your whole church as a large circle, and your goal is to connect the “interested” (those considering getting involved) and the “involved” (those already engaged) into a smaller circle.



Your Orphan Sunday action item is simple and clear – to toss the large net out and begin to draw it in – moving people from the larger circle into the smaller one.

This smaller circle is called a “Bridge Event”.

WHAT IS A BRIDGE EVENT?

Bridges cover gaps – from where we are to where we need to be. That’s what bridge events do – they are mid-size gatherings that provide a pathway for people to move from isolated and anonymous in a crowd on Orphan Sunday to being connected, and ultimately involved. That’s a pretty big leap, and why bridge events are important.

ORPHAN SUNDAY

ISOLATED
ANONYMOUS



“BRIDGE” EVENT

NEXT STEPS

CONNECTED
INVOLVED

Bridge events are your next “call to action”. Whether your Orphan Sunday is a full sermon, a prayer, a time of sharing stories of families and children – or all of the above – you leave people with a clear and actionable “next step” – to sign up for the bridge event. As you cast that net wide and slowly start to

draw it in, you will catch up not only those who are already involved, but those who have been privately and personally considering getting involved for perhaps months, if not years. This smaller gathering becomes a safe place for them to publicly process what has been largely private and personal, and to be encouraged, connected and challenged with others along the way.

Bridge events provide a safe place for people to bring their private and personal considerations into a public space.

Getting people that share a similar passion in the same room together is powerful. It takes individuals and turns them into community – a place where they can find support, encouragement and clarity along their journey. It also helps create critical mass for ministry growth. If you can get 10, 20, 50, 100 people in a room around a common cause it speaks volumes to those attending – “We’re not in this alone!” – and to the leadership overseeing – “People are getting involved!”

Whatever passion was once isolated within each one of them individually is now given the opportunity to collectively burn together – better, bigger and brighter.

WHAT IS THE BEST BRIDGE EVENT?

EXAMPLE BRIDGE EVENTS

The goal of your bridge event is simple – to move people into smaller circles with one another so they can get the connection, resources and support they need to take their next best steps forward. This could take on a variety of forms, so the challenge for you is to identify what type of event fits the culture of your church and whether or not you have the resources necessary to pull it off. A few simple suggestions could include:

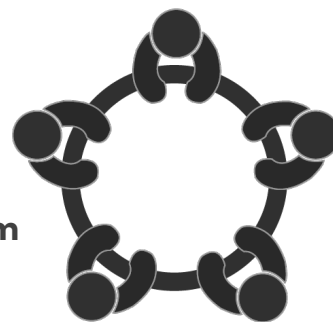
- **Invite people to a social event — a BBQ, family day at the park, etc.**
- **Host an informational luncheon after church. Share stories, cast vision and connect.**
- **Form a small group where you'll read a book or walk through a study together on the subject of God's heart for the orphan.**
- **Research local and national orphan care conferences, workshops or forums and take a group from the church with you.**
- **Meet over coffee with people who share a similar heart as you. Learn from those who have gone before you.**

There are endless amounts of opportunities you have to begin connecting people into community. Be creative! However, while anything you do to connect people with each other will be beneficial, there's one that seems to be the most impactful: a lunch after your worship service.

THE BEST BRIDGE EVENT: LUNCHEON

Why is a luncheon so impactful? Here's a few reasons:

- **Free food. No explanation needed!**
- **People are already at church. It's hard to get them back once they leave.**
- **Child care can be offered.**
- **People can sit in circles together at tables to eat and connect.**



A luncheon (or some variation of that) helps to remove barriers to attendance (food provided for free, childcare provided for free, immediately following church) and creates a relaxed, welcoming environment for people to connect and be encouraged to take the next steps.

WHAT TO DO AT A BRIDGE EVENT

The goal of your bridge event is to help people feel connected, inspired and informed. On average you will have 60–90 minutes together in a luncheon. Here's four strategic and essential things you MUST do:

1

SHARE STORIES

Set aside as much time as necessary to allow people to introduce themselves. They can answer a few simple questions for the rest of the room or small group at their tables: *Who are you? Married? How long? Kids? How many? Why are you at this luncheon today? What has your involvement in orphan care been?*

2

INTRODUCE LEADERSHIP

When people don't know where to go or who to talk to about something, they won't go anywhere or talk to anyone about it. It is important you use the bridge event as an opportunity to introduce your ministry leadership – whether one point person or a full-blown ministry team. In introducing the leadership in you answer those two very questions — *Where do I go and who do I talk to?* Now they know.

3

CAST VISION

Vision is painting a picture for others of what the future looks like in a tangible and concrete way. It is important you answer three fundamental questions when sharing the vision of your care ministry: *1) Why are we doing this? 2) How are we going to do it? 3) What are we going to do next?*

4

DEFINE NEXT STEPS

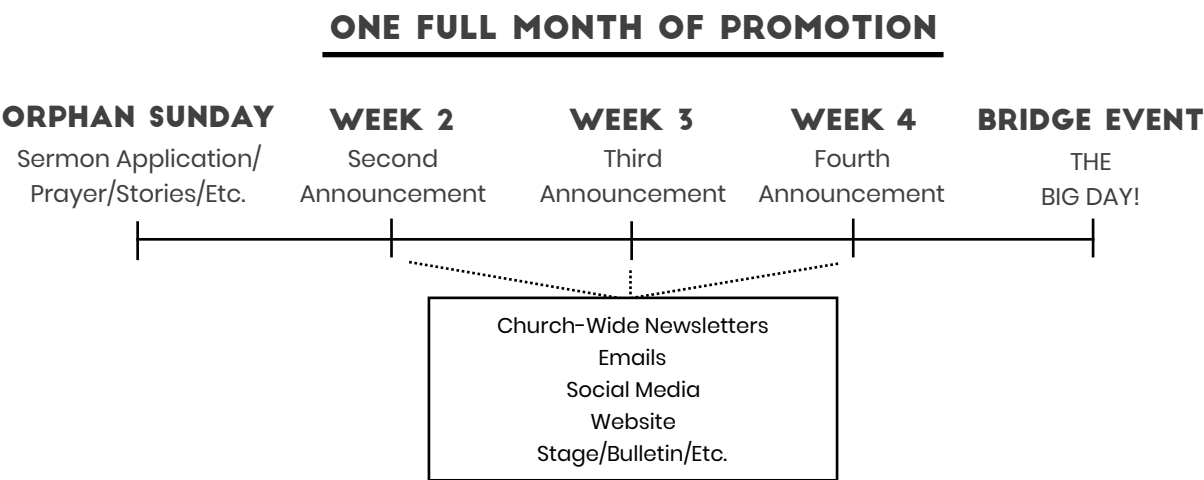
It's imperative to spend time during a bridge event letting people know what they can expect to happen after the bridge event is over. They should leave the room with a very clear understanding of what is coming next, when it's coming, where it's coming and why it's coming. When you increase clarity you reduce anxiety. The goal is for people to leave with a clear, actionable plan to pursue whatever their next best steps are.

PROMOTING A BRIDGE EVENT

The bridge event is the clear follow up action item to Orphan Sunday: *“In response to today, sign up for this event.”* If possible, allow approximately one month to promote your bridge event – or as much time as you can. A couple weeks? Great!

It is important you not just announce the bridge event once, but that you continue to announce it every week leading up to the event in a variety of ways — i.e. stage announcement, postcards/flyer/bulletin, website announcement, emails, personal invites, etc. Every church chooses to promote key events in different ways. Find out how your church does it and take advantage of as many of them as you can every week leading up to the actual event.

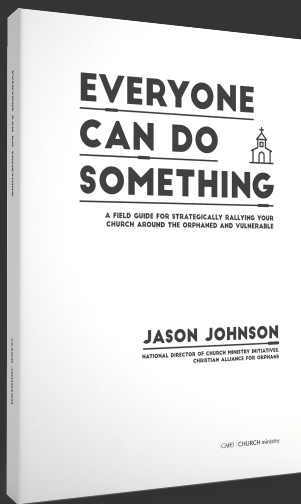
The following chart is a sample of what your promotion strategy might look like:



WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE THE STAGE?

Even if you don't have the stage/pulpit, it is still imperative to have a promotion plan in place, and to work the plan as diligently as you can. It will likely be more “grass roots”, dependent upon personal invites, emails, social media posts, passing out postcards or other more unconventional methods of promotion.

Are there other places in the church you might gain access to in order to help get the word out? What about a note home with each child in the children's ministry? A small blurb in the weekly bulletin or church newsletter? A few posts on the church's main Facebook page? A social media blitz on friends' pages? Get Creative!



This guide is an excerpt from the full length book,

EVERYONE CAN DO SOMETHING

Strategically Rallying Your Church Around the Orphaned and Vulnerable

LEARN MORE:

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orphan
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