

How to take a one-off social event (fund-raising) and give it a mission twist.

The following paper was kindly provided by the Rev'd George Fisher, who represents the Diocese of Litchfield within the Rural Evangelism Network.

Lots of churches not only rely on social events to raise money to keep them afloat, but they are very good at them and it develops a huge level of contact with the community. This is especially the case in rural communities but is the case for others as well. Here are some examples of one-off social events:

Fayres and Fetes (Summer, Autumn, Christmas, Spring). Often these have various stalls and people from the village/community are involved.

Flower Festivals.

Community Fun Day.

One-off unique specials. An example of this is the Teddy-Bear weekend at Barton.

BBQ or picnic.

How can we use these to be a means of sharing God's love, not only for making money? Each event is unique and each church is unique but here are a few ideas.

Make sure there is good publicity about the church either in the form of posters or handouts (or both). This should clearly show the times of main services and anything special to invite people to (socials, nurture courses). They can be on the walls, or available on church stalls, or handed out to people as they come or leave. Make sure they are clear, good quality and welcoming.

Have a church stall which has displays with lots of photos of what the church gets up to. You might work with a Christian bookshop on a sale-or-return basis and sell Christian books, magazines, CDs, DVDs and odds and ends. See other possible ideas below.

Do a questionnaire asking people about the community, a beliefs survey, or asking for favourite hymns to feed into a 'Songs of Praise' (well advertised in posters), or asking about a specific project coming up (e.g. developing a new service for families). People can either go around with clipboards (sensitively) or be based on a church stall. People are often quite happy to give their opinions on all sorts of things and it can lead to other questions and them coming along to other church activities.

Prayer Requests. Ask people if there is anything they would like the church to pray for – for them, their family, the community, the world. Many respond positively to this and are deeply touched by it. The requests can be put on a prayer tree or a prayer board – it's best for them to fill it in and put it up. This idea may be linked with the church stall, or be separate.

Psalm Reading. This is a simple idea with a small table with ten small cards, each with a different verse from the Psalms and a sign saying, "Psalm Reading". Invite people to have a psalm reading and pick a card, read it, take this as a word from God for them for today. It can lead to great conversations on spiritual matters and lots of outsiders are willing to have ago at this. For details see:

<http://www.lichfield.anglican.org/chadnet/Index.aspx?Page=top-tips> .

Open the church. Our church buildings are a great resource and often a social event will take place and the church remains closed. Open it up – advertise it as a ‘quiet place’, and put out relevant materials (e.g. see prayer stations below).

Prayer Stations. It might be that there is a corner of the hall or a separate room (even the church) where people can go for quiet reflection. These need only be very simple. There are loads of ideas at: <http://www.creativeprayer.com/>

Pause for thought. Invite a high-profile Christian and have them open the event or award the prizes and say a few words at the same time.

Simply tie in the timing of your social event with a special service or the start of an enquirers group.

Ideas related to specific items.

One church had an annual Flower Festival. The new Vicar developed the idea of each year having a ‘theme’ and each flower display had a bible verse or message with it. It not only breathed new life into something which was tired but meant there was a real message with it. One year the theme was ‘Darkness to Light’. Another year it was ‘Healing’. It had a powerful spiritual effect on many people.

One church held an annual Fun Day for the community. It was from 12 noon until 5.00pm and was great fun. In the middle of it all, from 2.00-3.00pm everything stopped for an Open Air Service. There was no ‘con’ since this was on all the publicity. It was ‘Songs of Praise’ style so everyone could join in but with a real challenge in it. P.S. All the proceeds from the day were donated to charity.

If you have any ideas, examples or suggestions from your experience, please contact George Fisher as we’d love to add more ideas to this paper.

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