Tips For Creating Church Banners

Planning:

- *Size and shape*—Before beginning, sit down with your pastor, sanctuary committee, or whoever oversees what goes on the church walls, to determine where they would like banners (up front, sides, backs, hallways, between windows), what size, colors, shape, and theme. The size of most banners can be adapted by using a grid (squares where you blow up or reduce a design). Directions for this can be downloaded at my website.
- *Groupings*—Great for large churches with lots of room. When you put together a grouping, there are 3 essentials to keep consistent amongst the banners: Size and shape; Borders; and Background. You can put anything on the background, in any color, and they will always go together if you keep these items consistent.
- *Backgrounds*—Use subtle, light colored fabrics. Batiks make wonderful backgrounds, especially for different shades of sky. It is extremely important that your background be perfectly squared. It *will* show from a distance if the 2 sides are off as little as 1/2 inch.
- *Borders*—Borders are used not only to finish the edges, but to enhance the design. Most banners are fairly large, so you don't want a wide border that will overpower your center theme. If you piece the border, make your pieces in a larger than normal quilt size. Piecing looks much smaller from a distance, and you can easily loose the beauty of it when it is too small.
- *Corner Squares*—Sometimes I like corner squares for design purposes, other times they are essential. If you are using a printed fabric for border, you may find it impossible to match the design on the corners, so corner squares work great. An unmatched design really shows up from a distance.
- *Narrow inside black border*—A narrow 1/2" inside border frames your design nicely, especially if you use black lettering.
- *Variety is nice/Change often*—Don't leave the same one up for months...we change our banners every month to keep the sanctuary looking fresh. Pace yourself—it's taken about 5 years to complete enough banner sets to change them monthly.

Creating:

- *Heat'n'Bond Lite*—I use this to 'glue' my appliqué in place. Because of the glue nature, there are no fraying edges, and it adds body to the quilt, allowing it to hang straighter on the wall. It is a simple technique *anyone* can be successful with.
- If you have an appliqué that you would like to move or change after it has been adhered, simply re-heat it, and peel it off. I usually take a piece of plain fabric and iron over the area to finish removing any left over glue.
- *Cutting Lettering*—There really is an art to cutting out smooth letters, versus short choppy edges, especially on curves. Open your scissors fully, begin cutting, slowly and smoothly, utilizing the full length of the blade, until you reach the end of scissor points. This gives you a long, continuous cut. What a difference it makes in the end result!
- It is easier if you cut the inside of the letters (a,e,o,b,d,g, etc.) and curves first, then the top edges, finishing with the bottom edges which have less turns and curves.
- *Letter Placement*—Placing your letters in straight lines, and centering them evenly makes the difference of looking amateur or professional. Using a sliver of soap, or wash out marking pen, draw a vertical line down the center of the area where you will be placing the lettering. Now draw horizontal lines, each the exact distance apart. Use these lines to place and adhere your letters. Simply use a wet washcloth to dab away the placement lines.
- *Quilt Fuse*—I have used this very successfully on several designs...most popular is "The Cross" If you can think beyond the squares, you can see how the Quilt Fuse can be used for borders, (you can also purchase it on point for this), and I also have cross-stitch patterns that I have used to make very intricate, picture banners, using 1 square of quilters grid for each cross stitch shown.
- *Quick Bias*—is 1/4" bias tape with an adhesive back that is used for stained glass, and to bring out design features. Adhere it in place on your quilt and then use a double needle to quilt through all the banner layers in the final quilting process .
- *Borders First*—Whenever possible, I cut my background fabric and apply the borders before adding the appliqués. It helps keep the size consistent (especially in groupings) and much easier to handle. Appliqués make the banner top 'stiff' and they can loosen in handling. The exception is if your design goes into the border seam allowance. You will want to put only those appliqué pieces on, then the borders before you finish the appliqué work.
- *Lame'*—Is beautiful on church banners. However, it has it's challenges. You will need to use a much cooler iron, to prevent melting the lame', and leave it on the fabric a bit longer. The glue from the Heat'n'Bond will come through the fabric onto your iron. Have a piece of extra cloth available to run your iron over after adhering the lame to clean the excess glue from the iron plate before using it on other fabrics.

- *Stretch Fabrics– Fabrics like Crinkle Satin, have stretch to them and must be stabilized before cutting the background out. I find a lightweight, inexpensive fusible interfacing, to adhere to the back of stretch fabrics to prevent them from shifting.*
- *Walking Foot—A "Walking Foot" for your machine is essential for quilting several layers, and preventing fabric layers from slipping and shifting.*
- *Layering Your Appliqués and Lettering—I like to put black behind many of my designs and larger letters. It allows them to stand out rather than blend in as well as show off design lines. Simply cut your design or letters out in the pattern size, then adhere them to black fabric with Heat'n'Bond...paper still attached to black fabric. Then cut out 1/8—1/4" from the original design, depending on how large you want the outline and the size of the appliqué. You can simply 'eyeball' this distance as you cut.*
- *Features—I have used several different ways to bring out features that I cannot make out of fabric, including hand embroidery, permanent ink marker, blush powder, buttons, etc. Sometimes we just have to think outside of the box!*
- *Patience—It takes time and patience to make a professional looking wall hanging. If your original fabric choice doesn't look good, be willing to re-do it...regardless of time and/or cost. Don't settle for less than the best....a lot of people will be looking at and analyzing your work for years to come.*

Quilting and Binding:
- *Outline quilt—I usually outline quilt (or have my quilter outline) on all the Heat'n'Bond appliqués and letters.*
- *Because I use Heat'n'Bond, there is no need to stitch anything down prior to quilting. Stitch all layers at one time.*
- *Don't forget to stitch borders as well. This will keep your edges from 'waving'.*
- *A large stipple done over all the banner will prevent it from wrinkling, and fabric from bulging in unquilted areas.*
- *Fringe is applied after the banner has been quilted, but before the binding goes on. You will need to leave 1" at the bottom of banner unquilted to give you room to sew it on, turn under and tack from the back side.*
- *After the banner has been quilted, I pin the rod pocket fabric piece to the top of the banner, and 2 small pockets in place at the bottom of banner for the small dowel rod. The edges of these pockets are sewn in as the binding is sewn to the banner edges. The inside edges will need to be stitched in place by hand, into the lining only, after the binding has been hand sewn in place.*
- *I have begun placing a dowel rod at the bottom of my banners, and find it to give a straighter bottom edge, as well as eliminating 'waves' along the side edges. Cut the dowel about 1/2" shorter than the bottom edge. If it is too tight, your banner will have an hourglass shape to it.*

Displaying:
- *Cords—I purchase matching braid and fringe. I make my own tassels from the fringe. I have not found a good way to attach premade tassels to the bottom of a cord and have it look natural.*
- *Rods—I use curtain rods if I want the ends to show or I have cords with tassels to attach. If not, I use a 1" X 2" wood board cut 1" shorter than the width of my banner. I simply drill a hole 1/2" in from the ends to attach my cord for hanging.*
- *If I have any excess fabric, I will make coordinating table runners, window sill cloths, or other items for the sanctuary.*

Storage:
- *Wherever, however, you store your banners, they must be in a totally dark room with no direct light. You can place cardboard over the windows. This will prevent fading, as well as fabric breakdown. Your banners will last you years with proper storage.*
- *Rolling—For a long time I needed to roll my banners to put in a closet, due to storage constraints. This is adequate, however, they will come out with some permanent wrinkles. If you need to do this, be sure to roll them with a sheet around them for protection from light, dust, etc.*
- *Hanging—A room for banner storage is ideal. I have a steel rod with 'S' hooks that goes across one end of the room to hang smaller size banners. I have placed screws into the wall studs to hang taller banners. I also find that bicycle hooks screwed into the wall work well for banners that have a drapery rod at the top as they simply slip onto the hook.*
- *Do not dry clean your banners. Air them out if necessary, and vacuum as needed.*

Have fun making these banners! The techniques are simple, and the results rewarding. In all we do, remember that our goal is to glorify God and enhance the worship experience by creating an atmosphere conducive to preparing peoples hearts to hear the Word of God.

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