

THE BIGGEST BIRTHDAY PARTY EVER.com

CURRY & COMEDY



+



A PROJECT BY



INTRO

They say laughter breaks down barriers and feasting is good for the soul so why not combine them for a night of curry and comedy. This event is best run in partnership with a local restaurant (other food options besides curry would also work).

IDEAL TARGET GROUP:

Young Professionals (Other target groups could be accommodated. See 'What If' section for details).

IDEAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE:

30 – 40

AVERAGE COST FOR THE EVENT:

£600 - £650 (can be regained by ticket sales)

THE AIMS:

- To represent the God who created us with a sense of humour and an appetite!
- For Christians to invite new people who live or work locally but probably don't have any contact with the church to a high quality event.
- To enable people from the local community to experience Christian community and have their perceptions of the Christian faith challenged.

WHO?

We love to laugh so this event can be tailored for anyone from teenage upwards. However, it is ideal for young professionals largely because it is more expensive to put on and therefore will probably need to be ticketed. For this reason, as well as due to the nature of the event, it works best in a community where there is some disposable income. The event will appeal to people who have limited connection with the church as well as those who are part of the Christian community. As the main purpose of this event is to build relationships between the church and the wider community, ideally the demographic who attend will be a good mix of both.

WHERE?

A recent survey of churchgoing in the UK, identified that 60% of the UK are either un-churched (have pretty much never been inside one) or de-churched (have had a bad experience and don't intend to come back!) For all of those people, church buildings can be scary places. This means that although we're hosting the party, there's good reason to hold it in a neutral space. For this event you should aim to find a local restaurant who wants to partner with you. This is a great opportunity to start building a relationship with a local business owner as well as find a great venue for your event.

WHEN?

This event can be run at a date that fits with your church's current rhythm of mission, taking into consideration how the event might compliment or clash with your existing church programme. Think about when is right for the people you are inviting. In order to maximise your appeal, choose a time that is not in competition with other events in the community. For this event a week night would be advisable as restaurants are less busy and more able to accommodate such an event. If many people in your community commute to work make sure you give them enough time to get back for the event.

MAKING IT HAPPEN!

STEP 1. CREATE A TEAM

You could run this event as a small group, a church or a group of churches. Your team will need to include:

- Someone who is happy to take overall responsibility for the organisation of the event including finding and liaising with the venue.
- Someone who knows how to produce high quality publicity
- Someone who can provide the very simple PA the comedians will need on the night
- Someone who is confident enough to host the event, including welcoming people, explaining the programme, introducing the comedian and wrapping up at the end of the night.

You could have a few further members of the team to help with the organisation and liaison with comedians and venues. A recommended core team size is therefore between 3 and 5 people although you can still have lots more people involved!

STEP 2. DECIDE ON YOUR COMMUNITY BOUNDARIES

Clearly define who your event is aimed at. What geographical area will you be advertising to? Is it a street? A few streets? A postcode? Ideally, do not try to reach too large a geographical area as this increases costs in publicity and makes it more difficult to build lasting relationships through the event.

STEP 3. PLAN YOUR FOLLOW UP

Don't leave it to the last minute to work out how this event will fit into the wider mission of the church. You need to have a plan in place for the following scenarios.

Scenario A: Someone comes to the event and they are already asking questions about faith and really want to know more. How will they find out more through this event or be invited into a context where they can discover more about the gospel? See out 'Top evangelistic follow up ideas' for some great ways to respond to this scenario.

Scenario B: Someone comes to the event without much knowledge of the Christian story and not particularly interested in finding out more. However, they love the event and are impressed that the church would put on something like this. Is there another event happening in the near future that you can invite them to?

Scenario C: Someone comes to the event without much knowledge of the Christian story and not particularly interested in finding out more. However, they are struck by the sense of community and would really like to hang out with people from the church more, even though they are not yet interested in the Christian faith. Is there a social group (maybe a sports team, dance class or film club) that meets regularly they can be invited to become a part of?

STEP 4. BUDGET AND FUNDRAISING

If you do not have much finance you can plan this event to break even, but you may need some initial finance to help with cash flow. Costs will be approximately:

- £200 comedian for the night (+ travel)
- £100 publicity
- £300 food (assuming 30 people at £10 a head)

Previous similar events have been ticketed at £15 - £20 a head and have sold out.

Restaurants are often willing to offer a set menu for a fixed price and people can buy drinks or further food if they wish. Comedians are normally happy to take payment on the night.

Restaurants will want some kind of guarantee of numbers so you will probably need to commit to paying for a certain number of meals, no matter how many tickets you sell.

Printed publicity will need to be paid for a month or so before the event.

You will probably need to have between £300 and £400 in the kitty to run this event, although you can recoup some of that through tickets to reinvest in further events.

Raising Finance

If your church or small group does not already have a mission fund that can help with some of the costs of this event you may have to look into some fundraising. This can be everything from cake sales and car washes, to council grants. Most local councils have small grant funds which faith groups can apply for and as your event will be benefitting local business there's a good chance of you being able to raise some funds through this. Visit your local council website for more details.

STEP 5. BOOK YOUR RESTAURANT AND YOUR COMEDIAN

There are lots of clean comedy performers in the UK, some of whom are quite high profile. They come at a range of asking fees, depending largely on their notoriety. Comedians we have worked with previously who may be able to accommodate such an event include:

- Andy Kind - www.andykind.co.uk
- Paul Kerensa - www.paulkerensa.com
- Tony Vino - www.tonyvino.co.uk

For more comedians please email: tbbpe@sharejesusinternational.com

The Right Location

Look for somewhere close to the heart of the community you are trying to connect with, somewhere that is generally quite popular but quieter on the earlier days of the week. It's important to make sure you book a restaurant that you can fill. Comedy is a struggle if the room feels half empty. Also, make sure the venue has a suitable place for the comedian to stand where everyone can see him and ideally has flexible seating.

Meet the Manager

Arrange to meet the manager for a face to face meeting where you can chat through your vision for the event and how it would work logistically. Remember that this is about building relationships, so take the time to get to know the manager if you can and let them know that you want to support his/her business and not just use the space.

Things to discuss with the restaurant manager:

- Explain who you are and what you are hoping to do.
- Propose the idea of a set menu that everyone pays the same price for. Can they offer an affordable set menu?
- Confirm an available time and date, including set up and set down time.
- How many people would they expect you to get in to make it worth it for them? Is there a minimum requirement?
- What happens if you cannot meet it? (reassure them you don't expect this to happen!)
- When will they expect you to have sold a minimum number of tickets by?
- What PA do they have in the venue? Are they happy for you to bring in a simple PA kit to amplify the comedian?
- Are you allowed to put up banners and bunting?
- Can you bring in extra lighting if required?
- Are you allowed to rearrange seating?
- Does the restaurant have an entertainment licence? (If not see our Licencing Guide on the website)
- Would they be willing to have posters and flyers up advertising the event in the two weeks leading up to the event?
- How will the restaurant manage payment to ensure that any extras beyond the set meal are covered by those attending and not billed to you?

Get it in Writing

When you have found the right place and have decided the above details make sure you write a follow up email to the manager with everything that has been agreed clearly laid out. Ask the manager to reply saying that they are happy with this. It's really important that you do this as it ensures transparency and avoids problems arising from miscommunication later in the planning of the event.

STEP 6. TICKETING

Whether or not you choose to sell tickets for your event, you will need to know numbers for food so people will need to register. There are several ways of doing this.

- Register with an online ticketing agency. There are several websites which allow you to sell tickets through their system for a small registration fee. This allows for a fully functional system with minimal admin and means that people can book tickets online. Most of them require you to register with them before you can begin selling tickets so if you wish to do this make sure you give yourselves time to get it all set up.
- Have a dedicated phonenumber and sell tickets on the door. If you have an office or work number people can call to book tickets you could have a system where they phone up to register and you either take card payment (if you have the facility) or take payment on the door. It's important that there are a reasonable number of hours per day that someone will be available to take calls and a good clear answer phone message for out of hours calls. People could also register by email but they would have to pay on the door. The limitation of this system is that many people will register without paying which will mean you cannot guarantee numbers. If people pay in advance they are much more likely to turn up!

STEP 7. PUBLICISE

For an event of this size, publicity should probably be released between two and three weeks before the event. Make sure you get the flyer designed by someone who is able to produce a professional standard of work. The quality of the flyer will indicate to the recipient the quality of the event they are attending. Examples and help with flyers are available on our website.

Make sure the flyer clearly states the date, time, location and price of the event. Make it clear what is included in the price. If there is a website or social media platform for the event make sure this is also included on the flyer. Be sure to communicate who is running the event.

Make sure the flyer is a true representation of the content of the event. This means do not advertise the event as a comedy night if you intend to include a 30 minute preaching slot. It is important to be honest with the public and let them know exactly what they are signing up for!

Places to distribute flyers/posters:

- Door-to-door. Get a group from the church to post them in houses in the local area. Avoid doors that say 'no junk mail'. Even though I'm sure you do not consider it to be 'junk', it's important to respect their right to disagree!
- Ask local shops if they are willing to put a poster in their window or to keep some flyers by the till.
- Put flyers/posters up on community notice boards.
- Get local churches to put the event in their news bulletin and give out flyers. Encourage church members to bring friends to the event.

Other publicity (see Communications PDF for more details on making the best use of these mediums).

- Use the internet, it offers you free publicity! If you have access to any local/church websites make sure the event is listed there. Also upload the event to any online local community calendars you can find - your council probably hosts one and there may well be others too.
- Use social media, set up a Facebook group or get local tweeters tweeting about your event.
- Let the local press know. Write a short press release about what you will be doing. Send it to your local papers or local news websites. Within 24 hours of the event send another press release about how the event went and include pictures. This will help promote the positive work the church is doing in your community.
- Make sure you've registered your event properly so that it appears on thebiggestbirthdaypartyever.com. Don't forget to make use of the t-shirts and publicity we will send you as part of your resources pack to make a real visible presence on the day.

STEP 8. VOLUNTEERS

To help with the smooth running of the event it would be good to have two people who are not core team members there on the day to welcome people and make sure everyone is having a good time. This means core team members will have the time to make sure everything is running smoothly and to solve any problems that may arise.

Make sure you remind your church members that they are not just there to have a good time with people they already know but should be trying to meet new people and make them feel welcome throughout the event. Don't forget to thank your volunteers at the end of the evening.

STEP 9. THE LEGAL STUFF

Most venues are registered for entertainment. However, if the restaurant does not have an entertainment licence you will need to obtain a Temporary Event Notice (TEN). These cost £21 and must be obtained at least 10 days before the event. For more details see our *Licensing Guide*. Please also see this document if you wish for further information on playing music (live or recorded) in the venue.

It is advisable, if you run any events that are open to the public, for your church to have Public Liability insurance. For more information on this see *Insurance PDF*.

STEP 10. ON THE DAY

Here's a list of things to do on the day to ensure a smooth running event:

- Visit or call the restaurant early in the day to make sure they've remembered the event is happening!
- Call the comedian to check they have remembered and to make sure they are planning to arrive early enough to run through the programme before the event.
- Arrive at the venue around 2 hours before the event to set up PA and decorations.
- Risk assess the venue using the form on our website.
- Don't forget to have the payment for the comedian ready at hand.
- Make sure you have an efficient set up for verifying tickets as people arrive.
- Arrange to meet with comedian and host for the night an hour before the event to talk through the schedule and answer any questions they might have.
- Make sure there is water on hand for the host and comedian throughout the show.
- Make sure you clearly communicate the follow up opportunities you have planned.
- At the end of the night be sure to thank the comedian and the venue and ask for any feedback they are able to offer on how the event went.



THE MEANING BEHIND THE PARTY!

You'll want to make sure that people don't just go away having enjoyed the event but that they've also been challenged or intrigued about the Christian faith. However you choose to present the gospel, it must be short and informal and should not leave anyone feeling like they have been tricked into coming to be preached at! Here are five inoffensive ways you can share the meaning behind the party on the night.

- 1.** Get the host to introduce the party with a little bit about why the event is taking place. Welcome to Curry and Comedy brought to you by <insert church name(s) here>. We're here tonight in celebration of The Biggest Birthday Party Ever – the birthday of the church which is now...We thought we'd celebrate with some comedy because we believe God is a God who likes to laugh! We hope you enjoy the evening!
- 2.** Make a birthday cake. At the end of the evening give everyone a piece of the cake and explain to them that you are holding this event to celebrate The Biggest Birthday Party Ever – the birthday of the worldwide church.
- 3.** Make use of party bags to give people some fun stuff as well as The Biggest Birthday Party Ever booklet telling them a little bit more about why we have so much to celebrate. Ideas to fill the party bag:
 - A mini joke book
 - Fake teeth
 - Mini chocolate bar
 - Lovehearts
 - The Biggest Birthday Party Ever gospel booklet
- 4.** Interview the comedian using a few simple questions. Keep the interview to just a few minutes. Here are some questions you might use:
 - What are the best and worst things about being a comedian?
 - You're a Christian as well as being a comedian. How does your faith affect your comedy?
 - Do you think God has a sense of humour?
- 5.** Buy a few copies of Andy Kind's 'Stand up and Deliver' a light hearted, comedic book which could act as a soft entry point for people wanting to learn more about the Christian faith.

FOLLOW UP

It's important that this event fits into a wider context of mission. Therefore, get feedback from everyone involved about how they thought the event went. You could ask them to respond to three simple questions:

1. What did you like about the event?
2. What did you think could have been done better?
3. If we were to run the event again what changes would you suggest?

Have a plan in place for your next event so that you can build on the good work you've begun.



WHAT IF...?

I WANT TO HAVE A MAGICIAN AS WELL AS A COMEDIAN

Magicians could work just as well as comedians as long as there is space in the venue for them to do their thing! Two magicians we've worked with before are Steve Legg (<http://www.stevelegg.com>) and John Archer (<http://www.john-archer.com>)

WE CAN'T FIND A SUITABLE RESTAURANT?

You could alternatively use a town hall, community centre or other community space to host your event and order in take-away food. This gives you the benefit of being able to accommodate more people. However you will need to pay great attention to the aesthetics of the room to make sure you produce an atmosphere that works for comedy.

I WANT TO PUT ON A SIMILAR EVENT FOR PEOPLE WITH LESS DISPOSABLE INCOME?

The more affordable version of this event would be to book a town hall, community centre or similar community space for the event. Get someone from your church who has a food hygiene qualification and can rustle up a good meal to cook for the event. This will reduce food costs significantly, but will require a larger team to help set up the space, cook, serve and clean up.

WE CAN'T AFFORD THE RISK OF SO MUCH MONEY?

A simpler option is to speak to a restaurant manager about booking in a comedian for their restaurant on a normal restaurant night. It's more of a gift to the community and less of an event you are putting on. Individuals attend the restaurant as normal but get a free comedy gig thrown in. You can still promote the event locally to generate interest. While this option does not risk as much financially, you cannot guarantee audience and will need to ensure you get some members of the church who commit to coming along and bringing friends to bless the restaurant and ensure the comedian is not performing to a half empty room.

WE THINK WE CAN GET MORE THAN ONE RESTAURANT FULL OF PEOPLE TO COME?

You could book two restaurants and two comedians and get them to swap over half way through the night. This works really well as the audience get two completely different comedy sets, and you can accommodate twice as many people. You need a few extra volunteers to facilitate the event on the night, but other than that it will not create a huge amount more work and it could make for an even better event!

MORE ABOUT SHARE JESUS INTERNATIONAL



SJI is passionate about communicating the good news about Jesus in our ever-changing times.

SJI's work covers three main areas:

1. Missional Leaders – leadership development has long been a focus for SJI. Over the past ten years, our leadership development programmes have seen in excess of one thousand young people trained to serve God in their communities. Find more details on the FRESH programme here
2. Missional Festivals – in 2008 we hosted London's first Pentecost Festival with over one hundred events, many of them free, in the heart of London. Since then the Festival has grown by collaborating with a wide range of organisations and churches. Now we are also training churches to run local festivals in their communities
3. Missional Churches – planting missional expressions of church locally, SJI is working to equip churches across the UK to be missionally focussed

For more information please visit our website: www.sharejesusinternational.com

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