

An A.M.O.K. Event

SUNDAY NIGHTS LIVE

An A.M.O.K. Worship Event You Can Do!

by Dave Weiss

It's all Doug Fields' fault. I along with my youth ministry team read his book, Purpose Driven Youth Ministry and did an inventory of all the things we were doing with our group. We lined these up with the five purposes (evangelism, fellowship, ministry, discipleship and worship) and discovered that while we were pretty complete in the first four, we were woefully inept in worship. We set out to do something about that and Sunday Nights Live was born.

We were looking to do something very different from our very traditional Sunday morning worship service, something that was hip, fun, youth oriented and yet something that was full-out Christ centered worship. It has been an evolving service that has changed quite a bit since we began it 13 months ago.

The Anatomy of Sunday Nights Live

Sunday Nights Live is held the second Sunday of the month. Because there is a lot of work involved in preparing this service and because we are a fairly small congregation, a monthly service is about all we can do at this point, there is some expansion on the horizon, but we will get to that later. The service runs two

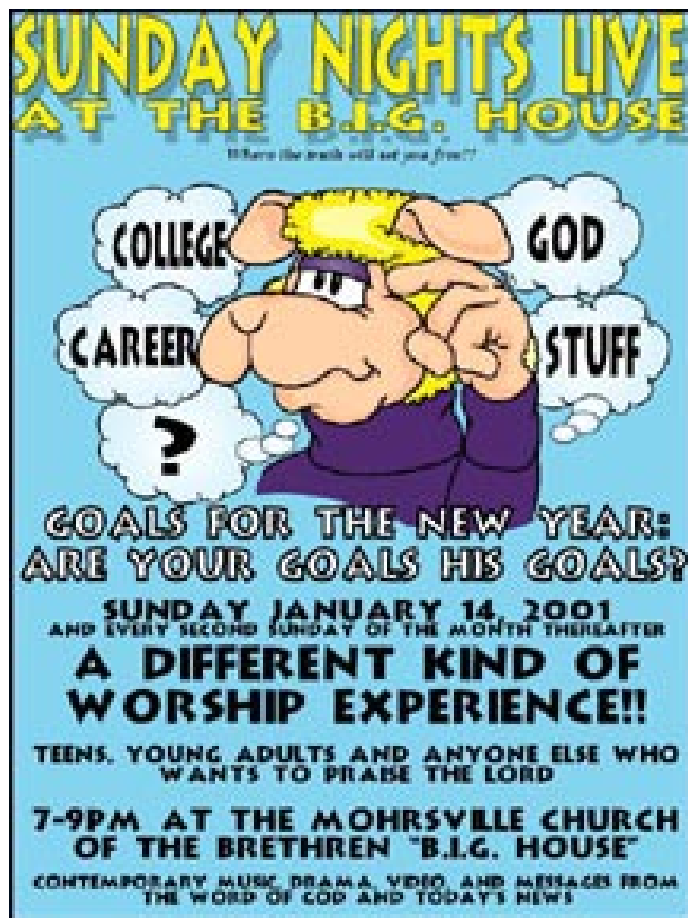
hours including a time of food and fellowship (roughly a half hour) at the end.

As people walk in, we usually have some sort of music video or other visual presentation playing. A typical service begins with a call to

worship, a reminder that although we all have a role in the worship. Whether we are in the front or in the seats we are all "performing" our worship for an audience of one, the Lord Himself. We really want to take the focus off ourselves and put it on the Lord. We follow this with 20 to 30 minutes of singing modern praise and worship songs. These songs are generally upbeat and really help with the idea of focussing on the Lord. We then get any announcements out of the way and move right into a sharing of joys and concerns followed by a time of intense prayer.

After the prayer we have a dramatic presentation which can be anything from reader's

theater, to a humorous skit, to a spontaneous melodrama. This is designed to begin to get the people to focus on the theme to be covered that night. From there we go to a solo or ensemble music piece or a video that leads into the scripture reading which leads to the message. After the message, we close with worship music, prayer and a time of fellowship. This is just a basic format, we feel free to alter it as the spirit moves. One of our favorite things to do is to split



the message into sermonettes and use dramatic and visual elements to highlight points in the different parts of the message.

Sunday Nights Live is very theme driven. We tend to make every effort to have the whole service point the people toward some important Biblical truth. We feel we would rather drive one point home than lead them in a whole bunch of different directions.

Sunday Nights Live is very visual. From the music videos in the beginning to the powerpoint presentation throughout the service, to the video and drama elements there is always something to see. We feel this helps not only to add to the experience but also to cement the points in a person's mind.

The vast majority of the service in Sunday Nights Live is done by the kids. Our kids lead the worship, act in the skits, do the technical work, read the scripture and more. At the moment we are looking for a praise band and some visual artists to help with the multimedia aspects of the service. The kids really seem to enjoy taking an active role in the worship.

Let's look at the individual elements of the service:

Music:

The music in a service like Sunday Nights Live should be culturally relevant to your area but that is not the most important thing. The most important thing is that it draws people closer to God. Test the music out on your kids. See what songs bring them into worship. Teach them to your kids and use them.

The ideal situation for Sunday Nights Live is to have a praise band. This allows the worship to be more spontaneous and Spirit led. If you don't have enough musicians to do this properly, there are a variety of performance tracks available as well as several great subscription resources like Spin 360 (available through Interline) and Vertical Life (available through Vertical Music and Group Publishing).

If you have a proper license, I find that it is best to project the lyrics onto the wall. This can be done with an overhead projector. We will look at this more in the next section.

Visuals:

While an overhead projector is easy to use and most churches have them, the ideal situation is to have a video projector. This allows you the capability to run power point presentations, and use video elements. Many churches are starting to include this type of equipment in their facilities. If you are not blessed with it, check with business people in your congregation to see if anyone has one you can use. If you can't locate one among your congregation, there are places that rent them but this expense may drive you back to the overhead. In our case, we are blessed to have a person involved in video production in our congregation. We borrowed a projector from him for about a year, at which point our freewill offerings had earned us enough to purchase a used machine.

In using visual content, make sure you are within copyright law before presenting anything. One way around this is to generate your own content (This is A.M.O.K. after all). Often, we will use power point slide shows over behind our music featuring our photos, artwork, etc. You can also create home videos and edit them on a variety of software programs if you have the facilities.

To do a power point presentation you need a computer with a video card and Microsoft's Power Point Program. There are other programs on the market but Power Point seems to be the industry standard and it will run on a lot of machines.

We also try to generate a graphic that will go on our promotional mailers and flyers and tie that in with the visuals held within the service.

Drama:

There are many sources for drama. One of the best that I've found is Youth Specialties Ideas Library CD ROM. Here you can find a wealth of resources at the touch of a button.

You can even search by topic of scripture. We are also building more and more drama resources on the A.M.O.K website Drama page, <http://members.christhost.com/amok>. The way you do the drama depends on how much advance preparation time you have. The best way is to rehearse and do the drama straight. This looks cleaner and more "professional" which is fairly important especially in an outreach situation. Sometimes there just isn't that kind of time. In

that case we do reader's theater, where everyone reads the script as they act it out. With a little practice this can be good and drive the point home. Sometimes we are looking for something a little on the zany side (humor can be very helpful for message retention). If this is what you seek, I highly recommend Spontaneous Melodramas from Youth Specialties. You pick your cast right from the congregation and they act out whatever the narrator reads. It is totally spontaneous and the results are often hilarious.

The best way to make the drama fit the message is to write your own. If your A.M.O.K. group contains gifted writers tell them what your topic and scripture will be, and cut them loose. For a great tool on a technique to accomplish this go to the writer's page and look up the resource First Person Writing Guide.

Message:

The message is still sort of the center point of the service since we feel that it is very important that the Word be preached. This is the only part of the service not done by the kids, although if you have a kid with the anointing to preach, help them to prepare and give them the opportunity. We had a guest ministry come in for one of our services and they had a really anointed 17 year-old preacher and he was wonderful. Don't hold the kids back if they are anointed, but make sure they understand the importance and take it seriously. The message is the part of the service that draws the whole thing together. A word of caution here. Due to the amount of effort that goes into preparing a service like Sunday Nights Live, you have to start well in advance of the service. Keep your heart open to the still small voice. If the Lord lays it on your heart to preach on something else, as he has on several occasions with us, do what He says. The theme is not the most important thing. The most important thing is doing the will of the Father.

As far as the length of the message goes, once again follow the guiding of the Spirit. There are all kinds of books that will tell you that you have to keep it short. I have not found this to be the case. Our messages go thirty minutes and up. In times when we segment the message into sermonettes, I have gone as long as an hour (3 x 20 minutes) with no complaints. Show the Word to be relevant, work with application and speak in their language. You don't have to hip or cool but you can't talk over their heads or give them a lot of Greek.

Testimonies:

We have had several times where the kids have given testimonies and it has been wonderful. We don't usually schedule them, they have come to us and have spoken from the heart.

If you have a kid that you know has a story to share ask them if they'd like to in advance of the service so they can have a little time to prepare (a lot of kids are uncomfortable speaking in front of crowds, so you have to give them some time.)

Fellowship:

We have a time of fellowship after the service where we serve simple snacks like juice and cookies, cake, coffee, and other such delicacies. This is an essential part of the service and one I would not want to do without. It helps us to be relational and talk one on one about all that has occurred in the service. It is during this time that we answer questions and get a lot of constructive feedback. We have two people that have volunteered to take care of this. They usually step out after the message and set everything up.

Promotion:

We have done a few different things. Our local Christian radio station has a service where they allow groups to record a two minute spot that they will play as a community service before the event. Check and see if your local station has a service like this. I have received a few calls from it. He have also done flyers that we took around to people's homes and posted on public bulletin boards. I have joined several email lists with local youth ministry folks and I publicize it to them as well. We also do a mailing to all the local youth groups as a way of building unity among the body of Christ. It is always great to get together and worship with other youth groups crossing denominational lines and genuinely worshipping the Lord.

Sunday Nights Live takes a lot of work to put together but it is well worth the effort. It definitely follows the A.M.O.K. philosophy of 1 Peter 4:10 because it truly allows each one to use whatever gifts he has received to serve others and to serve the Lord. Try it!



An A.M.O.K. Resource
Arts Ministry Outreach for the Kingdom
copyright 2002 David C. Weiss/A.M.O.K.