

ICDF NEWSLETTER - DECEMBER 2016: FLAGS & BANNERS

**BANNER MAKING...**

**A LOOK AT THE “HOW, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, WHAT AND WHO?”**

*Contributor: Rev'd. Rosalyn Smail*

**WHAT is a banner?**

There are many definitions of the word “banner” but the one that I like is “a banner is ... a graphic image that announces the name or identity...”<sup>1</sup> Banners can relate to countries, armies, churches, businesses, and families and individuals in coats of arms. They can be newspaper headlines and web-site identifications. Banners can be made of metal, building materials, fabric, plastic, paper, or a display on a computer screen.

But the banners that I want to write about are those made for and used in churches, chapels, cathedrals, Christian / Messianic organisations and even private homes. I will call them “Christian banners” when I need to differentiate from secular ones.

Christian banners can be designed to be static, hanging on the wall of a building or on a banner stand. They can also be mobile, used in processionals and recessionals, marches, spontaneous dance and / or spiritual warfare.

There are no right or wrong materials for these banners. It will depend on the intention behind the making of the banner, how it will be used, the size of the budget allocated to it, and what materials are available.

There are two specific styles of banner used in Christian settings. One is the “traditional” banner mostly suspended from a cross-bar, or carried on two poles. The other is “flag” style, often made of lamé, chiffon, or hand painted silk, etc.

The banners with which I am most familiar and about which I am writing are fabric and while I will mention others, these are my primary focus.

**WHY do we use banners?**

The purpose of a banner is to draw attention to its self and through that, to the message it carries. A banner should scream, “LOOK AT ME,” as it reveals the nature of its message.

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<sup>1</sup> TechTarget <http://searchsoa.techtarget.com/definition/banner>

We live in a visual age where billboards, advertising on the buses or the road-sides, vie for our attention. The attention span of the general population is more limited and more attuned to the visual, educated by the wonderful modern phenomena, television. People are less likely to be able to comprehend much of even the best articulated sermon, so it is important for the Church to use the visual as well as the audial, in its teaching. This is why Christian banners are so valuable. They proclaim truth in a form that is memorable, with or without words.

As Christians we turn to the Bible, the Old and New Testaments, for our rationale for the use of banners in worship and in Christian activities. There are a number of words in the Hebrew of the Old Testament which open up for us God's use of "banners", and they commence in Genesis.

**Genesis 1:14** Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for **signs** and seasons, and for days and years..."<sup>2</sup>

The word "signs" is pronounced "owth" in Hebrew, and means: "sign, signal, a distinguishing mark, banner, remembrance, miraculous sign, omen, warning, token, ensign, standard, miracle, proof".<sup>3</sup> On the fourth day of creation, God is proclaiming God's intention to use symbols and banners to guide humanity, even before they are created.

Another example of the use of this word is in Chapter Nine, where God is speaking to Noah.

**Genesis 9:12, 13, 17** And God said: "This is the **sign** of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:

"I set **My rainbow** in the cloud, and it shall be for the **sign** of the covenant between Me and the earth.

And God said to Noah, "This is the **sign** of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth."

In Exodus we meet a new word.

**Exodus 17:15** And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-**Banner**...

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<sup>2</sup> New King James Version is used in Bible quotations.

<sup>3</sup> Blue Letter Bible <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H226&t=NKJV>

The word “banner” is pronounced “nissi” and means: “something lifted up, standard, signal, signal pole, ensign, banner, sign, sail, standard (as rallying point), signal, standard (pole), ensign, signal.”<sup>4</sup> Hur and Aaron had held up the arms of Moses, while he held his staff, or pole, aloft. While it was held aloft the Israelites gained victory over their enemy, but if it was lowered, the enemy gained ground. The truth being proclaimed here to the heavens is that God is the Banner, victorious over the forces of evil.

Once again in Numbers we meet the word “nissi” as we read of Moses obedience to the Lord’s command to lift something up – this time a bronze serpent, which would bring healing to those who looked upon it. So this time the truth that is proclaimed is about healing.

**Numbers 21:8-9** Then the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a **pole**; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.” So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a **pole**; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

We meet this word again in Psalms:

**Psalm 60:4** You have given a **banner** to those who fear You, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah

This speaks of God giving banners to those who fear God, who will speak truth into a situations through the use of banners. This, I believe is the why we use banners and flags in Christian settings. We are lifting up the truths that God has given us to declare to the heavens and to the earth that God is in this place, working out in our lives, that truth that we are proclaiming.

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<sup>4</sup> Blue Letter Bible <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?strongs=H5251&t=NKJV>