

The More Light Presbyterians

Fundraiser

and

Event Planning Guide

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Sales pitch: if you find this guide helpful, please join or send a donation to **More Light Presbyterians**, one of the leading organizations working for the full inclusion of LGBT people in the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. Yearly membership is only \$50, so if you believe that this guide has saved you at least \$50 in event costs, time, or grief, sign up today! The online signup form is at www.mlp.org/join.html , or you can mail your donation to More Light Presbyterians, PMB 246, 4737 County Road 101, Minnetonka, MN 55345

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Contents

1. Introduction
 2. Planning timetable
 3. Critical early-stage planning issues
 4. Environmental issues
 5. Refreshments
 6. Marketing your event
 7. Money
 8. Tickets
 9. Technology
 10. Planning and pitfalls
 11. Special bonus section
 12. Conclusion
- Appendices A-J

1. Introduction

I've written this document at the prompting of More Light Presbyterians (www.mlp.org), which in the wake of a moderately successful film fundraiser that I produced in October 2002, has asked me to produce something akin to a brain dump of everything useful that I can provide to others who might be interested in organizing a similar fundraiser event. My emphasis here has been on providing as many hard-learned lessons as I can, sometimes in overly tedious detail, without worrying heavily about such niceties as style or meticulous proofreading.

This "fundraiser and event planning guide" is aimed at people who want to produce one or more events with desired audience sizes from roughly 100 to 250 people, and who have limited prior event-production experience. If you want to organize a small after-church event that has 30 people, this document is drastic overkill for your needs. If you want to organize a 500-attendee fundraiser, this document isn't for you either because you'll need a level of logistical experience beyond the scope of what I've written here. Furthermore, the focus here is on advice that I can offer based on events I've actually produced, not events I haven't. If you want to do a dinner fundraiser, or host a celebrity, or organize a benefit concert with multiple musical groups, this document will still be useful, but you'll also likely need to acquire additional logistical skills not covered here.

The author has produced the following events, all hosted at First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto (www.fprespa.org), a progressive More Light church, and the only More Light church in the Presbytery of San Jose (California):

- "The New Visions Project", a 4-event series over 4 weeks, with 18 official church sponsors, which offered a pro-LGBT response to California's anti-gay proposition 22 when that proposition was in front of the voters in early 2000. The first two New Visions events were speakers, the third was a film, and the final event was a Monday night-before-election pro-LGBT worship service which also spoke out against California proposition 22. Janie Spahr was the guest preacher at the worship service. The largest of these events drew about 150 people.

- "New Visions 2", a larger-scale version of the first New Visions project. New Visions 2 had about 25 church co-sponsors and featured 9 events over 4 weeks, with an emphasis on speakers. Two of the events were film showings, and the final event was another pro-LGBT worship service. The largest of these events drew over 100 people.

- "Martin Luther King Jr.: Civil Rights Leader or Domestic Terrorist?", a one-shot film showing and panel event on Martin Luther King Jr day in January 2002. I organized this event as a way of teaching people about, and opposing the so-called "PATRIOT act", the anti-terrorist legislation passed in late 2001 which drastically curtails civil liberties. This event drew about 80 people.

- "Family Fundamentals", the first true fundraiser that I've produced, held in October 2002. We showed the new-release documentary film *Family Fundamentals* from filmmaker Arthur Dong (see www.deepfocusproductions.com) and had guest speakers Michael Adee of More Light Presbyterians, as well as Brett Mathews, one of the gay children interviewed in the film. About 130 to 140 people attended this event.

I should mention up front that in the wake of the October 2002 fundraiser, I'm not convinced that hosting a film event is the most effective way, per planning hour spent, of raising money for a non-profit. The basic problems with a film fundraiser are first, people have a baseline expectation that they should only have to pay \$9 for a film, so you're generally not going to be able to sell tickets at, for example, \$50 each; and second, a hefty commission of the gross ticket receipts (30% in our case) goes to the filmmaker. We did turn a decent profit from the event, but if/when I do my next More Light fundraiser, I'll likely do something other than a film event - either a concert or a silent auction are good candidates.

Everyone should be aware that the canonical reference for progressive fundraisers is *Fundraising for Social Change (4th edition)* by Kim Klein, Chardon Press, 2001. This book is aimed at boards of directors of non-profits, where the expectation is that the organization will constantly be seeking to raise funds through a variety of methods not limited to one-shot events. However, the book also contains material useful for one-shot fundraiser producers; chapter 7 is entirely about "how to conduct special events". If Kim writes anything in her book that contradicts what I write here, go with Kim and not me. Chardon Press (at www.chardonpress.com) also offers a variety of other publications about various types of fundraising.

The core resource needs for making an event happen are the following:

- Plenty of human time (hours to invest)
- An event committee of 3 or more people
- Seed money
- A basic comfort level with using various productivity software on a computer

For many of my events I've violated my requirement that you have an event committee, since I've typically produced them mostly solo, but I don't recommend that you take the semi-solo approach. Producing a fundraiser takes a variety of skills, most of which I'll cover in the sections below, and it's rare that one person can do, or wants to do, or has the time to do, everything.

Don't let the large amount of text and responsibility areas in the sections that follow scare you away from doing an event. If you're doing an event the first time, start small and you won't have to do as much as you'd have to do for a larger event. On the other hand, if you're not sure that you want to organize even a 60-person fundraiser event, then you could consider just hosting a small house party, which is easier to do than many other types of events. This document doesn't discuss how to throw a house party fundraiser, but Kim Klein devotes 7 pages solely to house parties in *Fundraising for Social Change*.

2. Planning timetable

One of the worst mistakes you can make in planning any event is to not allow enough time to prepare. Do NOT attempt to throw a fundraiser on a 1-month notice; many people already have their calendars booked up a month in advance, plus you'll have to work at least twice as hard for less of a return on your time. The key to figuring out how long you'll need is to consider that many of the delay factors will be due to timetables that are beyond your control. Consider the following:

- Much of the free advertising you'll be able to get will be in monthly church and non-profit newsletters, which usually have deadlines multiple weeks prior to publication. For best results, you want an article or blurb about your event in two sequential monthly newsletters, so you need to start planning 3 months ahead of time.
- If you're trying to get other organizations to co-sponsor your event, the governing bodies that can make the decisions about whether to sponsor your event usually meet once a month, and it might take 1-2 months before your request for sponsorship gets into the hands of the right person. The typical church committee system is a good example of this: you postal-mail a request for sponsorship of your pro-LGBT event to a church, it gets into the hands of the chair of the social justice committee 2 weeks later, they give it a thumbs-up at their next committee meeting 3 weeks after that, then they take it to their church governing board 3 weeks after that, and you get the sponsorship form back in the mail 2 weeks after the board meeting. That's 10 weeks of delay time to get a "yes, you can use our church's name as an event sponsor" response back from a local church.

Kim Klein suggests that the following types of events can be done with this many months of advance planning:

- One month: summer BBQ, private home dinner, garage sale, pancake breakfast
- Three months: Book sale, cocktail party, crafts fair, haunted house, movie fundraiser, open house, wine tasting, historical site tour.
- Five months: Auction, bingo, concert, conference, dance, dinner + dance, fashion show, tribute luncheon with awards + speaker, walk-a-thon or other X-a-thon

Personally I wouldn't want to have to put together a garage sale or pancake breakfast on one month notice, but I guess if you're Kim Klein you can make it happen.

Here are some lead-time examples from the events I've done: For New Visions I and II, I typically started about 6 1/2 months in advance since I was trying to solicit official sponsorships from dozens of churches, and I couldn't create the marketing materials until the sponsorships were confirmed. For the More Light film fundraiser held in late October 2002, I started to work on the event in early July, 3 1/2 months in advance, and got official permission from the First Presbyterian Church session in late August (July would have been better, but I procrastinated).

In the planning process, certain events need to happen before other events happen, and some events need to be timed for maximum effectiveness. I recommend the following order of events:

1. Decide what event you're going to do and assemble your planning team.
2. Choose a tentative date.

3. Get initial commitments from your content providers: the outside speakers, the film distributor, the band, etc. This step might force you to revise your date. Let your content providers know that the entire event is contingent on venue approval.
4. Now you're in a position to approach your church governing body to ask for permission to use their building for the event. If you're renting a hall then the order of steps 3 and 4 isn't as important, but if you want to use your church's building, your church leadership will want to know WHAT the event will be, WHO the speaker(s) will be, and WHEN it will be. If you go to them before you have a date that you know you can work with, you're probably going to end up going in front of your church board twice, because they'll tell you to come back to them after you've got more of the details in place.
5. Fix the commitment with your content providers.
6. Put together your PR material (see the marketing section below)
7. Send out the PR material. The timing of your PR, including newsletter articles, printed information blurbs, press releases, and mass-mailings to individuals is a tricky business. If you send out a mailing about your event that asks people to buy tickets and you do it too far in advance, people will say "oh, that's so far away, I don't need to worry about it now" and they'll lose the letter. If you send the mailing too close to the event, people have already booked their schedules. My recommendation is that mass mailings where you're trying to sell tickets should go out 6 weeks in advance of the event. For newsletter articles, work with the newsletter editor to get the article (which you, not the editor, will write) into the newsletter that comes out 2-6 weeks prior to the event, then get a reminder blurb in the next newsletter issue if that issue still comes out prior to your event. Press releases which are supposed to attract secular media should be put out a maximum of 1 week in advance of the event - journalists work on short-term timetables, so any release about your event sent out more than a week prior to the event will probably be ignored.

3. Critical early-stage planning issues

One of the earliest decisions you have to make, after you determine what your event will be, is the date. A bad date will kill your event. A good date increases the chances that your event will be well-attended and therefore more successful. When you choose an event date, there are several things to watch out for: bad months, bad days of the week, and conflicts with other known events.

BAD MONTHS: Stay away from late November, all of December, and all of January as a minimum. November and December are holiday-season months when people are already booked solid with parties, church events, concerts, plus they're having to buy their holiday gifts for everyone. In January, people are tired from the holidays, plus they're paying off their credit card bills from December. Personally I wouldn't want to schedule a fundraiser event for any of the months November through early February. The only exception I can think of is if you're trying to establish your event as a quasi-official Yearly Holiday Fundraiser, and if you're willing to put up with the pain and suffering of having to compete on people's schedules with all the other events out there, year after year until people start coming to *your* party instead of all the *other* parties, then you could try for a December event (with an appropriate holiday theme, of course). Those of you who aren't masochists will probably want to steer clear of at least November through January.

I'm also of the opinion that in the vast majority of cases you want to stay away from May, which tends to be loaded with end-of-school-year concerts and events, and August, when everybody I know takes vacation.

If we eliminate the bad months, that leaves you with late February through April, June and July, and September and October as preferred months for a fundraising event.

BAD DAYS OF THE WEEK: If your event is an evening event, you really want to schedule it for a Saturday night. Why not Friday? Because on Friday night people are tired from a week of work, so unless you've already sold them tickets in advance, they're less likely to come. If your event is an afternoon event then you probably have your choice of either Saturday or Sunday afternoon; I know of no strong reason to prefer either choice.

DATA POINTS THAT PROVE I'M RIGHT: As a totally unscientific survey, I see that as I write this paragraph (January 2003), my calendar shows that the most recent fundraiser I was invited to was on a Saturday night in September 2002, and the next two fundraisers I've been invited to are on a Saturday night in late February and a Saturday night in early March. All of these events follow my Saturday rule and my good-months rule.

EVENT CONFLICTS: As you choose your date, ask around for possible major conflicts. Is there a major sporting event (televised or local) on the day you're proposing to hold your fundraiser? How about a major musical event such as a rock group or other performing artist? Even if the constituency likely to attend your event isn't likely to attend a conflicting local event, will traffic be tied up so badly that people can't get to your event on time, so then they'll have a miserable time when they do because they arrived late?

Some event conflicts can't be planned around; you just have to deal with them because they happen unexpectedly. For example, the October 2002 More Light fundraiser happened to fall on the same day as game 6 of the World Series... which wouldn't have been a problem, except that the San Francisco Giants ended up being one of the two teams in the World Series, so everybody in the entire San Francisco Bay Area wanted to stay home and watch the ball game instead of come to my fundraiser. One way to defend yourself against problems like this one is to sell advance tickets, so that even if people decide to bail out on your event, you still have their money. (Did I mention that you should have a strict "no refunds" policy?)

A TALE OF TWO EVENTS: Here's a real-life comparison. Two fundraising events for pro-LGBT Presbyterian groups in the San Francisco Bay Area were held in late 2002. One of the events was the More Light film fundraiser at First Presbyterian Church Palo Alto. The other was a dance party held by an organization whose name will be withheld to protect the innocent and the guilty. The event planners for both events did a mass-mailing of about 800 event notices to their respective potential-attendee databases. The More Light film event was held on Saturday October 26 in the evening (thus following both my good-months rule and my hold-it-on-Saturday-night rule), charged \$25 per ticket, and had about 140 attendees despite the unexpected World Series conflict that I mentioned above. The dance party event was held on Friday December 6 in the evening (violating my good-months rule as well as my Saturday-night rule), charged \$60 per ticket, and pulled in about 80 attendees (they wanted 300). Despite the significantly lower ticket cost for the More Light event, it made more than twice as much money than the dance party event due primarily to the higher attendance. The exact reasons for the attendance difference will never be known, but I'd argue that two of the reasons are that the dance party was on a Friday night (bad) in December (bad - all the holiday parties start in December).

Two additional key early-stage planning issues for your event include the content, and deciding whether or not you want to seek official sponsorships or endorsements from other organizations. Determining "content" is really part of determining what sort of event you're trying to hold - are you doing a film, a

concert (not easy), a guest speaker, a dinner, a combination of the above? My one comment on content is that in my experience, the audience-attraction factor that I can generate from invited guest speakers has been less than stellar. If you're trying to raise money, a speaker event alone probably isn't the way to go, unless you're able to get a celebrity. The we-don't-like-to-be-talked-at factor came into play unexpectedly for the 2002 More Light film fundraiser. The schedule for that evening had us showing the film first, then an intermission followed by two guest speakers: one of the documentary subjects from the movie, and Michael Adee of More Light Presbyterians. I found that during the intermission between the film and the guest speakers, roughly 30% to 40% of my audience left and went home... they had come only to see the movie! This unexpected mass departure was unfortunate since I had scheduled the pass-the-plate collection of extra funds for AFTER the intermission.

Getting official sponsorships from other organizations, such as churches or PFLAG, has both advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is that you get to list their name on your event materials as "official sponsor", plus the organization has more of a commitment to help you publicize the event to its members. The disadvantage is that you need to allow yourself several additional months of lead time to arm-twist organizations into giving you the sponsorship. That means more phone calls, more relationships to cultivate, more requests for introductions from friends-of-friends, and more delay time while you wait for other groups to hold their board meetings.

If you plan to show a film at your event, whether it's a feature or documentary film, you've got to acquire what's called a "public performance license". A public performance license is written permission from the film owner or distributor to show the film on a certain date to a public audience. It is *not* legal for you to go to your local Blockbuster, pay \$5 to rent a movie, then show the film to a 150-person audience at an event you've publicly advertised in advance and at which you're charging admission. If you want to show a film, then early on in your planning process you need to contact the film's distributor and inquire about how you can pay for a public performance license and what the cost will be. Sometimes non-profit or "educational" rates are available, so you should aim for those discounts if your organization qualifies. A public performance license for an off-release film can easily cost a few hundred dollars. For the October 2002 showing of *Family Fundamentals*, we negotiated a public performance license fee of 30% of the gross ticket receipts. We paid that 30% directly to the filmmaker.

4. Environmental issues

If you're going to go to the trouble to organize an event, you want to do it right, and you want people to leave saying "that was a good event - I'll attend it next year if they do it again!" Basic environmental issues are one of the components that can contribute to people have a good time or a lousy time. Here are some concerns to think about in advance when you're choosing a venue:

- LIGHTING, interior and exterior. Do you have enough light inside the building for your needs? If you're showing a film, can you take the lights all the way down and totally block out any exterior light? Ambient sunlight in a room can ruin a film event by making it impossible to see the film projected onto the screen. Is there sufficient exterior lighting to let people find the building, and do you have enough lighting to do anything you need to do outside? As an example, for the 2002 More Light fundraiser I needed most of the interior space for attendee chairs, so the will-call and at-the-door-ticket-sales tables went outside. There wasn't sufficient exterior lighting for these tables, so I had to purchase a standup lamp at Office Depot and run an extension cord out to it on the patio. That exterior lighting was crucial to our ability to sell tickets at the door. Be careful when you do your site survey, since you may

find yourself looking at a site during daylight hours even if your event will be held when it's pitch black outside.

- **SIGNAGE** You'll need to think out a plan for creating and posting signs that direct people to your event, to the restrooms, to any special tables at your event, etc. Once somebody finds their way to the parking lot for the building that hosts your event, you want a large sign telling them which direction to go to find the event building. Once they've found the building, if you have a registration table, ticket-sales table, or other table that the guests need to stop by before they get in, you'll want overhead signs labeling those tables so that people don't wait in a long line only to discover that they were waiting in the *wrong* line.

In many cases you'll need signs on tables. For example, you might need a "suggested donation" sign on your refreshments table, or a "tickets: \$25. Write checks to XYZ church" sign at your tickets-at-the-door table. For these signs I normally use clear plastic 8.5x11 angled signholders available from any major office supply store. These signholders are designed to stand up on a table and hold a single sheet of paper up vertically or at a slight backward lean. These vertical signholders are much better than putting a sign flat on a table, where nobody can read it without actually coming right up to the table and looking down.

- **SOUND** The vast majority of events will need some sort of sound system. For any event larger than 20 people, DO NOT assume that you can get by with simply talking loudly when you do announcements, introductions, etc. Nothing beats an amplified sound system for ensuring that you and your guest speakers have the ability to talk louder than anybody else in the room. If the facility you've selected doesn't have a usable sound system, or doesn't have one suitable for your needs, you'll want to bring in your own system or choose a different venue. More notes on sound systems appear in the "technology" section below.

- **ACCESSIBILITY:** Is your venue handicapped-accessible? If not, can you choose a venue that is? Also, does your venue have sufficient parking to accommodate all expected guests?

- **RESTROOMS:** Does the venue have enough of them? Remember that people tend to swarm to the restrooms en masse during break times, such as intermissions and after the event is over, so you need to have enough restroom capacity to handle the PEAKS, not just the average need. We held the 2002 More Light fundraiser in a building that only has 2 attached restrooms, and since I was hoping for a crowd of up to 200 people, I had to open up two other "secret" restrooms elsewhere on the church campus and tell my house manager where they were, so that people could be directed to those restrooms during the intermission.

- **INTERIOR LAYOUT:** How are you going to set up tables, chairs, stage, and other key items of furniture inside your venue building? If you've got people seated in rows of chairs, make sure you budget space for aisles, which should be wide enough to handle a wheelchair passing a single standing person. In general I like to keep to a maximum of 8 or 9 chairs in a row between aisles, otherwise the people in the middle of the row of chairs have to trample on a large number of people to get out of the row. If you're doing a film, remember that the vast majority of theaters are long and thin: long in the direction that the audience looks, towards the screen, and thin from right to left, so that you don't end up with anyone stuck on the edges who can't see the screen.

How you're going to physically set up the room is a critical decision that can require a lot of thought, so spend the time to survey the room and put some time into it. There have been times that I've spent

over an hour in the room I had reserved for an event, walking the room, checking placement of the light switches, deciding what I was going to do with the piano that couldn't be removed from the building, thinking through the optimal way to set the room for the event, etc.

- OPENING EVENT LOGISTICS: This item really belongs in an "evening of the event" section, but it's also an environmental issue so I'll list it here. At every event I've planned, I always budget the first five minutes for me to stand up and give logistics to the audience. These logistics, which I usually have on-screen as a mini Powerpoint presentation (see "technology"), generally include:

- Welcome to the XYZ event
- The schedule for tonight is: (film until 8:30, then intermission, speakers until 10 PM, etc.)
- Restrooms are in the following locations...
- Please turn off all pagers and cell phones, or set them to vibrate mode
- If you MUST place or receive a cell phone call, please step outside.
- Please fill out the yellow name-and-address cards on your seats to tell us who you are, so we can contact you about future events like this one.
- There are refreshments, donation boxes, and a book table in the back of the room.

The cell phone reminder is particularly key since nothing fouls up a good event like having somebody's cell phone go off right in the middle of a quiet part of the film, or right when your keynote speaker is addressing the crowd.

5. Refreshments

I've generally had a refreshments table, or at least a coffee/tea table, at the events I've produced, however even if you charge for food and drinks, you shouldn't expect your refreshments table to be a major source of income. As I see it, the purpose of a refreshments table at a non-meal event is to increase the quality of the event and make people happier, so that they'll come back to your next fundraiser.

The refreshments table is a good place to put at least one donations container. You might be giving away refreshments for free and simply asking for donations, or you might have a "suggested donations" pricing sheet out for the items available at your refreshments table. I recommend either of these approaches over putting a required price on each food item and then making one of your volunteers collect the money and give change. If you go with a "suggested donation: drinks \$1, cookies \$1, brownies \$2" sign on the table, you'll probably collect just as much money as you would if you actually priced the items and gave change, plus you'll free up a volunteer since you don't need a cashier at the refreshments table (however, you always need somebody around the area to keep an eye on the donations jar).

Any tabletop donation containers that you use should be large CLEAR plastic containers which you have pre-fluffed with a minimum of \$20 worth of \$1 bills. The "fluffing" of the donation container has, so I'm told, been shown in studies to increase giving, because people are more likely to join a "herd mentality" if they see a donation jar that already has what looks like a decent amount of cash in it. For containers, I've had good luck with 1-gallon and 2-gallon plastic kitchen storage containers. We've also used a 2-gallon clear glass tea jug, though I prefer plastic to glass.

6. Marketing your event

6.1 Marketing introduction

You can get the best content in the world for your event, but if you don't tell a lot of people about it, you can't have a successful event. By "marketing" I mean all aspects of publicity, which includes building, maintaining and updating a marketing database; creating, reproducing, and distributing publicity content; working with reporters; and creating and maintaining an event web site. If done correctly, marketing your event is by far the largest time sink of anything you'll do to prepare for your event. You should count on marketing consuming at least 50% of the total number of hours that you spend working on the event, and you should have at least two people (or one insane person with not nearly enough work to do at her day job) assigned to marketing.

Here are a few issues to keep in mind about marketing:

- For all intents and purposes, the job of marketing never ends. It begins very early on in the project planning timetable when you either create or update your marketing database, and when you create a draft flier to use when you solicit co-sponsorships or when you get permission from your church to hold the event on their property. Marketing continues in the planning mid-phase when you write newsletter articles and blurbs for other organizations to publish, and when you finalize your paper publicity materials and mail them out to the people in your marketing database. As you get closer to the event date, you'll be trying to get blurbs into newspaper calendars, maybe putting out a press release, sending out email to more contacts, and perhaps calling reporters to try to get event coverage. When the event is over the marketing job isn't done, because now you've got to keypunch the new names and addresses that you gathered into your marketing database.

- A basic fact of human social existence is that people tend to structure themselves into communities based on common interests. A primary goal of your marketing efforts should be to target *pre-organized communities* whose members are likely to be interested in your event. Sure, it would be great if you could blanket the entire metropolitan Chicago area (assuming for the moment that your event is in Chicago) with fliers for your event so that everybody within a 20-mile radius gets a copy, but mass-marketing gets very expensive very quickly and isn't cost-effective for small events. Instead, to market your event you'll want to concentrate on communities with an affinity for your event. If you're holding a fundraiser for a pro-LGBT organization then you should be trying to get an article into the newsletter of the local gay/lesbian center, any area PFLAG chapters, and progressive churches. This advice doesn't mean that you don't do *any* publicity outside of affinity groups, but it does mean that your highest rate of event interest is generally going to be with members of these groups.

6.2 The marketing database

If you're at all serious about doing a fundraising event, you're generally going to want to do more than one of them over the course of a few years... and even if you don't ever want to do a second fundraiser, you're going to want to hand off a list of contact information to the next person who does a fundraiser for the same organization, so that (s)he doesn't have to start all over again.

Your marketing database is how you keep track of names, addresses, email addresses, phone numbers, and other information about people, media outlets, and organizations that you want to know about your event. You live and die by the size, accuracy, and ability to generate lists and printouts from your

marketing database. Note that I distinguish your "marketing database" from a "contacts database" such as Act or Goldmine. A "contacts database" is specialized software, often used by people in corporate sales departments, designed solely to track personal contacts. Your "marketing database" needs more flexibility than what's available from specialized contact-management software.

For the vast majority of people reading this document, the correct piece of software to use to create your marketing database is Microsoft Access. I'm not a Microsoft fan, but reality says that roughly 90% of the installed base of home personal computers are running some flavor of the Microsoft operating system, and every database-driven third-party tool that runs under Windows will be capable of working with Access. If you're a Macintosh fan, Filemaker Pro might be a good bet, though you should ask your Mac-user friends for advice on this since I haven't used any Mac databases for at least 7 years. If you have a Unix geek on your planning team, (s)he might try to arm-twist you into using MySQL or PostGRES or some other freeware SQL-based database system, but I recommend against it because then you'll end up with a marketing database that only your Unix geek knows how to use or fix. By comparison, it's trivial to buy books or taking training classes on Microsoft Access.

WHAT NOT TO USE: Do not create your marketing database in Microsoft Word (or any other word processor). Do not create your marketing database in Excel (or any other spreadsheet). Do not create your marketing database on paper. All of these choices can seem like the easiest thing to do at the time, but you'll regret it the moment you need to do queries against your data, or sort to remove duplicates, or produce a report showing which people on your list have already purchased a ticket to your latest event. What you want is a real *database* application that gives you the ability to do sorts by any column, complex queries based on combinations of fields, and custom reports that can range from mailing labels to tickets with pictures on them.

This event planning document isn't a tutorial on small-business databases, however to understand portions of what follows you need to know four database terms: table, column, query, and report.

A *table* is a collection of information about similar things. The individual pieces of information appear in *columns*. For example, you might have a table titled "supporters" which contains three columns: "FirstName", "LastName", and "PhoneNumber". Then the "supporters" table itself would contain the first name, last name, and phone number for each of dozens, hundreds, or thousands of your supporters.

A *query* is a way of teaching your database to ask a question about one or more tables and then list only the entries that match. For example, you could build a query that tells your database: "give me a list of all supporters whose last names start with the letter 'o' AND who are in a zip code that starts with '952' AND who bought a ticket to last year's fundraiser."

A *report* is a pretty way of formatting either a table, or the output from a query. A report might list one supporter per page, or it could list dozens of supporters per page. You'll use reports primarily to format the output of queries so that you can print mailing labels.

You don't need to become a database guru to make a fundraiser event work - in fact, all of the (admittedly somewhat small) events I've produced in the south San Francisco Bay area have been driven off of a Microsoft Access marketing database with only three serious tables: "supporters", "churches", and "media". My wife, who is more of an Access guru than I am, has suggested that I could actually merge all three of these tables into one mega-table. However, since I've found that I tend to send different types of correspondence to people in the "churches" table than I do to the people in the "supporters" table or the news outlets in the "media" table, I've kept them separate.

My "supporters" table lists information about *individual human beings* whom I want to tell about each event that I produce. I've been slowly building up the supporters table over the past 2 1/2 years using a variety of data sources, including sign-in forms from earlier events I've produced, contact lists supplied by pro-LGBT Presbyterians in the San Francisco area, people who have contacted me via email, and so on. Here are some typical fields that you'll want in a supporters table:

- First name
- Last name
- address1 (first line of postal address)
- address2 (second line of postal address, if any - this is NOT city/state/zip)
- city
- state
- zip
- phone number (10 digits long)
- email address
- how-learned : an integer that tells you how you found out about this person
- bought-2002-ticket : a yes/no flag that you set to "yes" if this person purchased a ticket for the event that you produced in 2002. Obviously, you can have a different flag for each event that you produce. This information is useful for figuring out who is attending your events and whose names you might want to flush from your database, or at least stop sending fliers to. (NOTE: true database geeks will point out that given a series of fundraiser events, there are better ways of tracking which of those events a supporter attended than to create a new database column for each event. Unfortunately for you, I'm not a true database geek, so that's not how I do it.)

I've found that the "how-learned" integer is quite useful, because I often want to know how I learned about a certain person in my database. I have different numbers assigned to each original data source, i.e. a person gets "how-learned" set to 1 if I learned them from New Visions 2000, set to 2 if I learned them from New Visions 2001, set to 3 if I learned about them from the personal contact list sent to me by person X, and so on. Why is this useful? Well for example, now that I've finished the 2002 More Light fundraiser, I can make a query that says "give me a list of all supporters whom I learned from source number 8, AND who bought tickets this year." If the result of that query is empty, it means that *nobody* whom I learned from source number 8 bought a ticket, so maybe I should go through my database and delete all of the source-8 people to save postage the next time I do a mailing.

In addition to my "supporters" table, I also keep a "churches" table and a "media" table. The churches table lists *churches* which I generally want to tell about my events. Whenever possible there's a human being's name associated with the church, so that I can print a mailing label that says "Rev. John Smith, XYZ Episcopal Church..." but the key here is that I'm tracking churches, not individual members of a church. If my pro-LGBT contact at a church changes, then I need to find out who the new contact person is and keypunch that person's name in as a replacement in the churches table. The progressive churches stay the same, but the name of the person I mail to at that church might change.

My "media" table tracks *news outlets and organizations* which I might want to tell about my events. Since I've done several different types of events which can require sending press releases to different types of press, I've found it useful to have a few yes/no flags in my media table. I have one flag for "Bay Area" that tells me if the organization is in the San Francisco Bay Area, and another flag for "pro-gay" that tells me if this organization is likely to be particularly interested in pro-LGBT events. I've found that I can end up with multiple people at the same organization in the media table, which is OK; you

might very well want to send them all a copy of your press release or email announcement even if several people in your media table all work for the same newspaper.

If you decide to maintain a media table, you're probably going to want to track fax numbers in case you want to fax press releases or event notices at some point. My one tip here is that if you want to track fax numbers, you should set up separate columns for the area code and the 7-digit portion of the fax number. I've found that fax-blast programs such as Winfax Pro are much happier when talking to Access if they can find the area code in one column and the rest of the phone number in a separate column.

The care and feeding of your marketing database, particularly your supporters table, is an ongoing effort that can keep you doing occasional work year-round. There have been times that I've had to hold a variety of email messages in my inbox simply to wait until I had the time to keypunch the email addresses, and the names of the people associated with those addresses, into my supporters database. You should always be on the lookout for ways to add more names and addresses to your supporters list. Of course, any list you add should be a list of people likely to be interested in the types of events that you expect to organize. There's no point in walking through the white pages of the phone book typing in every name and address, because the whole point of your "supporters" table is to have a list of people who are likely to respond positively to an invitation to attend your events.

Here's an example of why you need to use a database application instead of some other home office tool. About 2 weeks before the date of the 2002 More Light fundraiser in Palo Alto, I decided that I wanted to do a postcard reminder mailing to try to stir up some last-minute ticket sales, but I needed to keep postage costs as low as possible so I didn't want to send postcards to people who had already purchased tickets. In my "supporters" table, I have a variety of different information about people. Some people only gave me their email addresses and not their postal addresses. Some people live outside of California, because they were visiting town during one of my previous events, came to the event, and filled out an address card. Some people from my supporters list had already purchased tickets, and I had created a yes/no flag in the supporters table called "bought-2002-ticket" to indicate that fact. Now I needed to generate a list of names and addresses of supporters who simultaneously matched all of the following criteria: had a postal address listed; lived in California; and had NOT yet purchased any tickets. In Access I was able to build that query in about 60 seconds, and the output of the query pruned my 800-name supporters list down to under 600. Cutting the size of a mailing database down to a targeted subset is important, because duplication and postage are expensive.

6.3 The event flier

For every event that I've ever produced, I've created an event flier. If an event is actually a series of events over multiple weeks, I've always created one flier that advertises the entire series and a separate flier for each individual event. The flier is one of your primary paper-based mechanisms for getting the word out about your event. There are several basic rules which I strongly recommend for any flier:

- It should be 8.5x11 so that anybody who gets a copy can easily toss it onto a photocopier and make more of them to distribute to their friends.
- It should have some sort of artwork or picture on it - it must NOT be only text. Text is boring.
- It should use a maximum of 3 fonts (no font clutter!)
- It should leave some empty space. The #1 sign of an amateur flier designer is a flier that tries to fill up every single spot of space with information or clipart.

- It should provide just enough information about the event to let people know what the event IS, and to tantalize them into wanting to attend. This is not the time to write a novel - use short catchy sentences or sentence fragments.
- It MUST provide all critical information about your event: date, time, place, price, major sponsor, and how to purchase tickets. Ideally, a portion of the flier itself will be the ticket order form.
- You should print your fliers onto paper which is some color other than white. Being the type-A read-my-flier-NOW personality that I am, I have a strong affinity for what Kinko's refers to as the "astro-brite" series of colors. These are the loud, sunglasses-required-for-protection paper colors such as "rocket red", "fireball fuchsia", and "sunburst yellow", also available in full reams at most office supply stores. They are NOT the pastels. Pastels put people to sleep; astro-brite colors make them pay attention.

Your flier will be what people put onto church bulletin boards. When you do a direct-mailing to your supporters database, it will be the one piece of paper that you want them to read the most. If somebody says "fax me some information on your event", you're going to fax them a copy of the flier. So you should take the time to make the flier look good, make sure you get all the basic information on it, and photocopy it onto a color of paper that attracts people's attention from 30 feet away.

These days you can use a variety of software to make a decent-looking flier. I've always used Adobe Pagemaker since I find that it provides more control over the precise placement of text and image blocks, but I believe that Microsoft Word has now evolved to the point where you can pretty much position anything anywhere on the page. PowerPoint is another (unusual) option if you prefer it to Word. If you have a serious computer artist on your team, you might end up using Adobe Illustrator. Use whatever works for you, but just remember that your flier will need some artwork or other graphic elements in it.

If you're creating a flier for an event that has a special guest, there's a good chance that you're going to want to put in a photograph of your guest's head above an appropriate caption: "special guest Jane Fleemage, president of Schmoo corporation!" Here's an important tip from somebody who had to learn the hard way: if you're using a photograph of a person's head, you need to first edit the image with a paint program (e.g. Adobe Photoshop or Jasc Paint Shop Pro) to *remove any background pixels surrounding the person's head*. Many photos look great on the web, or on square photo paper, but when you toss them onto your flier you're suddenly going to find that you don't have a picture of the person's head, instead you have a picture of a dark rectangle which happens to have a person's head in the middle of it, with a lot of distracting black-ink background pixels that your reader doesn't care about. Your paint-program edit job needs to turn all of those background pixels into white pixels (or whatever color will make your printer *not put any ink onto the page*) so that your flier looks more professional. This is a boring, tedious job that requires a lot of care and hand-whiteouts of pixels, but the darker the background the person was standing in front of when the picture was taken, the more you need to remove that background.

As an example of this pixel-edit job on headshots, below I show two photos of More Light Presbyterians field organizer Michael Adee, one as I originally grabbed the image off of the mlp.org web site, and the second after I cleaned it up for inclusion on the 2002 fundraiser event flier.



Figure 1: "Special guest: Michael Adee the rectangle"
(looks lousy on a flier)



Figure 2: Michael Adee, background
hand-painted to white in Photoshop

There are of course many other types of paper publicity that you can produce, ranging from small to large. For the New Visions 2000 and 2001 events I created half-sheet (5.5 x 8.5) glossy mini-fliers, suitable for insertion into church worship bulletins, which were simply reduced-size (and very small print, unfortunately) versions of the 8.5x11 flier. If you're doing mini-fliers, you'll either need to copy them at a photocopy shop that can also provide cutting services to cut your 8.5x11 sheets in half, or you can work with a professional printer (see comments below).

Posters are another way of doing publicity for your event, though of course as always you need a list of people to send them to who will put them up at their buildings. I've worked with two different production methods for posters. The first method I've used is to print the entire poster on a wide-carriage (13" wide) HP color inkjet printer, then take the poster to Kinko's and have them run it through their industrial laminator. This gives me 13"x19" full-color posters right out of Pagemaker, and the lamination means that you can dump a bucket of rainwater on them and nothing happens. Plus, they don't tear, ever. The second method I've used, on behalf of an event I didn't produce myself, was to print an 11"x17" black-ink-only master, then photocopy that master at a photocopy shop onto colored 11"x17" paper, with no lamination. The full-color inkjet method with lamination looks good, but it takes a while to design a good color poster, it takes a long time to print each poster, and it still ends up costing you a few dollars per poster once you add up the ink and lamination costs. For a first event, if you want posters I'd recommend you try the smaller 11"x17" size and photocopy onto yellow astro-brite, then don't bother to laminate. This method is a very inexpensive way of making posters - usually about 20 cents per copy.

Business-class copy shops such as Kinko's will also try to get you to use their industrial inkjet printers, which can print posters much larger than 13"x17", but you'll pay an arm and two legs per square foot for your printing costs. My advice: stay away; it's too easy to run up your advertising costs doing small-run jobs on expensive Kinko's equipment.

A related issue is the question of whether you should simply outsource either the design or the duplication of your fliers, mini-fliers, and/or posters to a professional designer or to a print shop. I did choose to go to a printing shop for both New Visions 2000 and 2001 because I wanted 4-color glossy-paper fliers and mini-fliers in quantities that were totally unrealistic to print on a personal inkjet printer - 1000 to 2000 copies each. I also worked with a professional designer for New Visions II in 2001 because I wanted a professional logo design done. There are, of course, several issues to keep in mind if you start thinking about outsourcing to the pros:

- Professional design work costs money, obviously, plus it doesn't always save you as much time as you thought. You still have to tell the designer what you want on the flier, write all the text, and suffer through the editing process as you fine-tune the layout. The designer I worked with for New Visions II charged a total of \$1000 for logo design and flier design, plus she handled getting the pre-press data files to her preferred printer so that all I had to do was drive over and pick up the finished fliers. \$1000 was extremely inexpensive for this type of job - she was giving me a discount because she supported the New Visions event. The \$1000 for her design time did NOT include the amount paid to the printer, which was at least another \$1000.

- Commercial 4-color printing firms generally don't have a huge amount of interest in small print runs, where "small" can often mean "anything under 10,000 copies". The typical print shop I looked at for New Visions I was accustomed to doing 10,000 to 100,000 copy runs for commercial mass-mailings or newspaper inserts, not 1000 copies of a half-sheet flier for some guy's church event. You can certainly find print shops which will take your job, but you should allow for 2 weeks turnaround between the time you get them the computer disk and the time they have your print job done, since the 50,000-copy jobs are going to take precedence over your small job.

- Many print shops are accustomed to working with designers who know what they're doing and who know precisely what types of computer image files to hand over. Print shops don't necessarily have the time or the staff to handhold you through the process of turning your Powerpoint document into something that they can use. Some print shops are willing to take your Word file or your Pagemaker file and turn it into something they can roll off their presses; many are not. If your print shop wants a PDF (the Adobe standard), you then have to go buy the commercial version of Adobe Acrobat and wade through the dozens of different settings that Acrobat has for producing pre-press digital output. My advice: for your first fundraiser, stick with paper publicity material that allows you to use a photocopier as the primary reproduction device. Don't mess with a commercial printing company until you're feeling more ambitious.

6.4 The mass-mailing

This section contains what might seem like an excessive amount of detail about what goes into a mass-mailing, but I should note for the record that Kim Klein dedicates 12 pages solely to discussing the interior and exterior of fundraising appeal letters. I do think that it's worth the effort to think through what you're putting into the mail before you send it to 500+ people.

If you keep doing events on at least a yearly basis and if you're responsible about collecting and keypunching contact information from your attendees, you'll build up a mailing database of at least hundreds of people. Whenever you do an event, you're going to want to mail these people a copy of your event flier with a cover letter inviting them to attend and bring their friends. You'll need to do a mass-mailing, which is just a mailing of many copies of the same item to a long list of people. Here I'll first discuss doing the mass-mailing yourself, since that's generally how you'll want to do it until you have quite a large supporters list. After the initial discussion, I'll comment on postage and outsourcing alternatives.

The keys to doing a manual mass-mailing are careful preparation, a careful assembly-line setup, and ideally a group of friends which you've arm-twisted into helping on the assembly line. You can prep mailings of several hundred pieces on your own without a lot of grief, but as you start pushing 500 pieces, you'll probably want to do the envelope preparation with a group of people so that you don't have to stay up all night for 3 nights in a row.

There are multiple components to a single piece of the mailing, and you have to make a decision about each component. As the person organizing a mail-stuffing event for arm-twisted friends, it's your responsibility to make sure that you've purchased the appropriate quantities of every component in advance of doing the stuffing. Nothing quite beats the frustration of discovering at 10 PM that you're 150 postage stamps short. Here are the components of the mailing:

- The *envelope type* can be a standard white business envelope, in which case you'll have to tri-fold any 8.5x11 paper that you stuff into the envelope, or the envelope can be a full-sized 9x12, in which case you won't need to fold standard paper. The 9x12 envelopes will cost you more money to mail, but you won't have to fold anything, unless you're sending a poster. You have a variety of choices for sealing the envelope: you can buy traditional wet-to-seal (lick-to-seal) envelopes, or the type with adhesives pre-applied so that you have to tear off a plastic strip to expose the adhesive, or you can buy the self-stick press-to-seal envelopes. The fancier the adhesive, the more the envelopes cost. When we did the mass-mailing for the 2002 More Light fundraiser, we did a 700-piece mailing in standard (inexpensive) white wet-to-seal business envelopes and we simply tucked the flap inside the envelope so that we didn't have to wet the glue. Separately, we also did a 110-piece mailing to my progressive churches list. I wanted that mailing to stand out when pastors received it, so we sent it in 9x12 brown envelopes and paid the extra postage for the extra weight of those envelopes.

Note that there do exist paper-folding machines which can automate the tri-fold process for 8.5x11 paper, so ask around - maybe your church has one of these machines and can save you some manual labor time by folding your envelope contents for you.

- Your envelopes need a *return address* on the outside, generally an address that gives the name and address of the church which will be your primary sponsor for the event. You can either print these onto separate address labels (here a word processor is fine for label production since you just need hundreds of identical labels), or if you have somebody with a lot of time and right type of printer, you can laser-print a return address directly onto the envelopes. Note that this latter method does *not* work well on many types of home laser printers, which can melt the glue on the envelope. In an ideal universe, your church will simply gift you with as many pre-printed envelopes as you need from the stock of thousands that they had run off at the local business printing shop.

- You need to decide, obviously, on the *contents of the envelope*. Generally you'll want at least a copy of your event flier (which you've photocopied onto astro-brite paper) and a cover letter (on white paper), but there might be other items that you want to include as well - a registration form, fliers for multiple events, etc. Every piece of paper that goes into the envelope incurs additional assembly time when you stuff the envelopes, and of course if you include too much then you'll have to pay more in postage.

In some cases you might want to personalize the content of the cover letter. For example, when I do mailings to my progressive church list, I usually personalize the letters so that the letter sent to Rev. Smith has the address of the pastor's church and starts "Dear Rev. Smith" instead of "Dear friends". Any modern word processor will allow you to do this type of mail-merge operation, which ties the output of the word processor to your database as the backend. When I do this type of personalization, it produces a 110-page Microsoft Word document where each page is a personalized letter to a different pastor. Note that you can't use a photocopier as your duplicating engine for personalized content, because by definition a photocopier makes identical copies, not personalized cover letters. I don't recommend messing around with personalized content until you have some experience, because it introduces additional complexities into the mailing and it tends to be hard on your printer if you need to print a lot of custom letters.

- Your envelope needs a *stamp*. To my knowledge, you can't simply walk up to a U.S. post office customer counter with 500 unstamped pieces of mail, throw some money at the clerk, and say "please meter these for me". The postal clerk will kindly (or not so kindly) tell you to buy 500 stamps and put them on yourself. So, you should plan to put on stamps as part of the mass-mail assembly process. To know what denomination of stamp you want, you first have to decide on your envelope type and on the contents of the envelope. Then you need to put together one copy of everything that will go into the envelope, plus the envelope itself, and weigh it on a postal scale to determine the first-class postage rate. Once you know the rate, you can buy the stamps. You'll want to use the pre-adhesive stamps, not the lick-to-stick stamps. Post offices generally have several choices available in pre-adhesive 1-ounce first-class stamps, so ask what your choices are. The stamp is part of what your recipient sees when (s)he first gets your mailing, so I treat choosing the stamp type as an important part of the mass-mail assembly process. For the 2002 More Light fundraiser I got lucky - the post office was at the time offering multicolored "love" stamps both in 37-cent (1 oz.) and 60-cent (2 oz.) denominations.

- You need the *mailing labels* that go in the addressee section of the envelope. You'll print these onto standard adhesive-backed address label sheets using your database, generally via a "report of a query of a table", which will make more sense once you actually start to build your supporters database and learning how your database software works.

Beware: if you're doing a mailing with personalized content (see above), it means that you have to physically match your personalized envelope *content* with the mailing label that goes *onto* the envelope. There's not much worse, in terms of credibility for your event, than Rev. Smith opening an envelope addressed (on the outside) to her at First Baptist Church and seeing a cover letter addressed to Friar Harrison at the local Jesuit university. If you want to do personalized cover letters, it means you have to make sure that you *print your cover letters and your address labels in the same order*, generally alphabetical by last name. This is not necessarily as easy as it sounds, since your custom cover letters will be coming out of a word processor that may have a mind of its own about how to order the database entries that it sucked in from your database, while your mailing labels will be coming directly from a database report. If you aren't careful, you'll end up having to resort your entire pile of personalized cover letters to match the ordering of your address labels. It happened to me, it could happen to you, so don't say I didn't warn you in advance.

Once you've prepared and purchased enough copies of your content, envelopes, return address labels, mailing labels, and stamps, you're finally ready to assemble your mailing. If it's a 200-piece mailing, it might be easiest to just do it on your own. For the 800-piece mailing that we did for the 2002 More Light fundraiser, I hosted a pizza/movie/ mailing party at my home and got about 6 people to come over and help prep the mass-mailing in the 90 minutes before the food arrived.

Once you've done one or two mass-mailings, you inevitably start thinking about ways to optimize on time or money. One way to optimize is on postage, with either a bulk-mail permit or a non-profit mail permit. Although these methods of mailing items can save you a significant amount of postage and though I *have* investigated the options for non-profit and pre-sort mailing, so far I've never used them. There are several reasons to steer clear of reduced-rate mailing methods until you're a hardened professional:

- Bulk-rate mail (aka "standard mail", formerly known as "third class"), although dirt cheap, gets delivered at the whims of the post office, sometimes weeks after you sent it out. As the instructor noted in one event-planning class I attended, "has anybody ever received a notice of a fundraising event 3 weeks after the event took place?" If you have, chances are that the event notice was sent bulk rate. Furthermore, bulk-rate mail doesn't receive the first-class-only service of return-to-sender, a service you need so that you can prune the bad addresses out of your database.

- Non-profit mail permits require the non-profit to pay a yearly fee (as I recall it's around \$150/year) to the post office, and my church didn't already have a permit. The cost to reinstate our mail permit would have cancelled out any postage savings to be had from using non-profit rate.

- The USPS rules for discount mailings are long, tedious, have multiple sub-classes of rates (5-digit zip pre-sort, 9-digit zip pre-sort, bar-code, no bar-code, etc.), often have a minimum number of pieces required to get the discount rate, and normally require you to pre-sort the mail into mailing trays by zip code. The USPS also wants you to run special address sanity-check software against your database at least once a year, or pay a third-party company to run the sanity-check software for you, to prune out nonexistent or badly-formatted addresses.

From the investigations I did late in 2002, my conclusion was that if I'm doing an 800-piece event mailing once a year, it's not worth the pain involved to try to score a postage rate less expensive than first class. If I were doing an event every month (ha), I'd take a closer look at my options, and obviously if I had a mailing database of 5000 people instead of 800, then the postage savings would be worth some extra effort. Of course, if I had to do a 5000-piece mailing then I wouldn't do it myself anyway, I'd pay a direct-mail firm to do it for me.

Outsourcing your mailing to a professional direct-mail company is another potential optimization method. With third-party mailing firms, you spend extra money to save time. The supporters database that I maintain isn't yet large enough for me to start talking to a mailing firm - if I ever get up to 2000 database entries, that's about the time I'll start doing some serious investigation, since once you're doing a mailing to several thousand people, you're typically beyond the amount of volunteer labor that you can draft by throwing a pizza party.

A lower-volume alternative to a full direct-mail company, and one which has only recently started to arrive on the scene, is the Internet-based mass-mail service provider. An Internet mass-mail provider offers a service which allows you to submit your content and your mailing list to them via a web

browser. The company then does an optional mail-merge into your cover letter, prints your content, and handles all of the mail-preparation process up to and including putting it in the mail for you. You never see a physical (paper) copy of your content unless you include your own name and address in the address list that you give to the service provider. Because these firms have the ability to handle all of the pre-sort and barcode work for you, they can save money on mailing costs that you often wouldn't be able to save yourself.

A search with any Internet search engine for the key phrase "bulk mail" should turn up a number of choices for Internet-based mass-mail providers. The U.S. postal service itself recently entered this business; their web site for Internet mass-mail is at www.usps.com/netpost. For the 2002 More Light fundraiser, I assembled the original business-envelope mailing manually, the "old-fashioned way", but for the postcard mailing I put together in early October 2002 I used Zairmail, at www.zairmail.com. My experience with Zairmail was less than perfect, since the postcards they printed changed the fonts from what I submitted and caused some word-wraps in not-entirely-aesthetic places, but they did generate and mail out 550 postcards for me for about as much as I would have had to pay for the postage alone. I still had to do some work - first to export my supporters database into a simple text format that their software could read, and second to design my reminder postcard using the Microsoft Word postcard template that they provide online. However, the amount of work that I had to do was significantly less than what I would have had to do had I been physically dealing with the postcards myself.

6.5 Press releases

A press release is a brief document, generally one page only, which you can fax or email to the media, and which you can circulate around in email as an easy-to-forward block of text. If you want to get serious about issuing press releases and working with the media in general, you should buy a copy of *Spin Works! A Media Guidebook for Communicating Values and Shaping Opinion* from the Spin Project in San Francisco - see their web site at www.spinproject.org. SPIN also does media training for nonprofits and individuals, so if you're in northern California, take a look at their web site to see what they're offering.

I've had mixed results with press releases. My experience has been that in most cases, reporters don't consider my *event* to be *news*. Most newspapers simply don't care that you're hosting a guest speaker, or holding a concert, or running a fundraiser - churches do those sorts of things all the time, so they're not news. The one time that we did get heavy news coverage, and when a press release definitely paid off, was on election eve in early 2000, when the anti-gay "Knight Initiative" (California proposition 22) was up for vote the next day and we had 18 progressive churches holding a pro-LGBT worship service the night before to speak out against the initiative. We had several different evening news camera crews show up for that event, because it fit their criteria for what constitutes *news*: something new, something with conflict, something that affects a lot of people, something current.

At this point in my event experience, if I don't see any reason why the secular media is going to see my event or fundraiser as newsworthy, I won't bother to write a press release and fax it to my media fax database. Instead, I concentrate on other methods of marketing that I think will be more successful: the mass-mailing, getting newsletter articles and worship bulletin blurbs planted at churches and organizations with an affinity for the event, email announcements on key mailing lists, and so on.

Maintaining a good media contact database is more work than maintaining your supporters database, because reporters can change beats or change employers. Also, to really get your story spun in the news, you're supposed to cultivate a working relationship with key reporters at the papers that you want to see cover your events. This time-intensive approach presumably works for a non-profit organization with a full-time staffperson to devote as their media contact, but since I do my events in my spare time and only a few times each year at most, I haven't found that I have the ability or time to maintain working relationships with reporters.

However, there may very well be times when you organize an event that you believe *will* be newsworthy under the secular media's definition of the term, in which case you should definitely take steps to let the media know about it. One alternative to maintaining your own media contact database, if you're in a major metropolitan area, is to pay a professional press-release distribution company such as Businesswire (www.businesswire.com). Although the vast majority of the press releases that Businesswire and its competitor PR Newswire distribute are on behalf of for-profit companies, they're also happy to take your money if you're a non-profit organization, and in fact they sometimes offer a non-profit membership rate and discounts off of the regular press release prices. Firms like this take your press release via email or fax, edit it to fix up any formatting errors or glaring mistakes, and send it out to hundreds or thousands of newspapers, magazines, radio stations, and TV stations on your behalf. They maintain a media database for you so that you don't have to. What you lose, of course, is the personal working relationship with individual reporters - instead of faxing your release directly to the reporter who does the gay-rights beat for your city, the best that PR Newswire can do is fax your release to the general editorial fax machine at the newspaper's main office, where if you're lucky a staff member will scan your headline and, once in a blue moon, route the fax to the correct reporter.

The trick with these professional press-release firms is that you can pay for a "regional distribution", which means that the firm only distributes your press release to media in your geographic area, at a significantly reduced cost. As I recall, a U.S.-wide press release distribution via Businesswire costs over \$500, whereas a distribution within only the San Francisco Bay area costs slightly over \$100, which is a manageable cost for most events. Be aware, however, that response rate to these paid press release distributions is very low. For a regional press release distribution, you should consider it a success if one reporter calls you in response to your release, and a fantastic success if two or three reporters call you. And don't expect them to call right away - many reporters are on deadline for other stories and will wait to contact you until your event is closer on the calendar.

What I've been taught is that with press releases and similar content, you're supposed to send out the press release about one week in advance of your event, and then the day before your newsworthy event you send out a "media alert", which is something of a truncated version of your press release giving the who/what/when/where info. I've included a sample press release and a sample media alert in the appendices to this document.

6.6 Content for churches and organizations

One of your major sources of free high-success publicity will be in the newsletters and other communications channels of pre-organized communities, including but certainly not limited to churches. At the earliest stage of thinking about your event, many months before the event itself, you should be asking yourself "what organizations have members who are likely to be interested in my event?" Then you should track down those organizations and get the mailing address, email address, and/or fax number of someone at that organization with the ability to get information about your event

into that organization's publications. Note that the person you want for your database often isn't the newsletter editor. Unless you're a member of the organization yourself, the newsletter editor is quite likely to ignore content that you send directly. The person you need is the *supportive insider* within that organization who will take your announcement and send it to the newsletter editor.

If you don't have contact information for a supportive insider, it's OK to instead create a database table entry for the pastor, in the case of a church, or for the organization's local chapter president, in the case of some other organization such as PFLAG. So for example, in the *churches* table within my Microsoft Access database, roughly 80% of my church entries have a pastor's name as the contact, since that's the only person whose name I was easily able to track down. Roughly another 10% of my churches entries have an LGBT-supportive person within the church who at some point in the past responded to one of my request-for-sponsorship mailings, so I substituted that person's name for the pastor's. In another 10% of the cases I haven't been able to track down any name, not even a pastor, so my first name / last name entries might say "ATTN: More Light" or "ATTN: gay rights concerns".

When mailing content to churches and organizations, I have two rules: first, mail with a heavy lead time to give your content time to cycle through the right pairs of hands. Second, create content which is easy for people to pass on to the right people.

If you're trying to get an article into monthly newsletters, which is definitely something you should try to do, you should mail it out about 4-6 weeks prior to the month in which you want the article to appear. Remember that your content doesn't go directly to the newsletter editor: often you're sending it to a pastor, who will hopefully (eventually) pass it off to a committee chair or other active person in the congregation, who might give it to the newsletter editor. Your mailing lead time has to allow for your document to cycle through these multiple pairs of hands.

To create content which is easy for people to pass along, my strong recommendation for dealing with churches is that mailings to pastors should contain four separate sheets of paper:

1. A one-page cover letter. Be brief.
2. A copy of your event flier (did you remember to copy it onto colored paper?)
3. A one-page newsletter article. At the top of the page, put "FOR NEWSLETTER EDITORS - CONTENT FOR OCTOBER NEWSLETTER" (or whatever month you want the article to appear).
4. A separate sheet of one or more single-paragraph, short blurbs suitable for inclusion in a Sunday worship bulletin. At the top of the page, put "FOR WORSHIP BULLETIN EDITORS - SUITABLE FOR OCTOBER BULLETINS" (substitute the appropriate month).

The point here is to minimize the number of brain cells that the overworked senior pastor has to devote to dealing with what you've sent in the mail. (S)he opens your 9x12 envelope and first skims the event flier - that's the one piece of paper that's in color so it must be the most important content. Maybe (s)he skims the cover letter, but it doesn't matter that much, the cover letter is just for pastors who want more detail than what's on the flier. Then (s)he sees the piece of paper marked "FOR NEWSLETTER EDITORS". Congratulations - you've just told the pastor what to do with this piece of paper - stick it in the mail slot of the newsletter editor. The other piece of paper is marked "FOR WORSHIP BULLETIN EDITORS". That's a different person, so that piece of paper goes into the mail slot of the weekly bulletin editor.

Note that if you're trying to get official co-sponsorship for your event from other organizations, that's a separate can of worms which will require you to include a sponsorship form and a reply envelope, along with a more detailed cover letter explaining what you're asking for. I haven't solicited official co-

sponsorship for my past few events because to do it successfully requires me to send out the sponsorship requests months in advance and then make a large number of follow-up phone calls.

6.7 Email

Along with postal address information, you should also maintain email addresses for supporters in your marketing database, plus you should keep track of any public mailing lists in your geographic area which might be appropriate places for you to post an announcement of your event. To send email to the supporters in your database, you'll generally want to purchase some sort of low-end business mass-email software which is capable of importing fields from Microsoft Access tables, or from whatever database software you've chosen to drive your marketing database. If you're a cowboy, you might be able to play around with importing a large number of email addresses into something like a Eudora or Outlook email contact list, but I recommend that you work with software designed to send hundreds of pieces of email to addresses on a list. Some people also experiment with Internet-based free one-way email announcement services such as Topica, however the low-end versions of these services generally use an ad-based revenue model, which means that they plaster advertising onto the bottom of your email announcements.

There are at least two reasons to go with mass-email software instead of a standard personal computer email client such as Outlook: first, mass-email software will generally allow you to avoid the classic neophyte's email mistake of putting your entire list of email addresses on the "To:" or "CC:" lines, which will send a copy of your painstakingly-compiled list of email addresses to everybody who receives your email. Second, mass-email software normally understands the concept of sending to a long list of people in small batches, so it will typically send a separate message to your upstream mail server for each person on your list, with a configurable delay, in seconds, between messages. This process is generally easier for your upstream mail server to handle than a single copy of the message which says "please send this message to the following list of 500 people".

There are a number of rules to follow when dealing with email announcements of your event:

- If you insist on sending your message using standard email software, be sure to put the recipients on the BCC: line, not on the To: or the CC: lines. When you use BCC, the recipient list is hidden from each recipient. If you use To or CC, every recipient sees every other recipient's email address. If your email software doesn't give you a BCC line that you can use for addresses, use a different piece of email software to send out your email.
- There's a fine line between useful information and spam (junk email). I try to minimize the amount of event email that I send out - generally one heads-up announcement to my entire contact list 6 weeks in advance, and then a reminder announcement 1 week in advance is what I'd recommend. If you try to send out weekly event notices for weeks in a row, you're going to irritate a large number of people.
- Craft your email announcements using the same level of care that you'd use for a press release. Create a subject line that's interesting and appropriate to the content. At the start of the message body, put some sort of "hook" text, either a catchy news headline or a good opening first sentence, to make people want to read the rest of the message. Make sure that you set off the who/what/when/where part clearly so that people don't have to dredge through the message to find those details. If your readers need to purchase tickets or take some other action, list that action in multiple locations to make that information hard to miss.

- Pre-established mailing lists for various affinity groups (church groups, local gay/lesbian groups, etc) can be a good way to get your event announcement in front of hundreds of people all at once, but you have to make sure that you know the posting policies for any mailing lists to which you send an announcement. If you start posting inappropriate advertisements to a public mailing list, you're generally going to either find your email flushed by the moderator (for a moderated list), or you'll find yourself kicked off the list and unable to post again in the future.

- You need to have a mechanism in your marketing database to deal with people who email you back and say (usually not very nicely) "take me off your email list, I don't want to read your junk!" The easiest way to handle these requests is simply to delete the person's email address from your database, but keep their other contact information.

- Remember that your event notice will probably end up forwarded to various other email lists and to people who aren't on your own contact list. This forwarding process is highly desirable, and is one way that a well-crafted event notice can reach hundreds or thousands of people whom you otherwise might never be able to reach. If you take the time to write an event notice that makes your event stand out as Something Important That All My Friends Should Know About, you can usually rely on email to give some extra circulation to your announcements.

The useful feature about email is that it's cheap. The drawback about email is that it's cheap, so most people receive a lot of junk email and will spend much less time looking at your email announcement than they will looking at a flier that you've sent them via the U.S. mail. Email announcements should only be a supplement to a more comprehensive marketing campaign. I strongly recommend against using email as the only method of marketing an event.

6.8 Web site

An event web site is an excellent way to provide a comprehensive set of information to the world 24 hours a day, in a way that doesn't require people to track you down in person or on the phone. You can make just about any content available, including basic who/what/when/where information about your event, copies of your newsletter articles, worship bulletin blurbs, your event flier, and any other public content that you produce. You can also use your web site to sell tickets to your fundraiser event, though this is more complex than simply web-publishing content. I've always put together web content for the events that I produce, because then in my email announcements I can simply say "for more information, go to this web site". Putting the URL (aka the "web site address") gives the email-readers instant gratification, since if they actually read the email announcement, then can then immediately bring up their web browser and check out the event web site. All of my events go up on www.newvisionsproject.org, which started out as a site specifically for the 2000 and 2001 New Visions projects, but has as of late become my general resting place for whatever event I happen to be producing at this moment.

Obviously, a tutorial on web site layout and design is far beyond the scope of this document. Generally you're going to want a technology/web geek on your event planning committee so that you have somebody comfortable with the various mechanics involved in getting web hosting space, getting a domain name reserved, producing the content, uploading it, fixing it, etc. If you and everybody on your event planning team are technology novices then you might want to avoid putting up a web site at

all the first time around - save the web site for the second time you do the event, when you have more time to invest in getting it right.

All of the web service that you need should be very inexpensive - don't be taken in by full-service packages that try to give you your own server, your own e-commerce site, or whatever other complexities the hosting company is trying to offer. My own event site www.newvisionsproject.org is hosted out of Hurricane Electric (www.he.net) in San Jose for \$10/month with plenty of disk space for my limited needs. Domain name service for the [newvisionsproject.org](http://www.newvisionsproject.org) domain name (ask your Internet geek what this means) costs about \$15 a year from Stargate Inc. (www.stargate.com). Both basic web hosting service and domain name service are available from a wide variety of companies at similar prices. Alternately, if the church where you're hosting the event already has a web site, you might be able to work with the webmaster there to get content hosted within their site, in which case you won't pay any hosting or domain name fees.

Web-page creation software is a matter of personal choice and experience. I use an obsolete website creation package from Adobe called PageMill which has very few features and is still enough for me to make functional event web sites with links, graphics, counters, forms, and a Paypal link for purchasing tickets. Popular commercial packages today include Adobe GoLive and Macromedia Dreamweaver - the former is more for the GUI web designer and the latter more for the programmer. Macromedia also has a GUI website product out now called Contribute, which as of this writing is available in trial-download form. If you're not interested in investing the \$300+ it generally costs to buy either GoLive or Dreamweaver, take a look at shareware options and at your local business software store. Or you can even, if you must, resort to Microsoft Frontpage, but don't count on the HTML that it generates being readable with any of the Netscape browsers.

In many cases, you'll want to put copies of documents up on your web site in a way that preserves the print formatting, so that people can download a document, hit print, and have what comes off of their printer look exactly (or almost exactly) like what comes off of *your* printer when you printed the document. Your event flier is a perfect example of this type of document. For example, I create my event fliers in Pagemaker, which saves in its own format. I can't put the Pagemaker file up onto the web site, because then to read and print the flier, people would need to own a copy of Pagemaker. The same goes for Microsoft Word documents - not everybody uses Word, plus there are at least several dozen different flavors and versions of Word out there and none of them seem to format documents exactly the same way.

The generally-accepted solution to the "how can I make paper documents available in electronic form so that they print right?" problem is to use Adobe PDF format. PDF works like this: you create your document using whatever document-creation software you like. Then you "print" your document to a special PDF print driver that you've purchased from Adobe, and that driver produces a .pdf file on your hard drive. You can then upload that file to your web site and make it available. The PDF reader software is called Acrobat Reader and is freely available from Adobe, so anybody can download the reader, install it, then go to your web site and download your .pdf file. This method beats saying "sorry, my flier is only available in Pagemaker, so you'll have to buy a copy of Pagemaker if you want to run off copies yourself"... or worse, having to say "send me your postal address and I'll mail you a paper copy". You want your event flier to be available immediately, on your web site, to people who read your email announcement - you don't want people to have to go to the trouble of tracking you down so that you can postal-mail them a hardcopy. Instant flier gratification - love it, learn it, live it.

The one irritating point about making yourself ready to produce PDF files is that you'll need a copy of the full version of Adobe Acrobat (not just the free PDF-reader software from Adobe's web site). Acrobat retails for \$250 as of this writing, and of course is available at discount rates from various software resellers.

Accepting orders online: The next step beyond simple web publishing of information about your event is to accept payments online for ticket orders. However, I don't recommend that you do this until you've first had some experience working with a basic web site to publicize your event. The easiest way to accept online orders for something simple, like event tickets, is with a Paypal account from www.paypal.com. You do *not* need any of the complex "e-commerce" hardware or software that various vendors or web-hosting providers might try to sell you. You don't need your own server, you don't need a credit card merchant account, you don't need an online customer database, you don't need SSL capabilities or cookies or fancy programming or any of those more expensive customized ways of doing business online... not if you use Paypal and not if you're just selling event tickets.

Paypal is what you might call a "credit card intermediary" which is able to charge people's credit cards on your behalf, then send you the funds after they dock you a small (about 3%) commission. Paypal's service allows just about anybody selling anything to accept credit cards - you no longer have to apply to Visa and Mastercard to get a merchant account, or pay for expensive credit-card processing software or hardware, or do any of the heavy lifting that merchants used to have to do. They also have a clean mechanism set up to allow you to accept payments from your web site without the need to create any special database entries at Paypal, or to pay them any fees other than your per-sale commissions. To learn how to put a link onto your web site that allows you to charge people's credit cards for your event tickets, tell your web/computer geek to go to www.paypal.com and look for the merchant documentation. Paypal has several long documents up which describe, in extensive detail, the various ways that you can make use of their ability to process credit cards on your behalf.

I successfully used a buy-your-tickets-online Paypal link from the www.newvisionsproject.org web site for the October 2002 More Light fundraiser, and we sold at least 25% of our tickets via that online link, so it was worth doing. It wasn't entirely trivial to set up, but the investment required was in learning-curve time, not in dollars. My feeling is that the more opportunities you give people to buy tickets to your event, the more likely they are to buy a ticket. If you send them a piece of paper in the mail (which you will, of course), they can lose the piece of paper, but your web site is always available 24 hours a day with the Paypal link, so they can buy their tickets at 3 AM if they feel like it.

6.9 Other

This section includes notes on some event marketing methods that didn't merit their own section.

Support committee: many fundraisers that want to pull in 200+ people at \$75 or more per ticket will work with what I call a "support committee". The support committee isn't the planning committee - rather, it's a larger group of people who take their marching orders from the smaller planning committee. The purpose of the support committee is to sell tickets to the people in their own social circles, generally with a per-member ticket sales goal. For dinner fundraisers, sometimes these support committee members are called "table captains", and each table captain is responsible for filling a single table at the event. Regardless of the price of your fundraiser event or the number of people you want to attend, it's definitely true that the single best way to get somebody to attend is to have that person

invited by a personal friend. A personal invitation beats all the postal mail, email, and newsletter articles you can ever hope to distribute.

Newspaper calendar listings: most daily and weekly newspapers have an event calendar. In fact, major metropolitan dailies often have multiple event calendars that are run in different sections of the paper, on different days of the week, edited by different people, with different publishing policies. If you want to get listed in event calendars, you'll need to do your homework by obtaining copies of the relevant newspapers on the days that they publish calendar listings, then taking notes on how to submit entries to each calendar. Take your calendar notes in a centralized location such as a word processor file on your computer, so that you can reuse what you've learned in future years. It hasn't been my perception that newspaper calendars have been a very effective way to market my events, but your experience might differ.

Newspaper ads: unless your event is designed to appeal to a broad range of people rather than a small percentage of the population, you should think twice before working heavily with mass-media advertising such as newspaper ads. If you want to experiment with ads, my recommendation is that you start small (it's easy to break your budget with print ads) and try to choose a regional or local paper whose region of coverage centers around the venue for your event. For the October 2002 More Light fundraiser, at which we showed a new-release documentary film, I did run a small ad two weeks in a row in the movie section of the Palo Alto Weekly, a local and freely-distributed Palo Alto paper. My goal was to pull in some of the local art-film crowd, so the newspaper ad noted that the film was a Sundance selection and that this was the south San Francisco Bay premiere. Follow-up surveys at the fundraiser suggested that the number of people who attended because of the newspaper ad was minimal, however it was an unusual situation because we were in conflict with the San Francisco Giants playing in game six of the World Series. I have an unproven theory that had the Giants not ended up in the World Series, we might have seen slightly higher response to the newspaper ad.

6.10 Statistics from the 2002 Palo Alto More Light fundraiser

When you're doing an event for the first time, life can be rough when it comes to making choices about marketing. All forms of marketing cost time and/or money, and some forms of marketing can consume large quantities of money, all of which gets paid out far in advance of you knowing how many people will attend. As a public service to the readers of this document, here I'll present the statistics that we gathered from the marketing survey that we asked people to fill out at the October 2002 More Light fundraiser. They provide excellent insight into what forms of marketing were productive and what forms were less than productive.

Survey methodology: each person who attended the event received one half-sheet yellow piece of paper which was an event schedule for the evening, and a second light blue half-sheet which was a combination More Light Presbyterians sign-up form and marketing survey. The marketing survey asked people to fill in checkboxes for each of the ways that they had heard about this event: newspaper, mailing, email, etc. After the intermission, I gave a brief who-is-More-Light-Presbyterians presentation and asked people to fill out the blue form, at least the marketing survey on the top, and put it into the collection buckets which we then passed through the audience. This method brought in 59 surveys, which was slightly under 50% of the total number of attendees that evening. 59 data points is enough to draw some initial conclusions about the effectiveness of various types of marketing.

Remember that each person filling out a survey could check more than one checkbox, so the numbers below don't add up to 59.

Number of people who learned about the fundraiser event from various types of marketing:

Received flier or postcard: 22 (8 people checked no other box)
Received email announcement: 21 (10 people checked no other box)
Invited by friend: 16 (9 people checked no other box)
Read newspaper ad in movie section: 1
Read newspaper calendar listing: 0
Read PFLAG newsletter article or blurb: 11 (2 people checked no other box)
Read church newsletter article or blurb: 11 (3 people checked no other box)

Some conclusions that I drew from this data breakdown are:

- Only 1/3 of the attendees (22 out of 59 respondents) were there because of my mass-mailing... this despite the fact that I did both a flier mailing 6 weeks in advance, and a follow-up postcard mailing 1 week in advance. So although a postal mailing is important, it's not sufficient.
- Email had significantly more impact than I had expected. Due to time constraints, I had only done a single mass-email event notice, about 6 weeks prior to the event. Had I had the time to do a follow-up mass-email event notice 1 week before the event, we might have pulled in some more attendees. Particularly surprising was that 1/6 of respondents (10 out of 59 people) said that email was the *only* way that they had learned about the event.
- Newsletter articles and personal invitations are an important part of marketing efforts. This came as no surprise.
- The attempts to market via the newspaper movie ad and newspaper calendar listings weren't very successful.

Based on this data, for future fundraiser events I plan to use email more consistently, put together a support committee which is responsible for inviting their friends to the event, and make no increases in newspaper advertising efforts.

6.11 Tracking your attendees

A critical component of your ongoing marketing efforts is the process of adding to your supporters database. To build your supporters database, you need to get people who attend your events to give you their contact information, ideally both their postal and email addresses. The statistics in the section above suggest that only a fraction of the people who attend an event are there because they received a mailing from you, so a large percentage of attendees will be people for whom you have no contact information at all.

In practice you can't force somebody to give you contact information if that person is determined to not tell you anything, but there are a number of mechanisms you can use to pull in a good response rate. Here are a variety of methods:

- If you're selling advance tickets to an event, make everyone who buys a ticket provide a name and address at the time of sale. Most theater box offices do this as standard practice. If you also offer tickets via Paypal on a web site, Paypal's system helps you out by asking for a name and address of the person making the payment, then emailing that contact information to you as part of the payment

confirmation. If you also sell tickets on site at your event, make everybody who buys on site provide a name and address.

- Sign-in sheets: you can funnel all of your event attendees through a single doorway, put a table in the doorway, and staff the table with two people and a pile of clipboards holding sign-in sheets. I've never used this method because first, it almost inevitably tends to create an enormous logjam at the entrance; second, people have a tendency to only provide partial information when you make them sign in to get in the entrance door; and third, you get some amazing examples of unreadable handwriting from people who just wanted to scrawl something on the clipboard so they could get inside.

- Sign-in cards on chairs. This worked well for us at the 2000 and 2001 New Visions events. I printed a large stack of postcard-sized cards onto bright yellow card stock (Kinko's did the copying and the cutting for me), then put one card onto each chair at the event. The front side of the cards had a space for name, address, and email information and said "Help us let you know about future New Visions events!" We encouraged people to fill out the cards and drop them into the donation boxes at the refreshments table in the back of the room, but the reverse side of the postcard had the First Presbyterian Church mailing address on it, so it could be used as an actual postcard if the person filling it out took it home and later decided to send it in.

- Collection-plate sign-in forms. We used this method at the October 2002 More Light fundraiser. Attendees received a hybrid form when they came in the door - the form included a marketing survey, a place for name and address information, and a space that let attendees sign up with More Light Presbyterians if they wanted to. We gave people plenty of advance notice that we'd be collecting these forms after intermission, then passed offering plates after intermission to collect the forms and any cash donations.

You should be aggressive, without being rude, about trying to find ways to get people to provide their contact information. The way that you build organizational strength for future events is to build up your contact database. To date I don't recall that I've had a single complaint about the efforts that I've made to collect names and addresses at the events I've produced.

7. Money

Whether you produce a fundraiser event, or an event that's not designed to bring in funds for an organization, you're likely to be dealing with money at your event, potentially in multiple ways. This section has some tips for smoothing the process of collecting money and dealing with it after you've got it.

Cashboxes: in many cases you'll be collecting funds at a table dedicated to a certain type of activity, such as a ticket table, book table, or T-shirt table. For this situation you can buy inexpensive (under \$20) metal cashboxes at your local office supply store and pre-stock them with a generous assortment of small bills as change. Whenever you're pre-seeding a cashbox with change, be sure to record exactly how much cash you put into the box in advance so that you can take that much out later. There's nothing more miserable than being unable to figure out how much revenue you generated from a table because you forgot to write down how much money you started with. I like to track critical financial information like this in a single bound event notebook that also holds my planning notes for the event.

Your logistical planning for the evening of the event must ensure that at all times either a trusted person is watching every cashbox, or that the cashbox is locked in a secure room or vehicle. In the chaos of last-minute logistics and minor crises during an event, it can be easy for unsavory persons to pilfer from your cashbox, or even run off with the entire box.

Donation containers: these are standalone containers, either brightly colored or transparent, clearly marked "donations", which you set in key locations such as on your refreshments table or your book/information table. I've done well both with USPS priority mail boxes covered in bright yellow paper, as well as with clear plastic storage containers with a mouth small enough that it's difficult to fit your hand in. The advantage to a clear container is that people can see that it's already got cash in it, so they want to join the herd of prior donors. You should "pre-fluff" all transparent donation containers with a minimum of \$20 in \$1 bills and a healthy handful of quarters - nobody wants to donate to an empty donation jar. For non-transparent boxes you can get away with dollar-sized pieces of paper as your "fluffing", since people aren't going to be able to see exactly what's in the box, but you should still dump a handful of quarters in. As with cashboxes, make sure that somebody on your volunteer crew is responsible for keeping a watchful eye over the donation containers throughout your event, or that the money is locked in a secure area. Also keep track of how much money you used to fluff the donation container, so that you can compute your actual income later.

Offerings or collections: these are pass-the-plate or pass-the-bucket active solicitations for funds, usually done after you've presented part of your event's content but not all. If you plan to take up a collection, your content for the evening should include a "shill speaker" just before the collection who will tell your audience fabulous things about how wonderful the organization is that they're giving money to. Shill speakers should speak for 3-5 minutes tops (nobody wants to hear a 20-minute sales pitch prior to a collection), and the shill speaker is normally somebody other than the event emcee. Ideally you want a respected member of the community, somebody whose opinion will carry some weight with your audience and who can tell some sort of personal story about the positive good that the organization is doing.

There's no need to pre-seed collection plates or buckets with cash, but the standard rule about physical security of your cash applies. The logistical plan that you work out with your volunteer collection-takers should involve all of the collected cash being aggregated into a single container *immediately* after the offering, followed by the transfer of that container to a secure room or vehicle. Don't worry about counting it at the event; there will be time to count it later.

Counting the income: As soon as possible after the event, and ideally the same night, you should go through your various cashboxes, donation containers, and the collection funds, count what's in each, and write down the financial numbers in your notebook of important facts and figures. This is the raw data that will let you figure out how much you made from the book table, how much you made from the T-shirt table, the donation boxes, etc. Make photocopies of all checks, because you'll want to keypunch the names and addresses from the checks into your marketing database.

Keeping track of your various sources of income can be a non-trivial task, because for even a modest event you might have multiple sources of funds. For the October 2002 More Light fundraiser we had a total of five different ways that money could come in during the evening of the event: at-the-door ticket sales, T-shirt sales and More Light signups at the T-shirt table, two separate donation containers on the refreshments table, and the pass-the-buckets collection that we took after intermission. Preparing for this income required two cash boxes each separately pre-stocked with change, plus the two donation

containers each fluffed in advance with dollar bills. We kept all of the sources of income separate so that at the end of the night I was able to tell how much money had come in from the different sources.

8. Tickets

The advantage of selling tickets in advance is that you get people's money in advance, so you get a much better idea of attendance in advance. If you're holding an event that requires you to get headcount estimates, such as any event that requires you to make commitments to caterers, you're pretty much going to have to sell advance tickets. The liability with selling tickets in advance is that you have to print up the tickets, mail them out as you receive paid orders, and deal with will-call and similar logistics. If you don't want to charge people in advance and you only plan to charge at the door, or if your event is something like a silent auction where there's no admission charge, then there's probably no point in dealing with tickets at all.

Unless you're producing either a very large event or an event where you need very fancy tickets, you'll likely be creating and printing the tickets yourself rather than working with a printing company. Your goal should be to produce something that looks like a ticket and that can't be trivially forged by tossing it onto a photocopier. The way I've seen tickets done for events in the \$10 to \$40 range, and the way we did them for the 2002 More Light fundraiser, is to buy a pack of print-your-own-business-card perforated card stock at an office supply store, design your ticket to fit onto a single business card, and print on a color printer. Put some artwork onto the ticket to make it look nice, and include text that lists the date, time, and location of the event. Most word processors these days have templates for the pre-cut business card sheets, or you can get fancy and print them using a database report, which will allow you to more easily assign and print unique numbers onto the tickets. You don't need to be overly paranoid about ticket forgery - if you print onto grey or tan business card stock and you've included artwork, it's unlikely that anybody is going to take the trouble to try to forge tickets.

I do recommend numbering your tickets, since it makes it much easier to track what tickets you've sold to whom, which tickets you've given out to any resellers, which tickets you left at the church office for on-site sale, and so forth. If you have more than 100 or so tickets to number, rather than hand-numbering you can either purchase a self-incrementing ticket number-stamper at a good office supply store, or you can print your tickets as a database report tied to a database table of incrementing integers.

Pricing your event: how much to charge for your event is always a wonderful point to agonize over. I have yet to find any good guidelines on how to set pricing, likely because pricing will vary tremendously depending on the nature of the event, the venue, the expectations of your attendees, and the phase of the moon. Here are some crude guidelines:

- One obvious guideline is to set your ticket price high enough that you'll make money if you get roughly the number of people that you expect to attend. Of course, if you're not trying to make money on the actual ticket sales but your point is instead to bring in a crowd so you can hit them with a donation pitch, or in some other way get them to give money, then this rule doesn't apply.

- Price matters. Allow me to state what should be obvious: if you price your event higher, fewer people will attend. In economist's language, we say that "demand for fundraiser tickets is elastic rather than inelastic". Although it should be obvious that if you price too high, your event will be a flop, it's easy to get caught in the mindset of thinking that simply because you've decided you want 200 people to attend your event, that 200 people *will* attend your event and so you can set the price wherever you

want. This slippery slope tends to happen like this: "Hey, we were going to charge \$25 a ticket, but if we were to charge \$50 a ticket then we'd make twice as much!" Well actually no, you won't make twice as much if you double your price because not as many people will attend your event... in fact, you might make less at a higher price than at a lower price. The old joke about the streetcart apple vendor who charges \$1000 for an apple ("because all I have to do is sell one of them!") applies here.

- Seek comparable events and consider their prices. People have certain expectations for what an event should cost, based on similar events they've been to or heard of. So for example, in the San Jose area it presently costs \$9 to see a new-release film, so a price of \$25 per ticket was the highest I was comfortable setting the price for our documentary film fundraiser in October 2002. If you're having a spaghetti dinner, people probably aren't going to pay \$75 a ticket no matter how good your spaghetti recipe is.

Another issue related to pricing is the question of whether to attempt tiered pricing (different prices for different people) or to simply set one fixed price. The advantage of fixed pricing is that it's much simpler to deal with - only one price on the order form, only one Paypal link on the web site, and no arguing with people over whether they're eligible for a lower price. The advantage of tiered pricing is that in theory it can increase both your revenue and your attendance. Consider a basic two-tier pricing system such as a \$25 "regular price" and a \$15 "student price". The purpose of offering a lower student price is that you're presuming that many students wouldn't attend if they have to pay \$25, but they might attend if they only have to pay \$15. If you're right, you've increased your number of attendees and your gross revenue. Another approach I've seen widely used in the San Francisco bay area is the concept of the "sliding scale". With a sliding scale, the event producers advertise a price range and tell everybody to choose whatever price they're comfortable with. So for example, you might see "sliding scale: \$10 to \$40". This approach to pricing makes certain assumptions about human behavior: it assumes that there are somewhat more well-to-do avid supporters of your cause who will be willing to pay \$40 per ticket, and at the same time that there are cheapskates who aren't willing to pay anything close to \$40, but who will pay \$10 to get in. In theory, with a sliding scale you approach the event-producer's ideal universe where you charge everybody exactly what they're willing to pay and no more. I haven't worked with sliding-scale pricing yet, but the experience of our local peace and justice center is that with the mix of people that they get attending their ticketed events, the average revenue per ticket consistently works out to fall in the middle of the sliding scale. So they'll get some people at \$10 a ticket, some at \$40 a ticket, and some in the middle at \$20 and \$30, but after they add up the gross receipts and divide by the number of attendees, it works out to \$25 per person gross revenue.

Early in the planning stages of your event, before you send out any fliers that advertise tickets for sale, you should decide on a reseller policy and put it in writing. You will likely get requests from friends, church leaders, and others saying "can you give me 10 tickets up front to resell to my friends?" Congratulations, you've now got yourself a reseller, and you need a ticket-resale policy to set some ground rules for that person. What happens if your friend can't resell all of the tickets? At what point does (s)he have to give you the money and return any unsold tickets? How are you going to get your reseller to collect the names and addresses of people who purchased the tickets? These are the types of questions that you need to work through in advance so that you don't have to make up policy on the fly.

Reserve tickets: you will get requests to hold tickets for on-site payment. The advice I've had on this one is "don't do it" - if the person doesn't show up, you don't get the money, plus you held back a seat on the assumption that Mr. no-show was going to show up and pay. The flake factor on reserved-but-unpaid tickets is apparently quite high for fundraisers. My opinion is that if people are really interested

in attending your event, they should be interested enough to break out their checkbook and write you a check in advance for the tickets like everybody else. Note that a "no reserves" policy is entirely different from will-call policy. "Will-call" means that people have paid in advance but you're holding the physical tickets for them on site at a special will-call table. That's fine, because you have their money so you no longer care if they're a no-show. It's people who want to *pay* on site for reserved tickets who are the potential source of trouble.

As you start to receive ticket orders in the mail (and via Paypal, if you put a buy-tickets link onto your event web site), you're going to be in the "fulfillment" business, which means you now have a physical object (a ticket) that you're responsible for mailing out to people. Since you're now going to have to send a first-class envelope to your customer anyway, you should take this opportunity to send the customer some sort of additional information. When I mailed out tickets for the October 2002 More Light event, I included a cover letter that explained how much of the ticket cost they could write off on their tax return, plus an additional copy of the (bright yellow) event flier "to share with your friends".

Your final-days-of-sale ticket logistics are an area where you should put in some thought in advance. If you're mailing out tickets to people as the orders come in, there will come a date beyond which it's not safe to mail out the tickets, because the event is too soon and the tickets might not arrive in time. You need to have a cut-off date such that when you receive orders after the cut-off date, you'll hold the tickets at will-call. Ideally you should list this cut-off date on your event flier or any other material that tells people how to send in their check. A second final-days-of-sale logistical issue is the problem of people sending in ticket orders too late for the post office to get the orders to you by the date of the event. This problem can result in people showing up at your event with no tickets in hand and no tickets held for them at will-call, because you haven't received their order form and their check yet. Thankfully these cases should be rare, so you probably simply want to have a policy that you'll take them at their word and let them in without tickets. Another option, not as likely to result in happy attendees who want to donate more money to your cause, is to tell them to buy tickets on-site and promise that you'll mail their check back to them once you receive it. Note that for more expensive formal events, you're probably going to have a ticket sales cut-off date that precedes the event date by at least a week, so this problem of orders not arriving in the mail soon enough goes away. For lower-cost events where you might want to keep accepting orders up through the evening of the event, you'll want a "but-I-sent-in-my-check-in-the-mail-yesterday" policy.

9. Technology

If you've survived reading this far, you've presumably noticed a wide variety of mentions of various types of technology in the preceding sections. Because I'm a technologist by training, I have a tendency to exploit technology whenever possible to save time and to improve the quality of the events that I produce. My general recommendation is that people producing an event should only introduce as much technology into the mix as you're comfortable with. However, you do need to face the fact that you'll need basic tools like a marketing database.

What follows is a brief discussion of useful information about various types of technology that I haven't covered in sufficient detail in previous sections.

9.1 Sound system

If you're throwing a 150-person event and you have no amplified sound system, you're in trouble. In many cases the venue where you're hosting your event will provide a sound system for your use, but in some cases there might be no sound system, and in others what's available to you might be insufficient for your needs. You're going to need to think through exactly what your event needs will be, then talk to whomever manages your event space to determine whether their system will do. Are you showing a movie? Then you need a way to patch the sound output from your video playback device (VCR or DVD) into the sound system. Will people be speaking into mikes? From what locations on the floor? You need to be able to tap the mikes into the sound system, or you need wireless mikes with receivers tapped into the sound system.

I've hosted most of my events in the Fellowship Hall at First Presbyterian Church in Palo Alto, which unfortunately doesn't have a sound system that can handle what my events need. As a result, I've had to piece together my own sound system, enough to handle several microphones, audio input from a VCR or DVD player, and external CD input for background music that we play prior to the event and during intermission. Here are the basic components that I assembled:

- An ordinary home stereo amplifier, 100 watts per channel. This serves as the power amp. Estimated cost if new: \$150.
- A 4-channel mike mixer from Shure Inc. I went with the Shure 200M, which appears to be the lowest-end (and least expensive) mixer that Shure sells. It works find for the needs of my events. Estimated cost: \$80.
- Two 8-inch-high speakers designed for outdoor restaurant or commercial use. Commercial-use speakers generally have better armor than home-stereo speakers: they have wire mesh protecting the speaker cones, and the housing is either metal or high-impact plastic so you don't ruin them if you accidentally drop them. Estimated cost: \$60 total (\$30 per speaker) from the local discount electronics store.
- Collapsible speaker stands for the speakers. Estimated cost: \$60 for the pair.
- One Shure UT-series wireless handheld microphone with receiver. Estimated cost: \$400
- One Shure UT-series wireless body microphone (clip-on lavalier) with receiver. Estimated cost: \$400.
- Three wired (not wireless) microphones, low-end studio quality. Estimated cost: \$25 each.
- One adjustable floor mike stand, for use as a floor mike during Q&A sessions.
- Two tabletop mike stands, for use during panel sessions.
- Assorted microphone cords, patch cables, and speaker cable.
- One 4-head hi-fi VCR. Estimated cost: \$120
- Four stackable, dismantlable plastic shelves from K-mart, for use as an ad-hoc sound system base station rack that can be set up and torn down in the field. Estimated cost: \$12. You can pay hundreds of dollars for professional portable sound equipment racks... I prefer my \$12 solution.

Assembling all of this equipment took some research time and some cash, particularly for the professional Shure wireless mikes, but it gives me a flexible field audio system that can be hauled into any location, set up in about an hour by a team of 3 people, and quickly torn down after the event is over.

If you're on a budget, which you probably are, you can get by with much less. If you just need to put a few people on microphones, all you need is a power amp (any modern home stereo amp will do), two home stereo speakers, a cheap mixer from Shure, some low-end wired mikes from your local music store, and cables. The key to putting together a reasonable sound system on the cheap is knowing how

to avoid buying expensive professional equipment that you don't need. You don't need a \$1000 microphone mixer; you only need an \$80 mixer. You don't need professional studio speakers at \$1000 each; you just need a pair of home stereo speakers or outdoor restaurant speakers. Don't pay \$150 for a microphone at Radio Shack; go to your local rock band equipment store and see what they can sell you in the way of \$25 basic vocal or talk-only mikes.

A note on wired mikes: all professional microphones use 3-prong "XLR" connectors, and all professional mixers, even the low-end cheap mixer that I bought from Shure, expect to see your mikes coming in on XLR connectors. Radio Shack is not a good source for these types of mikes; go instead to a music store, not a consumer electronics store like Radio Shack. If you're looking at microphones that have either a 1/4-inch headphone connector, or a smaller 1/8-inch headphone connector, you're looking at the wrong type of mikes.

A note on wireless mikes: if you decide to bite the bullet and invest in one or more wireless microphones, do your homework first. There's a lot to learn about your options in wireless mikes: do you want VHF or UHF? Do you want diversity (yes you do) or non-diversity (no, stay away)? If you buy a lousy low-end wireless mike kit or a home karaoke mike, you're probably going to get lousy sound, or worse, sound dropouts when your mike receiver occasionally loses the signal from your transmitter. You also have to research frequency issues, because the radio frequencies that wireless mikes use are typically the same frequencies used by VHF and UHF television stations. If you buy a mike on the wrong frequency, you might not be able to use it in your area because you've got too much interference from the local TV station. Wireless mikes are a bear to purchase when you're doing your initial research, but they really pay off once you've got them available in your bag of tricks. Most people don't like being tethered to a wired mike and are able to function and speak more effectively if you've got them on a wireless throat mike.

9.2 Video system

Video is, surprisingly, less complicated than audio because there are fewer pieces to assemble. If you're showing a film, still images, or doing any sort of presentation with overheads, you'll need a video system. The optimal way to show video these days is with what I call an "LCD projector" and what the vendors sometimes call a "multimedia projector", "digital projector", or sometimes just "projector". These are the precision projectors from vendors such as InFocus, Epson, Viewsonic and others which can take either SVGA input from a computer laptop, or video input from an external VCR or DVD player, and project it onto a screen. I do all of my event projection on my personal Infocus LP425z, which I purchased about 2 1/2 years ago for far too much money. My Infocus has long since been eclipsed by the next generation of better and cheaper projectors, but it still works fine.

Given that new projectors can now be had for under \$2000, and used projectors for easily under \$1000 on Ebay, it could be worth purchasing one, or convincing your church or organization to purchase one, for general use as well as for your use at fundraisers and other events. Your alternative, if you need a video projection system, will generally be to rent a digital projector for up to \$350 per day from a commercial A/V rental firm. Possibly the rental prices have come down in the past 18 months, but the last time I did a price investigation, digital projector rental was still extremely expensive.

If you decide to rent or purchase a projector, look for these features:

- At least 800 lumens, which will be enough to show a movie on a 10'x10' screen. Essentially all projectors sold today are 1200 lumens or stronger, so the amount of light that a projector can put out is

rapidly becoming a problem of the past. However, if you need to project onto a very large screen, 12' wide or larger, you'll need to do some research to see how many lumens you need from your projector.

- An infrared remote control plus cable accessories to connect your laptop's mouse port into the projector. This feature is useful if you plan on giving Powerpoint presentations or similar. The wireless remote *becomes* the mouse for your laptop, so the person giving the presentation can stand on stage and press the button on the remote to step through the slides in the presentation. You can also now buy external wireless mouse attachments for your laptop that hook in to the USB port, in which case you don't need to connect your laptop's external mouse port to your multimedia projector.

- Keystone adjustment. This feature gives you the ability to change the size of the projected image by turning a dial on the projector lens. With older or cheaper projectors, the only way to change the size of the image is to change the distance between the projector and the display screen.

Another way to do presentations (though not movies, obviously), if you're old-school, is to use an overhead projector which projects from 8.5x11 transparency film. The advantages of this method are that many venues have these projectors available for your use, they're a lot less expensive to rent than a digital projector, and you don't have to hook up a laptop to show your presentation. The disadvantages are that you have to shuffle transparencies during your presentation, plus overhead projectors don't have lamps nearly as powerful as what you can get from even a low-end digital projector these days.

If you're showing a movie from video tape or DVD, there's no difficulty in using a digital projector as your video output device. You simply connect the video out from the VCR or DVD player into the input of the digital projector, connect the stereo sound output from the VCR or DVD player into the power amp for your sound system, set up a screen, and you're ready to go.

9.3 Photos

One of the logistical items you should consider in your planning stages is whether you'd like to have somebody take pictures during the event. Often it can be useful to have some good pictures of the audience, of small groups of attendees, and/or of special guests, since you can then use the pictures as part of a followup article in various newsletters, post them to your event web site, and use them to market future events. If you want to take photos, treat "photographer" as one of the official jobs to assign to your on-site volunteers. If you use a digital camera, as many people are doing these days, you'll generally want to set the photo resolution to the highest that the camera can offer, to maximize the quality when the image goes to print. 640x480 (that's 640 dots horizontally, 480 dots vertically) digital pictures are good for web sites, but the printing company that does your organization's newsletter will probably have a strong preference for 1600x1200 or better.

9.4 Software

Throughout this document I've made occasional references to software that you might need as part of the event-planning process. Here I try to summarize and comment on some of the major types of software packages that you might decide you need to acquire. Don't be scared off by the wide range of software listed here - you can organize a good event with only a word processor and your marketing database. However, I've found that the following types of software have saved time or helped me to do a better job when I produce events.

Paint program: a paint program can be useful for touching up images, turning backgrounds to white in pictures of people's heads, resizing images, and occasionally for downgrading image quality so that you have a picture that works well on a web site and doesn't take forever to download. Photoshop is widely used but probably has more features than what you need to pay for. An alternative is Jasc Paint Shop Pro (see www.jasc.com), which sells for under \$100.

Flier-making program: you need some sort of software that will let you create your event flier. Current versions of Microsoft Word appear to give you the ability to position graphic images at arbitrary locations within the page, so Word might be a good choice for many types of fliers. I use Pagemaker because I own a copy and I'm accustomed to using it, plus it offers good flexibility for wrapping text around graphic images. If you have a more serious graphic designer on your planning team, you might use a design package such as Adobe Illustrator, though I don't recommend that you run out and buy Illustrator just to do event fliers.

Database: See the marketing section earlier for an extended discussion.

Bulk email software: See the marketing section above. This type of software, which is capable of pulling in a list of names and addresses from Microsoft Access or other external sources, should be available for under \$50.

Fax software: If you start to build up a more serious database of media contacts with fax numbers, or fax numbers of organizations that might be interested in your events, you might decide that you want to fax a copy of your event notice to a long list of fax numbers. If you need to send 100 faxes of the same sheet of paper, the painful way to do this is to slave over a hot fax machine for several hours punching in the numbers yourself. The time-saving way to send 100 faxes is to purchase business fax software such as Winfax Pro for the PC. Business-class fax software such as Winfax Pro is capable of pulling in a list of fax numbers from an external database such as (surprise) Access, then sending your document along with a customized cover sheet to every fax number on the list. If you decide to work with a fax program, you'll need to purchase a modem with robust fax capabilities - modems are *not* all alike when it comes to their ability to send faxes. Two vendors well-known for making excellent fax-capable modems are Zyxel (www.zyxel.com) and Multitech (www.multitech.com). You should *not* try to use your U.S. Robotics, Hayes, Motorola, or other modem as your fax modem, because you're likely to find that the failed fax rate is higher than if you went with a modem vendor that puts time into debugging and tuning the fax firmware built into its modem.

Website creation software: if you want to do any sort of event website, you'll need some type of site-creation software. Your choices are many and varied, to the point that there can be too many choices. In general there should be no need to purchase a high-end tool such as Adobe GoLive - for a first attempt you might want to experiment with shareware or freeware products, if you haven't worked with website design in the past. I've never wanted to touch Microsoft Frontpage because it's not respected in the web-design business and because I don't trust Frontpage to output HTML that displays properly on non-Microsoft web browsers.

Contact manager: Remember that "contact manager software" is different from the database software that you use to create your marketing database. The sole purpose of contact management software is to allow you to keep track of people's names, addresses, phone numbers, and related information about the person and how you've interacted with them in the past. I use an older version of Act (see www.act.com) to track contacts, since I have a list of about 200 people I might need to get in touch

with for one reason or another. If you already have a solid method of tracking the people you might need to work with, there's no need to throw out what you're doing and migrate to contact management software.

10. Planning and pitfalls

This section contains some comments on planning issues and potential pitfalls which didn't fit well elsewhere in this document.

Volunteer staff: relatively early in the planning stages, you'll want to break down a list of volunteer slots for the evening of the event, then start to put out feelers for people to staff the positions. Even for a relatively small event you can end up with a lot of volunteer needs. For example, for the 2002 More Light fundraiser I came up with this list of volunteer needs:

- 1 person to staff the at-the-door ticket sales table
- 1 person to staff the will-call table
- 1 person to check tickets at the door
- Up to 3 ushers
- 1 sound/video operator, plus setup assistance
- 1 person to staff the T-shirts and information table
- 2 people to plan the refreshments table, buy or make the food, and staff the table
- 1 "floater" or gofer volunteer to handle unexpected errands or tasks
- 1 house manager to coordinate all of the other volunteers
- 1 event emcee / master of ceremonies (this was me)
- Numerous setup/teardown/cleanup people

This is easily a staff of 13 people for an event which was to host a maximum of 220 attendees. We handled all of these tasks with a staff of about 9, through creative overlapping of roles.

Item checklist: In particular because I'm the person who hauls in the sound and video system for events I produce, I've found that there are a large number of items, large and small, that I need to remember to load into my car on the afternoon of an event before I drive over to the venue. To make sure that I don't miss anything, I always produce a written item checklist that tells me everything I need to load before I leave. Because a single missing item can cause severe difficulties for your event (try putting up your signs without any tape, or try accepting donations without your donation bins), it's worth it to produce a list in advance.

Pitfall: keys. Be sure that you have keys for all rooms and buildings that you might need to get into, and that everybody else who might need to get into the same rooms has copies of the keys. If keys aren't available to you, make sure that the person who does handle the keys knows which rooms to unlock in advance, and make sure that this person will be available just in case something that's supposed to be unlocked doesn't get unlocked. Don't assume that rooms that were unlocked when you first toured the venue are going to be unlocked for the evening of your event. Nothing beats the joy of showing up at your event location to start the setup process and then finding that the 200 chairs that you need are locked in a storage room to which nobody has the key.

Pitfall: HVAC, an abbreviation for "heating, ventilation, and air conditioning". You need to ensure that environmental controls for your venue are set to something comfortable for human beings during the time window of your event. Don't assume that the thermostat will be set to 68 degrees on the

evening of your event just because the meeting hall was a comfortable 68 degrees when you first visited. Many non-profit organizations have their buildings on thermostat timers to save on heating and cooling costs, and the timer might be set to treat Saturday evenings as off-duty times when it's assumed that there aren't any people using the facility. Ask specific questions about how you can make sure that the room is at the right temperature for your event, and find out who is in charge of HVAC for your venue. In addition to the locked-chair disaster I mentioned above, another great way to make life unpleasant for your guests is to host the event in a room that's either 58 degrees or 88 degrees.

Pitfall: clipboard shortage. This seems trivial, but I list it because it's an easy one to not think through carefully. There are a variety of situations in which you might decide to have people fill out forms on a clipboard, such as to purchase a ticket at the door, to fill out a survey, etc. Be sure that you buy enough clipboards, and pre-stock them with your forms, to cover the hypothetical *maximum* number of people who might need to simultaneously fill out your clipboard form. If you plan to have people fill out a sign-in sheet when they enter the room, and if you've got 150 guests coming, two clipboards aren't going to cut it. Remember that at any event, half of your guests will show up in the final 5 to 10 minutes just before the event, so you have to be prepared for a swarm of people descending on you at the last moment. Clipboards are cheap; there's no point in skimping on quantity to save a few dollars.

11. Special bonus section: top 10 ways to help your event be a failure

If you've read this far, you've probably already picked up enough hints to avoid these pitfalls. However, so that I can emphasize some of the key points I've suggested above, I present for your perusal this list of ways that you can significantly damage the quality of your event.

1. Shoddy marketing materials: text-only flier printed on white paper ; cover letters ramble on for 3 pages; failure to produce an easy-to-redistribute one-paragraph blurb that gives all key features of the event ; ticket order form doesn't tell people to whom to write the check or where to send it.

2. "We don't need a sound system - we'll just ask the guest speaker to talk loudly!"

3. Irrationally exuberant attendee estimates: "let's see, we're sending out 700 invitations, and if half of those people attend, and each of them bring a guest, that's 700 PEOPLE! Wow, we'd better pay for a bigger room!" Reality: in practice, a 5% response rate to invitations is excellent, 10% is fantastic (don't count on 10%), and you can't necessarily expect each person who *does* respond to your mailing to bring a guest.

4. Bad date and month choice: "Let's have our event on Friday night December 12... nobody's doing anything then!"

5. Woefully insufficient planning time: "Quick, we need money, let's pull together 4 jazz groups and have a concert next month!"

6. Naive marketing: "We don't need to do mailings or make a flier - we'll just send out an email announcement and then people will forward it! That's all the publicity we need." Reality: consider how much email you probably receive and how much of it you flush without reading. If you want people to take your event seriously, you need to get them to read a piece of paper that you've mailed to them, or an article in the newsletter of an organization they like, or you need to have one of their

friends invite them. Email is good for coordinating your planning team, but it can only be a solid *supplement* to a real event publicity campaign.

7. Technology meltdown: feedback in sound system, continuous microphone pops/hisses, nobody knows how to operate video player, laptop computer doesn't work with projection system, etc. Reality: TEST all technology in advance and have a technology geek on your volunteer staff who knows the gear and can deal with crisis situations. And remember: the more technology you use, the greater the likelihood of problems (I'm as guilty of this as anyone).

8. Starting 20 minutes late. Reality: nothing makes your event look unprofessional more than starting really late. 5 minutes late is fine, 20 minutes isn't. Which brings us to number 9...

9. Running significantly overtime. Reality: if you went to an event that was billed as lasting from 7 PM until 10:30 PM, and the content that you came for didn't finish until midnight, would *you* want to come back next year?

10. Boring content. Lots of talking with no visuals, no audience interaction, and no breaks can tend to put your audience to sleep in a hurry.

12. Conclusion

Despite possible appearances to the contrary, the intent of this document is to make it easier for you to organize an event, not to scare you off with a large number of details. You don't have to do everything covered by this event guide, and you don't have to pull out all the stops to host a huge event your first time around. You can aim for a 75-person event the first time, harvest names and addresses from that event, then scale up in size six months or twelve months later with another event.

Although there's a lot of information presented here by somebody with *some* experience at event production, always keep in mind that the author of this document is an amateur event producer with no experience at organizing events that aim to bring in more than about 250 people. You'll likely find places where I give advice that you decide is flat-out wrong, and when you do, by all means feel free to ignore me and do what works.

Fundraising is an essential component of all long-term social justice work, and both event-planning and fundraising skills are important abilities that people concerned with equality need to cultivate. One of the reasons why anti-egalitarian ideologies have seen so much success in the U.S. over the past several decades has been due to the sustained ability of supporters of these ideologies to raise funds and grow their fundraising membership bases. Supporters of progressive causes can and must do the same. When all is said and done, nothing quite beats the satisfaction of having produced a successful, cash-positive fundraiser on behalf of an organization that you want to support. So now that you've got some of the basics, get out there and start planning your first event!

Appendices

Much of the work that goes into producing an event involves writing: cover letters, press releases, event announcements, calendar listings... the list of things to write sometimes seems to go on without end. In the following appendices I've pasted in some samples of actual written material that I've used for past

events, mostly for the October 2002 More Light fundraiser event. You might be able to use what's included here as examples to get you a head start on writing your own material.

A note on potential font problems: All sample documents that appear in the appendices appear in the original font that I used when I wrote the content, which is typically the Times-Roman font that ships with (Microsoft) Windows. If you're reading this document in Adobe PDF format, the Times-Roman font might not look very good on your screen due to how my Adobe PDF creation software deals with Times-Roman. So as they say, "do not adjust your set".

Appendix A: Sample name/address solicitation card

This is the fill-in-your-address side of a card that we placed onto the audience chairs at just about every New Visions event in 2000 and 2001. Four of these cards print onto a single 8.5x11 piece of paper in landscape mode. I photocopied onto bright yellow card stock and had Kinko's cut into postcard-sized cards. The back side of the card (not shown here) had the address of First Presbyterian Church in the center, so people could affix a stamp to that side and mail it back. However, we encouraged people to fill out the cards and deposit them into the donation boxes that we had on-site at the events.

New Visions Project mailing list form

Yes! Please add my name and address to the New Visions mailing list and keep me informed of any future New Visions events.

Your name: _____

Postal address: _____

Email address: _____

Phone number (optional): (_____) - _____ - _____

Your church or organization, if applicable: _____

This information will be used exclusively by the New Visions Project. We do not sell name or address information to other organizations.

Appendix B: Sample cover letter to pastors

This is a cover letter that I sent to the pastors in my "churches" database table to publicize a Martin Luther King Jr. event in early 2002. For this sample letter the inside address and salutation line weren't personalized, though this would have been easy enough to do using Microsoft Word's ability to do

mail-merge based on data from Microsoft Access. Normally the cover letter would mention that you've enclosed copies of the event flier, a worship bulletin blurbs sheet, and a sheet with an article suitable for newsletters, however we organized this event on shorter notice so I didn't write a newsletter article in this case.

First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto
1140 Cowper St.
Palo Alto, CA 94301
H: 408-732-xxxx

January 2, 2002

To Bay Area religious leaders and friends,

In an effort to help all of us in the Bay Area to reflect critically on America's responses to the events of September 11, First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto will host and sponsor a one-shot evening civil rights event on Martin Luther King Jr. Day (January 21). The event, titled *Martin Luther King Jr.: Civil Rights Leader or Domestic Terrorist?* will seek to compare the methodologies used during the 1960's to desegregate America with the types of actions that Congress has recently declared to be "domestic terrorism". More generally, the speakers at the event will examine some of the legislative choices made in the wake of 9/11 and help us to consider whether these choices, which significantly increase law enforcement and Executive branch power at the expense of the rights of U.S. citizens, are in fact the most effective way of dealing with our very real national and international concerns.

As the event's producer, I'd like to extend an invitation to you and all members of your church or organization to attend this event, which will begin at 7:00 PM on Monday January 21 at First Presbyterian Church in Palo Alto. I've enclosed a few copies of the event informational flier suitable for posting on bulletin boards or to hand out to others who might be interested. On the reverse side of this letter I've also included a sample mini-announcement suitable for insertion into a church worship bulletin or for use elsewhere as a brief summary of the upcoming event.

We've been very lucky to arrange for the two excellent panel speakers who will be joining us on the 21st: Rick Callender, President of the San Jose / Silicon Valley chapter of the NAACP, and Riva Enteen of the National Lawyers Guild (NLG), who is both a Vice President of the Guild's national organization as well as the head of the NLG's San Francisco chapter. Both speakers are well-versed in local and national civil rights issues and are actively involved in Bay Area politics and decision-making. Prior to the speaking of the panelists we'll be showing a 25-minute extract from the award-winning documentary series *Eyes on the Prize*, as a way to remind the audience of the types of tactics that were used to overturn segregation laws in the 1950's and 60's.

As the enclosed column by William Safire suggests, how the United States chooses to respond to terrorism is an issue of concern for people across the political spectrum, since the potential erosion of basic civil protections is an issue that impacts us all. Please feel free to join us on the evening of January 21 for what promises to be an excellent and eye-opening event.

Sincerely yours,

Bruce Hahne, producer, First Presbyterian Church Martin Luther King Jr. Day event, 2002.
Email: hahne@-----.com

Appendix C: Sample worship bulletin blurbs sheet

This is an example of a "blurbs" sheet that I sent to pastors along with a cover letter and a copy of the event flier.

Family Fundamentals worship bulletin blurbs, appropriate for Oct. 2002 FOR WEEKLY BULLETIN EDITORS

Below are two different blurbs, one emphasizing the film premiere and the other emphasizing Brett Mathews as the outside guest speaker. Bulletin editors should feel free to choose whichever blurb sounds best, or to edit for space as needed.

Film premiere: On Saturday Oct. 26 at 7:30 PM, First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto will host the south bay premiere of *Family Fundamentals*, the newest release from award-winning filmmaker Arthur Dong. This documentary film interviews, and explores the tensions between, members of three conservative Christian families with openly gay and lesbian children. PFLAG Los Angeles board member Brett Mathews, one of the gay children interviewed in the film, will be a featured guest speaker. Tickets are \$25 in advance. All proceeds benefit the gay rights advocacy work of More Light Presbyterians. For more information, call First Presbyterian at 650-325-xxxx or see the event web site at www.newvisionsproject.org

PFLAG L.A. board member to speak at Palo Alto film event: Brett Mathews, a board member of PFLAG Los Angeles and one of three gay children interviewed in the new documentary film *Family Fundamentals*, will speak at a showing of the film at First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto on Saturday October 26 at 7:30 PM. The documentary, created by award-winning filmmaker Arthur Dong, interviews and explores the tensions between members of three conservative Christian families with openly gay and lesbian children. Tickets are \$25 in advance. All proceeds benefit the gay rights advocacy work of More Light Presbyterians. For more information, call First Presbyterian at 650-325-xxxx or see the event web site at www.newvisionsproject.org

Appendix D: Sample generic newsletter article sheet

This is an example of a newsletter article sheet that I sent to pastors and organizations along with a cover letter, a blurbs sheet, and a copy of the event flier. Note that the article isn't that long; it fits entirely on one page.

Newsletter article, appropriate for October 2002 newsletters. FOR NEWSLETTER EDITORS

Below is an article on First Presbyterian's showing of *Family Fundamentals* suitable for a church newsletter. Softcopy text of this article will be available at the New Visions web site, www.newvisionsproject.org, if your newsletter editor would prefer to simply cut and paste it.

Please feel free to edit this article text as needed.

Film premiere to feature PFLAG Los Angeles board member as special guest speaker

PFLAG Los Angeles board member Brett Mathews will be a featured guest speaker at a film fundraiser to be held at 7:30 PM on Saturday October 26 at First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto. The event, which will benefit the national Presbyterian gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender advocacy group More Light Presbyterians, will feature the south bay premiere of *Family Fundamentals*, the newest documentary film from award-winning filmmaker Arthur Dong, producer and director of the critically acclaimed films *Coming Out Under Fire* and *Licensed to Kill*. In *Family Fundamentals*, Dong takes viewers into the private, and sometimes very public lives, of three conservative Christian families with gay and lesbian children. He asks: "What happens when parents believe that their own kids represent the very element that will lead to the destruction of the human race?"

The film gives PFLAG L.A. board member Brett Mathews, one of three gay children interviewed extensively in the film, the opportunity to tell his story of coming out as the gay son of a Mormon bishop in the rural town of Erda, Utah. Brett served as First Lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force from 1996-98, however due to the military's policies on gay servicemembers, Brett was ousted after a grueling 16-month investigation. Although he finally received an honorable discharge, Brett lost his top secret security clearance and was stripped of all veteran's benefits.

The special event on October 26 will include a premiere large-screen showing of the film, extended time for audience questions and answers with PFLAG's Brett Mathews, and a special guest appearance by Michael Adey, national field organizer for More Light Presbyterians. Don't miss this opportunity to see this Sundance Film Festival official selection, a film that the L.A. Times has called "more compelling than any effects-laden spectacle you're likely to see all summer."

For more information about the film or to purchase tickets, see the web site for the Palo Alto showing of the film at www.newvisionsproject.org, or call First Presbyterian at 650-325-xxxx. Tickets are \$25 in advance.

Appendix E: Sample press release

I'm no expert at crafting press releases, but I'll include an example here anyway. The key points in a press release are to have a catchy headline, to give all of the critical who/what/when/where information in the first few

sentences, to write the release so that reporters can essentially use it verbatim to create a news article, and to provide a contact name and number so that reporters can call you for more information. The document below was designed to be printed, then faxed to area newspapers. I included a forced page break before the list of sponsoring organizations so that the list wouldn't be split between two pages.

**New Visions Project
8522 Carlisle Way #5555
Sunnyvale, CA 94087**

Press Release

For immediate release

EIGHTEEN BAY AREA CHURCHES TO STAGE ELECTION EVE NO-ON-22 VIGIL Lesbian evangelist Rev. Janie Spahr to offer keynote address

PALO ALTO, February 29, 2000 - The New Visions Project, a coalition of 18 San Francisco Bay Area churches, announced today that nationally-known activist Rev. Jane Adams Spahr will join with local religious leaders in an election eve vigil to oppose the anti-gay hostility symbolized by California proposition 22, the Knight Initiative. The event will take place at 7:00 PM on March 6 at First Presbyterian Church, 1140 Cowper Street, in Palo Alto. Representatives from all 18 coalition churches, representing 10 religious denominations, will participate in the service.

“We’re pleased to welcome Rev. Spahr as our keynote speaker,” said Bruce Hahne, co-organizer of the New Visions Project. “For centuries, Christianity has either tacitly or explicitly supported the oppression of gay and lesbian people. Janie’s voice is one of a growing chorus calling on the Christian Church to heal itself of its own hatred.”

“We’re weary of the mythologies, misinformation and misleading definitions which lead to scapegoating lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people,” commented Rev. Spahr. “What happens when the law forgets the people?”

The election eve New Visions Vigil is open to the public and the press. The dress code is casual, with rainbow colors encouraged. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet with Rev. Spahr at a reception to be held immediately after the service.

About New Visions: The New Visions Project is a coalition of 18 Bay Area churches sponsoring a series of community events to raise public awareness of the historic and tragic role which religion has played in the promotion of anti-gay hostility. More information about the complete New Visions series is available at the project’s web site at www.newvisionsproject.org.

About Janie Spahr: In 1991, Rev. Jane Adams (Janie) Spahr, a lesbian woman, was chosen to become one of four co-pastors at the Downtown United Presbyterian Church in Rochester, NY.

After an extended battle within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) court system, the highest judicial body of the Presbyterian Church voided Downtown United Presbyterian's call of Rev. Spahr on the grounds that the ordination of openly lesbian persons violated official church policy. Since 1993, Rev. Spahr has served as an evangelist with That All May Freely Serve (TAMFS), a national organization working to promote full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. More information about TAMFS is available at www.tamfs.org.

New Visions Project list of sponsoring churches and organizations:

All Saints' Episcopal Church (Palo Alto)
Alum Rock United Methodist Church (San Jose)
Chalice Christian Church, Disciples of Christ (San Mateo)
Congregational Church of Belmont, UCC (Belmont)
Dignity/San Jose: GLBT Catholics, Families, and Friends (San Jose)
First Christian Church of San Jose (San Jose)
First Lutheran Church, Palo Alto (Palo Alto)
First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto (Palo Alto)
Gay Ministry Committee, Santa Clara County Council of Churches
Grace United Methodist Church (Saratoga)
Los Gatos Unitarian Fellowship (Los Gatos)
Los Gatos United Methodist Church (Los Gatos)
Metropolitan Community Church of San Jose (San Jose)
New Community of Faith (San Jose)
Peninsula Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (San Jose)
Pescadero Community Church (Pescadero)
Sunnyhills United Methodist Church (Milpitas)
Trinity Cathedral - Episcopal (San Jose)
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Sunnyvale
Unity Palo Alto Community Church (Palo Alto)
University Lutheran Church (Palo Alto)

Media contacts:

Bruce Hahne: 408-732-xxxx, hahne@-----.com
Derrick Kikuchi: 415-xxx-xxxx, derrick@-----.com

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Appendix F: Sample media alert

This is the sort of document that TV and radio stations like to see to tell them about upcoming newsworthy events. The purpose of the media alert is to explain to the TV/radio station assignment editors what you're doing that's worth covering, and to give the who/what/when/where of your event so that they can call you and/or send a crew over. Your press release is for print media (newspapers and magazines), but when you fax to TV and radio stations, it's best to give them a media alert page first

and then throw in the press release as an extra in case the station wants more written details. The font sizes below are the actual sizes used for the printed media alert, since I designed it to be faxed.

New Visions Project
8522 Carlisle Way #5555
Sunnyvale, CA 94087
(408) 732-xxxx
<http://www.newvisionsproject.org>

MEDIA ALERT

To: Assignment editors of Bay Area television and radio stations
Fax date: Feb. 29, 2000

18 Bay Area churches will hold a no-on-proposition-22 vigil and service of affirmation for gay and lesbian people on election eve: Monday, March 6, at 7:00 PM at First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto. Nationally-known lesbian activist and Presbyterian minister Janie Spahr will join religious leaders from all 18 co-sponsor churches in a call to Christianity to reform itself of its own homophobia. Rev. Spahr and other clergy will be available to answer questions at a reception immediately following the event.

We expect an attendance of several hundred people. Local performing and visual arts expert Anne Keiffer has contributed to the visual design of the service, and dress for the event is “rainbow colors encouraged”, so the event will have visual appeal.

Television cameras will be permitted to film the vigil from the second-floor open balcony, which provides an excellent view of the church sanctuary. To film the event, please call one of the media contacts in advance and we will arrange for camera floorspace and electrical power.

More event details appear in the attached press release.

Time: Monday March 6, 7:00 PM

Place: First Presbyterian Church, 1140 Cowper St., Palo Alto, CA. (between Lincoln Ave. and Kingsley Ave.)

Media contacts:

Bruce Hahne: 408-732-xxxx, hahne@-----.com
Derrick Kikuchi: 415-xxx-xxxx, derrick@-----.com

Appendix G: Sample cover letter sent with purchased tickets

This is the cover letter that the October 2002 More Light fundraiser guests received along with their purchased tickets and another copy of the event flier.

First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto
Morelight Film Event
1140 Cowper St.
Palo Alto, CA 94301
650-325-xxxx
Email: morelight@newvisionsproject.org

October, 2002

Thank you for your purchase of _____ ticket(s), at a purchase price of \$25 each, to First Presbyterian's showing of *Family Fundamentals* on October 26, with special guest appearances by Brett Mathews and Michael Adeo. Your tickets are enclosed. We will check tickets at the door the evening of the event, so please keep them in a safe place and bring them with you the evening of the event.

Doors will open to the public at 7:00 PM and the evening's events will begin promptly at 7:30 PM. All seating is unreserved, so we recommend that guests arrive early. Refreshments will be available for purchase both before and after the film showing, and there will also be an opportunity to sign up as a yearly supporter of More Light Presbyterians.

Our accountant has told us to let you know that the church believes that \$9 per ticket represents a good faith estimate of the value of the service you are receiving in exchange for your contribution. This means that of your total payment of \$25 per ticket, \$16 represents a tax-deductible contribution.

We look forward to seeing you the evening of Saturday October 26!

Sincerely yours,
Bruce Hahne, event producer

Appendix H: Sample post-event news article

Here's the brief article that I wrote for More Light Presbyterians to use in their newsletter after the October 2002 fundraiser was complete. I also provided the newsletter editor with several high-resolution digital photos that we took of some of the guests and volunteer staff.

First Presbyterian Church, Palo Alto hosts More Light fundraiser

On October 26, 2002, nearly 150 people crowded into the Fellowship Hall at More Light church First Presbyterian, Palo Alto for the south San Francisco Bay premiere of *Family Fundamentals*, the newest documentary film from award-winning filmmaker Arthur Dong, producer and director of the critically acclaimed films *Coming Out Under Fire* and *Licensed to Kill*. The event, a fundraiser on behalf of More Light Presbyterians, featured special guest appearances and talks by national More Light field organizer Michael Adee and by PFLAG Los Angeles board member Brett Mathews, one of three gay children interviewed extensively in the film. More Light Presbyterians co-moderator Mitzi Henderson, a member of First Presbyterian Church, also joined the speaker list as a special unannounced guest.

In *Family Fundamentals*, an official 2002 Sundance selection, filmmaker Arthur Dong takes viewers into the private, and sometimes very public lives, of three conservative Christian families with gay and lesbian children. He asks: "What happens when parents believe that their own kids represent the very element that will lead to the destruction of the human race?" The film and the presentations afterwards gave Brett Mathews the opportunity to tell his story of coming out as the gay son of a Mormon bishop in the rural town of Erda, Utah. Brett served as First Lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force from 1996-98, however due to the military's policies on gay servicemembers, Brett was ousted after a grueling 16-month investigation. Although he finally received an honorable discharge, Brett lost his top secret security clearance and was stripped of all veteran's benefits.

"This was a successful event for us in a number of ways," noted event organizer Bruce Hahne. "We brought the Bay Area More Light community together, we attracted a large number of non-MLP members who wanted to see the film, we learned a great deal about what works and what doesn't work when you hold a fundraiser, and we brought in several thousand dollars for More Light Presbyterians as well as a significant number of new memberships."

First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto is no stranger to LGBT-supportive events, having been the host church for the 2000 and 2001 "New Visions" series of pro-LGBT lectures, films, and worship which brought dozens of San Francisco Bay Area churches together as event co-sponsors. Through the contacts made and the mailing list built up from two sequential years of hosting events, First Presbyterian was able to reach out to a community much broader than its immediate membership to advertise the 2002 film showing.

Appendix I: Sample event flier

I unfortunately can't include a copy of the 2002 More Light fundraiser flier in this written document because the flier is in Pagemaker format, however I've made a PDF copy available at www.newvisionsproject.org/event-index.html , so please check it out there.

Appendix J: Sample combination marketing survey and signup / donation form

This is another document that I created in Pagemaker, so I can't include it in this written document, but I've put a PDF copy at www.newvisionsproject.org/event-index.html This document is probably worth looking at, if only to see how I managed to fit both a multi-checkbox media survey form and a More Light Presbyterians sign-up form onto a half-sheet of paper. The result, however, is pretty complex for a half-sheet handout that I wanted people to fill out and return.