

A MANUAL TO HELP AND ASSIST WITH

The Gathering of God's People

Introduction

... The church, you see, is not the peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence...

Ephesians 1:22-23 the Message

This is a **working** manual to **help** all those involved in putting on meetings, gatherings or events of God's people. We have a fantastic **privilege** to host the body of Christ and this privilege should get our **best** attention and efforts. This manual is a **guide** to help with **excellence** of presentation and staffing. This manual considers **manpower** requirements and **venue** layout. This manual is **not** to be used when considering the content of the meetings, gatherings or events that you are **hosting** – use your **bible** for that!

This manual is **designed** to be a **servant** and not a **master**. You may discover **better** and more **effective** ways; use them!

It is our **prayer** that the people attending will be **inspired** to be the **best** that they can for **Jesus** in a **world** that desperately needs!

Keep going for it

James

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Set Up Advice

After 10 years of setting up venues I have learnt some lessons of what makes life so much easier when getting ready for a gathering of people. I believe that the following will help when getting ready for a group of 10 or 1,000.

1. Prepare Well

The worst thing that can happen is when a team turn up to get a venue ready for an event and they are not prepared. I follow a simple routine for preparation:

You need to see it before you see it – imagine what you want the venue to look like before you get there. Think about where you want the stage, the screens, the chairs and the stewards etc. this gives you a plan to work toward.

Communicate what you see – in advance, talk to your team about what you see. This will help them be able to plan regarding equipment. It will help you be able to spread the work load out amongst the staff. You all are now working toward the same objective.

2. First thing is First

As the leader, you need to be the first on site. Pray!

Once your team arrive, pray!

It's amazing that we can tend to leave God out of the equation until the worship starts! We forget that he wants to be involved! He wants to help!

3. Foundations are Key

In any venue, there will be priorities regarding time and effort. As the leader you need to decide what gets the most attention. Maybe you think the stage or pa or seating arrangements. What ever you decide allows you to manage time and staffing appropriately. Use skilled people when most needed.

Think ahead. There is no point putting all the seats out if in an hour you will have to move them all because you forgot to build the stage!

4. Time Management

I always work on the premise that any venue should be set up with at least one hour to spare. This gives time for people to rest and be refreshed.

This causes headaches because as the leader, time management is essential. Make sure that you are always on schedule i.e. by 3.30pm the stage and p.a. need to be up and running.

Give certain groups allocated time to do what they need to do. As the leader you are looking at the set up as one whole project, others aren't! The musicians are thinking only of music, stewards are concentrating solely on their role, the preacher is thinking heavenward and the prayer team find all this practical stuff intrusive.

As a leader, this is great but you have to bring balance to people's enthusiasm. Allow the musicians time to do what they need to, encourage the prayer team to find a quiet corner etc.

Your primary objectives are starting on time and completing the set up on time. To help you with this, it is suggested to timetable people correctly.

5. Lead, don't panic.

If things are not going to plan, it is down to you to speed things up. If you panic, you begin to get nasty with people. Don't panic. It is understood that there is pressure involved but panicking causes serious problems. The last thing you want is the worship leader storming out or your technical director falling out with you.

Breathe in! Now out! That's good!

Speak nicely but be assertive. You may be required to keep the peace between others so remain calm.

Talk privately to key people. There will be people involved that will respond to the pressure well. Draw them aside and urge them on to completion, they will inspire others for you.

6. Constantly Encourage.

It is essential that your only role in this set up is as foreman! Make sure you are free at all times to give direction, keep the atmosphere at its correct tension (light and yet determined), and be available to give advice where needed. You may be the best at setting the display up but here, that is not your role! Get somebody else to do it!

Be available to give constant encouragement but please don't patronise!

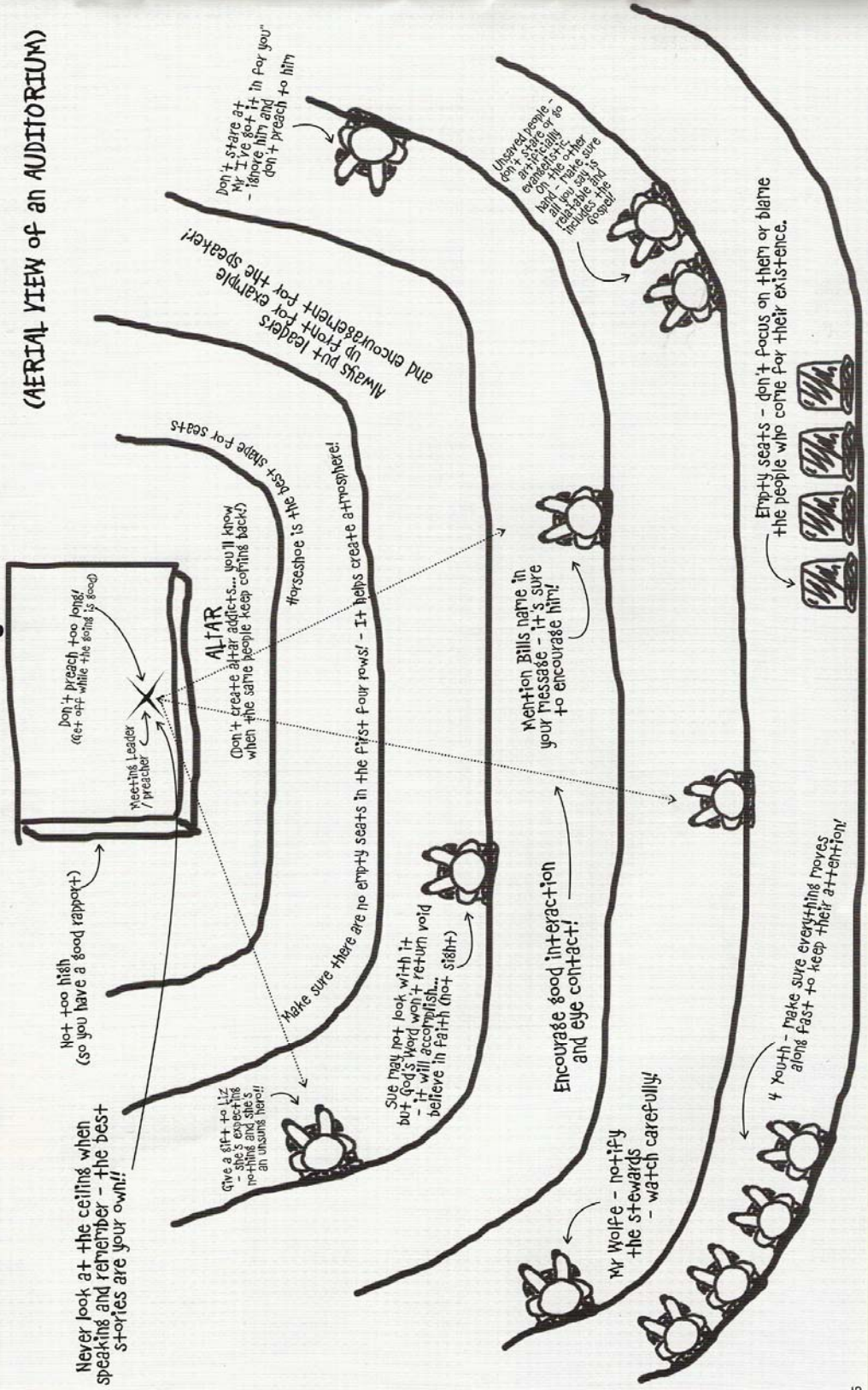
7. Celebrate Completion

There is nothing more satisfying than fulfilment. Ensure that the team feel fulfilled. Congratulate them! Encourage them to look at their work and say 'it is good!'

Through out the whole procedure ensure that you are learning how to better the process next time. You don't need to communicate your findings until next time!

How to have a Great Meeting

(AERIAL VIEW OF AN AUDITORIUM)



Never look at the ceiling when speaking and remember - the best stories are your own!

Not too high (so you have a good rapport)

Don't preach too long! (Get out while the song is good)

Meetings Leader / Preacher

ALTAR

Don't create altar adders... you'll know when the same people keep coming back!

Foreschope is the best stripe for seats

Always put leaders up front for example! and encouragement for the speaker!

Don't stare at My I've got it in for you - ignore him and don't preach to him

Unsaved people - don't stare at them - encourage them or so and on this side - all on their own - make sure they are saved - indicate people who are saved!

Empty seats - don't focus on them or blame the people who come for their existence.

Mention Bills name in your message - It's sure to encourage him!

Encourage good interaction and eye contact!

Sue may not look with it but God's Word won't return void - it will accomplish - believe in faith (not sight)

Give a gift to Liz - she's expecting nothing and she's an unsung hero!

My Wolfe - notify the stewards - watch carefully!

Youth - make sure everything moves along fast to keep their attention!

Entrance

Our western culture is one of the most advanced ever regarding the technology that is available for communication. We have mobile phones, emails, the World Wide Web and many more. If you need to communicate, in an instant you'll be talking to somebody 10,000 miles away.

And yet, when people come to the meeting that you are hosting, the 'hello' that they receive will probably be the most important!

The reason why is because your welcome will not have an agenda! It will not be dependant on a sale or a purchase; it will not be regarding an offer or manipulation. Your 'hello' will be simply that! Recognition of the person!

The entrance can be as big as you like. The most effective way that I have discovered is to adopt Gary Clarke's philosophy (Hillsong London)

...I want every person who attends to experience our church. As soon as they get off the bus, off the tube, out the car, on to the street they encounter a face that welcomes them to this awesome experience. By the time they get to the building, they are already experiencing church...

Ensure that the people that are on welcoming duty:

Smile – and really mean it.

Are **enthusiastic** about the meeting.

Are **energetic** about their role. There is nothing more depressing than lethargy.

Make **eye** contact.

Are **personable**.

Carry the **culture** of the gathering.

If the people that have this role struggle with the above, then as the leader it is essential for you to train and inspire this mode of practice. The welcome a person receives is possibly the most important aspect of any gathering. The school of thought regarding 'first impressions', is a proven one!

In setting the entrance area up, think of your home! What would you do if somebody were coming for dinner? The home would be warm, welcoming and clean. The same applies here!

Displays and Communication

Many years ago I was taught that 'it is impossible to say nothing'. I have learned over the years this true. After visiting, quite literally hundreds of church buildings and thousands of church meetings, I recognise that they all say something!

In poor display and communication we are saying:

... We are really not bothered about God, Jesus and all this church stuff. We wouldn't talk to anybody else this way, but you? And we're not that bothered about you either...

In poor presentation of the layout of the venue we are saying:

... We really can not be bothered with this. You'd never find my house like this! We talk about God being excellent but we really don't believe it!...

In a poor welcome we are saying:

... We really are not interested in you! This is our thing, make sure you don't ruin it for us...

However,

the welcome; stalls; speaking from the front; the tea and coffee; the state of the toilets; the seating; the dress code of the stewards and in fact everything that says something [which is – EVERYTHING!], if done **properly**, communicates **more** than we can possibly imagine!

We communicate that 'life as a Christian is the best', when our **venue** says so. We communicate the 'love of Christ', when people feel '**hugged**'.

People hear more with the **eyes** than the do with their **ears**.

Work hard at **signs**.

Work hard at **colours**

Work hard at **displays**.

Work hard at **being creative**.

Work hard at **communication**.

Use your **brain**.

Don't **accept** things because it has **always** been done that way.

Ask yourself, if this was a product, would I **invest** thousands?

Ask yourself, if this was a show home, would I **buy** it?

Ask yourself, if this was somebody's home, would I **be** impressed?

Ask yourself, if this was a gathering of God's people, would **God** be amazed?

I always work with **one** simple rule:

**Good enough is NOT good enough,
It will do will NOT do!**

Think about when Jesus was on the cross.

Think about before he died.

Think about life now if he had thought,

... That'll do ...

Are you pleased he gave his all?

Stewarding

The ministry is specifically designed for people with the gifting of hospitality, stewardship and encouragement.

This is the most important ministry at any gathering!

The general perception is that we live in the loneliest culture ever! This is demonstrated with more 1 bedroom houses and apartments being built than ever before; the iPod; and stories of the corpse of the elderly people being found weeks after the person tragically past away.

Stewarding has 3 primary objectives:

1. Welcome and Goodbye!

It will be our responsibility to give the most generous welcome and goodbye the people entering our services will receive that week.

2. Safe Hands!

It will be our responsibility to ensure that every person is safe; is supported; is directed and is served. All done in away that will enhance the experience of gathering with God's saints and worshipping Jesus.

3. Culture Generators!

It will be our absolute practice to be intentional in generating the culture of the gathering. It will be our responsibility to be enthusiastic, excited, passionate, dedicated, servant hearted, happy and responsive.

Training – this needs to occur regularly and prior to gatherings. The training that stewards require should be intense and yet fun; challenging and yet obvious; and practical and yet spiritual. The training should be centred on 7 models. The 7 modules are essential for best practice.

The 7 modules are:

Enthusiasm – learn to be enthusiastic. Inspire each other with the importance of the role and develop a passion for people. Help each other so that 'I don't feel like it' doesn't rule!

Health and Safety – this is very important. People need to be and feel safe. Stewards need to be competent in all situations.

Directive – The need to guide and direct people is essential. You know where the toilets are in your house don't you?

Supportive – the pastoral side of things is SO important.

Zonal & Visual – taking control of designated areas and making sure people know who the stewards are. How do they know that MRS X is a steward?

Hosting – practice, practice, practice.

Spiritual Authority – the stewards need to understand about demonology, the law and child protection. You are stewarding the gathering, what is correct and called for and what is not?

Stage Presentation and Presence

In order for people to clearly understand and catch the meaning of the importance of the gathering of God's people, public speaking and stage presentation is important.

All Praise team members, preachers, leaders etc, please note:

People hear more through their eyes than their ears!

It is essential to realise that you are not merely **presenting** the message or notices; you are doing **more** than singing a song. You **are**, whether you accept it or not, a **visual representation** of the words that are leaving your mouth!

Telling people how exciting the Christian Life is with a **miserable** face tells people that you **must** be lying.

Praising the King of King when you look **bored**, doesn't encourage people!

Jesus kept crowds of thousands hooked on stories of sheep and fish; coins and farmers, not because of the divine content and revelation but because he was a great story teller! I believe he would have been animated, excited, humorous and enjoyed telling the stories himself. A droll, bored expression wouldn't have cut it. It doesn't today!

Allow yourself to express your passion. Interact with the people. Don't **show-off** but allow what **Jesus** means to you **to be shown to all** watching on!

This is important!

People work hard all week! They are going through difficult situations! They are lonely and tired! The last thing they want is to come out on a wet and windy night to sit for a couple of hours in a room where they are made to feel bad about themselves and the world in which they live. They don't want to go home feeling worse than they did before!

Inspire people! **Enthuse** people! Allow people to **smile**! Cause people to **laugh**! Allow people to **cry**! Give people **hope**! And let people realise that **Jesus** is **awesome**!

Preaching

To declare God's word is not something to mess around with! It is extremely important to get it right! God's word is powerful and those who find themselves in the privileged position of preaching must, before God, do everything they can to get it right! Some things to help:

It was once said, 'if you fail to plan, you plan to fail'!

Study and practice.

Make good and **clear** notes.

Listen to experienced preachers and learn to handle God's word properly.

When listening to great preachers, don't think it must be easy!

Work **hard!**

Be relevant.

Be **obedient.**

Don't **try** to be funny!

Preach in context.

Never **use** the public pulpit to prove a private point!

Be humble.

Realise you are **servng.**

Bring **appropriate** application.

Preach toward a **heart** response.

Think!

Pray!

A lot!

Finally, **enjoy** it!

Response

You have been there!

You have been in the **meeting** when the **preacher** has asked for people to put their **hand** up to be a Christian.

You have **heard** “thank you”. “I see that hand”.

You have **looked**. The same as I have, and **seen** no hands!

The **response** time or **altar** call is one of those things that occur across the **globe**, across the church **spectrum** with extremely differing effects.

When I was a young boy, my dad took me to an auction in Stoke-On-Trent. My uncle was going and we tagged along! The auction was in a huge pub near a railway bridge. I was so excited!

The auctioneer had a vast array of products that would *revolutionise* your life. There was TV remote controls that also made tea and coffee; alarm clocks that walked the dog; washing up cloths that never need to be washed themselves and so much more.

What I also noticed that the price was too good to be true! There were prices that were discounted for this one day by hundreds of pounds. I remember hundreds of people crammed in to this pub desperate to make the most of this one special day.

Hundreds of desperate consumers were listening to every word of the auctioneer. The auctioneer was a man with a microphone and he had ‘stewards’ helping him. He presented an outstanding speech about how great the products were.

Then, the response! **“If you want this amazing offer, come to the front!”**

Scores of people rushed forward. The *stewards* helped form an orderly queue and the auctioneer began to deliver.

Then, as a small boy being carried away by this awesome experience, I noticed things were *not* what they seemed. In the corner, boxes were being brought in consisting of the same products that the auctioneer said “*only 3 left at this price*”. When I say boxes, I mean hundreds of boxes!

I turned to my father who informed me that the whole thing was “**a con**”.

Move on 25 years.

Today.

A man with a microphone.

Many stewards.

Calling people to the front.

....

The point that I'm trying to get across is this. The response time or alter call is a real and private thing! Very often, there is a desire to validate the gathering by producing a show that has 'results'. Remember your thoughts watching as no hands went up as the voice said "thank you", "I see that hand"? Listen, we are dealing here with REAL people with REAL lives and REAL hurts.

Ensure that you are genuine!

Remember, the whole reason is the gathering of God's people. God is watching! He loves His people. We have a responsibility to be right.

Be creative! Allow the time of response to mean something to the people. Bring challenge and believe God for great things.

"The con is on!" or "God is in the house"? - YOU DECIDE!

Breakdown

The gathering is finished.

The people have vacated the building.

A 'Break Down' is on the cards!

Not that type!

Breakdown is very important. At the beginning of this journey you entered a venue. You cleaned it and prepared a fantastic facility to house God's people. It is now time to put it back how you found it. Except for one thing! Due to the fact that we are *'blessed to be a blessing'* and aim to be *credible witnesses*, leave the venue not the same as you found it, but **BETTER!**

The **breakdown** is the **setup** in reverse. However please allow for people to be a little more tired than during set up!

Delegate roles and be free to assist and encourage where required. Watch for tensions and people slacking off. Encourage people through to completion. Talk of the great meeting and thank people for their labours.

Lessons may have been learned during set up. Please use those lessons now if required. An example of this would be if you saw 2 people really didn't work well together during set up, now would be a good time to give differing roles to accommodate their differences.

It is usually a good thing to provide food and drink at this point, or prompt those involved that after breakdown food and drink is available.

Always be aware that the process has been long and enduring for all involved. Avail yourself to any situation where spirits may need to be kept *high* or *controlled!*

Be aware that for some people their time commitments are different from others. Also be aware that breakdown is another great tool for relationship building and disciple making.

Ensure that the venue is left clean and tidy. Ensure that all the residing staff are happy and encouraged. Aim to leave your 'spirit' on the place and vacate in a *fulfilled* sense.

Leadership/ Management of Volunteers

Throughout this whole manual, it is evident that working in isolation is not possible. For the gathering of God's people to be a success, it needs people to be involved. In order for this the leader or manager has to handle the people with great care.

99.9% of all church labour is done by unpaid, volunteer staff. Volunteers are not employed by you, you are not their boss! The vast proportion of the volunteers will go to work on Monday morning with a boss that really doesn't cause their life to be great! Don't be seen in the same light!

As a leader of volunteers, you have to win their respect. You have to lead them not boss them.

After a period of close work, they might perceive you as their boss. They might choose to respond to you very positively and act on your every request! That is their choice, not yours.

Look to always **encourage**, even in rebuke.
Try to keep **calm**, even when to want to burst.
Enjoy working together.
Serve them in anyway you can.
Lead, don't boss.
Example, don't instruct.

It is a very privileged position to find yourself in i.e. people VOLUNTEER their time to help you fulfil your responsibility!

Please handle with care.

Conclusion

There it is!

We hope that you benefited and were inspired.

This manual set out to help you with the gathering of God's awesome people. It gives a few experiential examples.

It is our belief that if we get back to realising church is called to be the *head and not the tail*; we will again experience the same and more than the first century Christians. When reading the book of **Acts**, consider what people might be reading in the future about this generation of church.

It is our **prayer** that the people that attend realise that they are loved for who they are and be **inspired** to be all that they can be for **Jesus** in a **world** that is in desperate need!

Be the best that you can...

Keep going for it,

James Galloway
Senior Pastor Bethel City Church, Stoke on Trent. England.