

Themed Dinner Nights

Themed dinners serve as excellent fundraisers for SYC due to their ability to engage and captivate the community. By incorporating themes that resonate with the spirit of summer camp, such as "Outdoor Adventure" or "Campfire Cookout," these events not only attract attendees but also create a memorable and enjoyable experience. Themed dinners allow for creative expression, fostering a sense of community and shared interest among church members and supporters.

In summary, themed dinners offer a unique and engaging approach to fundraising, attracting participants through creativity, fun, and a shared experience. The ability to create a memorable event that stands out in people's minds can lead to increased support and contributions for the cause.

Selling tickets is the primary way these events raise money, but you can combine this idea with other ideas to make this event a very effective way to raise the funds you need. Incorporate a silent auction, raffle, or other ideas to reach your fundraising goals.

Here's a step-by-step guide to help you plan a successful themed dinner fundraiser:

1. Define Your Theme:

Choose a theme that aligns with the spirit of your youth group. Ensure the theme is appealing to your target audience and can be easily translated into decorations, activities, and menu options.

Below are some fun themes ideas to get you started:

- **Sock-Hop:** Bring swing dancing back into vogue with a sock-hop night. They were popular in the 50s and 60s, so pick music from that era to play. Also, turn the venue into a retro diner to set the atmosphere. The older members will love getting to show the younger members the ropes and dusting off their dance moves!
- **70s / 80s / 90s Night:** Speaking of the 50s and 60s, relive more memories by choosing a decade as the theme of the night! Everyone dresses up in the silliest version of what was "cool" back then. Play all the music hits of the decade, add movie posters from that era as decorations, and serve food older members remember eating often back then, and your members will have a blast. You definitely want to have a photo booth ready to go for one of these events!
- **Whodunit:** Do you remember the board game "Clue"? Make the game as large as life by making the whole event about a mystery everyone has to solve together. Consider turning it into a competition to see who can solve the mystery first with a prize ready for the winner. This one takes some work ahead of time, but gets the whole crowd involved!

Fundraiser Idea

- Campout: Does your church have a lot of land or a large open field - even a large parking lot? Host a campout! Roast hot dogs over the fire, play games until sunset, make s'mores, and sing worship songs around the fire to make this night as memorable as possible.

2. Set a Budget:

- Determine the budget for the fundraiser, considering venue costs, decorations, catering, entertainment, and marketing expenses.
- Establish a goal for the amount of money you aim to raise.

3. Choose a Venue:

- Select a venue that complements your theme. It could be the church basement, a park, a community center, or another creative venue you have easy access to!

4. Plan the Menu:

- Create a menu that fits your theme. For example, if your theme is a "Campfire Cookout," include barbecue items, s'mores, and other outdoor-friendly foods. Remember, the food doesn't have to be very extravagant, it can be simple, budget friendly items.
- Consider dietary restrictions and preferences of your guests.

5. Secure Catering and Beverages:

- Decide whether you'll prepare the food in-house or hire a catering service. This is a great opportunity for your youth to get involved and show off their cooking skills, or learn more about being in the kitchen.

6. Design Invitations and Promotional Material:

- Develop visually appealing invitations and promotional materials that reflect the theme.
- Clearly communicate the purpose of the fundraiser, ticket prices, and how the funds will be utilized by sending your group to camp.

7. Entertainment and Activities:

- Plan entertainment and activities that align with the theme. This could include live music, games, or a themed photo booth.
- Encourage your youth in showcasing their talents or leading activities.

8. Ticket Sales and Marketing:

- Set ticket prices based on your budget and fundraising goals.
- Utilize social media, local newspapers, and community bulletin boards to market the event.

Fundraiser Idea

- Don't forget to talk to your church about any existing online platforms that may already be in use at your church.

9. Decorations and Ambiance:

- Decorate the venue to create an immersive experience. Use elements like camping gear, lanterns, and themed signage.
- Enhance the ambiance with appropriate lighting and background music.

10. Volunteer Coordination:

- Along with your youth volunteers, be sure to get adult volunteers to help with various tasks such as registration, serving food, and organizing activities.
- Provide volunteers with clear instructions and roles.

11. Evaluate and Acknowledge:

- After the event, evaluate its success and identify areas for improvement.
- Thank and acknowledge sponsors, volunteers, and attendees through social media, newsletters, or a post-event celebration.

By following these steps, you can organize a memorable themed dinner fundraiser that not only raises funds for the summer camp but also fosters a sense of community and engagement.