

**THE
BIGGEST
BIRTHDAY PARTY
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COMMUNITY SPORTS DAY



INTRO

Sports unite people of all ages, races and backgrounds. Putting on a community sports day could be a brilliant way to bring the whole community together.

IDEAL TARGET GROUP:

Everyone!

IDEAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE:

100 – 5000

AVERAGE COST:

£100 - £1000 (highly dependent on how many people you expect to attend)

THE AIMS:

- To welcome people into an atmosphere of fun and celebration and build community through sport.
- To provide an opportunity for Christians from the church/churches to meet people who live and work locally and invite friends to a fun, free event.
- To enable people from the local area to experience Christian community and have their perceptions of the Christian faith challenged.

WHO?

You can either direct your event at a specific age group or you can try to make it suitable for all ages. Sport is such a great unifier that this is a good opportunity to bring everyone together in one event, so if possible, the greater diversity of people who can be involved in this event the better.

WHERE?

This event must take place in a big open space, preferably highly visible and well frequented by members of the community. This could be a park, sports grounds or school fields.

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.
- Someone who knows how to produce high quality publicity.
- Someone to coordinate the different sports events as part of the day.
- Someone to liaise with the council or venue owner
- Someone to manage refreshments.
- Someone to manage volunteers.

A recommended core team size is therefore between 4 and 6 people although you will need to have lots more people involved to make this event happen.

STEP 2. DECIDE ON YOUR COMMUNITY BOUNDARIES

Clearly define who your event is aimed at. What geographical area will be the target for your advertising? 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 until last 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 in Jesus 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? As this is a family event a messy church style Pentecost service would be a good next step. Sports Alpha could also be a perfect follow on from this event.

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? Christians In Sport offer a free common wealth quiz that could make a good follow up event. For details and help with organising a sports quiz: <http://www.christiansinsport.org.uk/events.asp?itemid=3173&itemTitle=The+Sports+Quiz§ion=26§ionTitle=Events>

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 sports team that meets regularly they can be invited to become a part of?

The best way to follow up an event like this might be to start a community sports team. For more information on how you can do this well visit <http://www.worldsportministries.com/ministry-teams/how-to-start-a-community-sport-team/>

If you are particularly interested in starting a football ministry there is a brilliant book entitled "Football 2 Football Ministry 3" by Mark Blythe that will tell you everything you need to know. You can contact him directly for a copy, mark@mccfc.org.uk or 07885 778501. Cost: £12 includes P&P.

STEP 4. BUDGET AND FUNDRAISING

The potential costs of this event are laid out below:

£300	Venue
£300	Sports equipment
£50+	Refreshments
£30 - £100	Winners Awards
£100	Publicity

You can run this event for just a handful of families in a small area or for a whole neighbourhood. The cost will vary dependent on the scale of event you choose to run. You may need to pay venue costs, depending on whether you use council property or privately owned space. If it is a free event you may well be able to get council property at no cost. Sport equipment costs will depend on whether you already own some of the equipment and the variety of sport you decide to include as part of the event. Further costs for refreshments and awards will vary dependent on the number of people you expect but can be managed to suit a tight budget. Publicity will need to be paid for a month before the event.

Raising Finance

It is not recommended that you charge entry to this event although you may be able to make some money back by selling refreshments.

If your church(es) or small group(s) 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 community there's a good chance of you being able to raise some funds through this. For larger amounts, your council may have a sports fund or a community fund you can apply to. Visit your local council website for more details.

STEP 5. CHOOSE YOUR VENUE

The ideal outdoor space is highly accessible and in close proximity to lots of homes. If you choose a park, it will help to build critical mass if there would normally be lots of people there anyway. Visit the park at the time of day, and the day of the week on which your event will be and see how many people are there. If you are applying to your council, we have a whole document devoted to this process which you can download.

If you choose a school premises you will need to make sure you let the families of the children in the school know as they will be your core audience. Similarly if you choose a sports ground you will need to advertise to the regular attendees of the sports clubs that use the grounds.

Choosing well

When choosing your venue you need to think about

Visibility: How well will passers-by be able to see the event?

Space: Is the space suitable for the number of people you hope to attend?

Accessibility: Is the space easy to get to and are there appropriate transport links?

Sports Facilities: This could include football/rugby/cricket/rounders pitches, basketball/tennis courts, running track, indoor courts etc.

Other Facilities: Access to running water, toilets and electricity would be advantageous. You will need some seating for spectators.

Cost: Most council spaces are free or cheaper to charities if you are not charging for the event. Privately owned spaces may cost a lot more.

Once you have decided on a venue, get in touch with the owner or council to let them know you're interested and set up an initial meeting.

Meet the Manager/council member

Arrange 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/council member if you can and let them know that you want to support his/her enterprise and the local community and not just use the space.

Things to discuss with the manager (for council meetings refer to our council applications document and attend the meeting as prepared as you can):

Explain who you are and what you are hoping to do.

- How many people you expect to attend.
- Tell them exactly what sports you are planning and how you will take health and safety precautions.
- Are you allowed to put up banners and bunting?
- Does the venue have an entertainment licence? (They probably do but if not you will need to apply to the council for a TEN Licence).
- Would they be willing to put posters and flyers up advertising the event in the two weeks leading up to the event?

- What are the rules on serving food and drink?
- Can they give you access to a (drinking) water supply, toilets and electricity?

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. DESIGN THE EVENT.

Who is it for?

The first thing you will need to decide is whether it is an all age event or whether you are going to focus on young people. If you are running it in a primary school you could aim it mainly at under 11s with mums and dads races, just like a school sports day.

In a park you will probably need to provide sports for under 11s and for under 16s. If you are also able to have sports events for all ages, adults and children, this will strengthen the community aspect of the day.

What sports will you play?

There are different types of sports day you could choose to run:

- A traditional sports day with egg and spoon races, sack race and three legged races.
- An Olympic-style competition with short and long distance races, long jump, discus etc.
- A Team sport tournament (five-a-side, basketball, rounders etc.)
- Lots of short challenges like how many baskets, runs, goals, can you score?
- Alternative sports day - welly throwing, frisbee, hoopla, assault courses, etc. These would be good if families wanted to enter in teams.
- Inflatable fun! Inflatable human futsal, inflatable assault course, bungee runs, a climbing wall and other similar activities. This gives people the opportunity to try new things but significantly increases the cost of the event.

For more traditional sports days one way of getting the equipment is to hire it. This website allows you to hire a full set of sports day equipment for under £300 <http://www.sportsdayhire.co.uk/Activities/School-Sports-day-package-Hire.htm>

Disability Sport

Think about how disability friendly your event is. Could you try to improve this by including a Paralympic sport as one of the activities? Perhaps blind football or, if there is demand, a wheelchair race. For more on disability sport and how you can include it in your event visit <http://www.efds.co.uk>

Who will lead the different sports?

You may know people in your church community who are proficient at/trained in sport coaching and happy to lead a bit of the day. Try to find people who are used to putting on tournaments and have some idea how to coordinate them so that they run smoothly. Remember that you will need at least one and often two people to oversee each different area. If you have links with local sports clubs, why not ask if they have anyone willing to come and do a few hours skills training in their area of expertise, as a way of promoting their club.

This might also be a good opportunity to get young people actively involved in the event, especially as they will be most familiar with up to date rules, having played the games at school.

Timings

The event should probably run for about 3 – 4 hours. The first half an hour will be for registering teams and giving people a chance to see what's going on. You can then have 2 – 3 hours of sport and the last half an hour for announcing the winners and giving out prizes. A Saturday afternoon from 1.00pm – 5.00pm is ideal.

Awards

It would be great to have a big finale to the sports day with a podium and medals and lots of cheering! As well as standard

winners medals you could also have awards for fair play, good sportsmanship or outstanding effort. You could also give everyone a certificate for participation.

Sound

For larger events you may want to think about bringing a simple PA for announcements. Most churches will have the simple speaker and microphone you will need, however you will need to be using a space with a power supply to be able to plug the speakers in. It is possible to acquire a small battery powered PA which would be ideal for this event for about £150.

Refreshments

You will need, at the very least, to have plenty of water available for volunteers and attendees. You may want to give away other drinks and refreshments. If you buy pre-sealed food and drink you could charge for them.

STEP 7. THE LEGAL STUFF

Most venues are registered for entertainment. However, if the venue 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 document. 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 our insurance document.

STEP 8. OTHER PRACTICALITIES

If you are filling in a council application for this event you will need to have a plan for all of the following. However, even if you are using private property it is still worth thinking about them. For more details on how to build a policy about these have a look at our council applications document.

Toilets: Where are the nearest toilets? How many are there? How accessible are they?

Security: How many people can you fit in the area? How are you going to make sure you don't reach over capacity? If it's a very confined area, one way of doing this is to have people on the doors counting people in and out. You may want to have people on the doors all day anyway, welcoming people, asking people not to block the entries and keeping an eye on who is coming in and out. If you're really concerned about security you may even want to hire a few qualified security people to be there on the day.

Emergency Planning: Let the police and fire service know that the event is happening. Have a look around and make sure there is a safe place for them to park should they need to. Have a chain of command in place so that everyone knows who's in charge in an emergency. Make sure you have qualified first aiders and fire extinguishers on site.

Children: Adhere to your church's child protection policy. If you don't have one visit <http://www.ccpas.co.uk/>. In addition to this, have a plan for what happens if a parent loses a child during your event.

STEP 9. PUBLICITY

For an event of this size, publicity should probably be released between 3 and 4 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, and location of the event. Let people know what ages the event is aimed at and clarify if there is a specific time they need to arrive in order to take part in certain activities. If there is a website or social media platform for the event include this on the flyer too. 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 sports

day and neglect to mention that 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!

How to share 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. By giving away free food you are already showing that God is a generous God. It is likely that people will ask you why you are doing this. Make sure church members are prepared to give an answer to this question.

Here are some other ways you can share the meaning behind the party:

When planning entertainment to coincide with the barbecue, think about choosing some live music or a theatre performance that communicates about God in an engaging way.

What events will your church or local churches be putting on in the near future? Use this event as an opportunity to profile the local church and invite people along to other things the Church is doing in your community.

Places to distribute flyers/posters

- Contact local sports teams and invite them to come along.
- 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.
- Ask local schools if you can give them flyers to put in children's book bags.
- 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

- 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, if you have purchased a registration pack, to make a real visible presence on the day.

STEP 10. VOLUNTEERS

You will need lots of volunteers for this event! Go to local churches at least 6 weeks before the event and invite people to get signed up. Ideally you should have two or three volunteers for each activity you are running and another five to ten on hand for emergencies and to chat with people.

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.

STEP 11. ON THE DAY

- Aim to have all the team and all the equipment at the location at least two hours before the event.
- Call a team meeting. Register volunteers and make sure everyone knows the chain of command, who first aiders are and where to go if there's a fire.
- Assign the different areas to different people to set up. They should also be responsible for setting down their section and clearing the surrounding area at the end.
- Don't forget to put up your Biggest Birthday banners.
- Call everyone together again to assign roles for the day. Make sure everyone knows if and when they can take breaks.
- Once everything is set up risk assess the venue using the form from our website.
- At the end of the event thank everyone who helped to make the day a success.
- Thoroughly clear the venue and make sure you leave it as you found it.

How to share 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 some ways you can share the meaning behind the party:

1. If you purchased a registration pack, make use of your 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:

- gold coin
- bouncy ball
- a mini chocolate bar
- stickers
- The Biggest Birthday Party Ever gospel booklet

2. Ask a famous or local sportsperson to come and present the medals during the medal ceremony. Ask them to speak for just a few minutes. Here are some questions you might use for a short interview:

What are the best and worst things about being a sports person?

How important is winning to you?

You're a Christian, how does this affect your attitude to sport?

3. Set up a prayer tent. Have a gazebo/tent where people can come and ask for prayer. You could decorate it creatively with different ways people can engage with prayer and bring in sporting themes. Ensure it is manned all day with people who are willing to pray with those who want prayer.

4. Get a Christian freestyle footballer to come and show off some tricks to end the event. Ask them to talk a little (again only for a few minutes) whilst showing off their skills.

STEP 12. WRAP UP AND IMPLEMENT FOLLOW UP

Outdoor events are difficult to get feedback from. However, it's important that this event fits into a wider context of mission and therefore to get feedback from everyone involved about how they thought the event went. You could ask them to respond to three simple questions:

What did you like about the event?

What did you think could have been done better?

If we were to run the event again what changes would you suggest?

You could also invite people to sign up to hear about future events. Have a plan in place for your next event so that you can build on the good work you've begun.

What if....?

It rains?

Have a back-up plan in place for really bad weather. If you have a few gazebos you may be able to carry on in a little bit of rain. If this is impossible, the best option is to have a large church hall ready to host a scaled down version of the event. You may want to have a reserve date in mind on which you could run the full event in the future.

We want to focus on disability sport?

That's great. You could have a whole event where able bodied and disabled people all compete in parasport. For example you could blindfold those with full sight and then have a game of blind football. For more information on disability sport visit <http://www.efds.co.uk>

We want to run an indoor version of this event?

There are some drawbacks to running this event inside, namely, limited space and less public exposure. However, if you wanted to book out a multisport venue and play indoor sport like badminton, table tennis and five-a-side football you could still create a great event. The costs of hiring such a space may be higher than the costs of using an outdoor area.

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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