

Mission Fundraising Ideas

Fundraising for global mission initiatives can seem daunting, particularly when there is a large group or project to be funded. Take heart that, while fundraising may appear to be the most challenging aspect of mission leadership, it is virtually never the barrier to a successful trip or program – the money will come.

There are a number of creative things that people can do to fundraise and have fun while doing it. The more people involved and the higher the profile of your campaign, the more successful the fundraising will be: “Many hands make light work”. The following ideas are some examples of approaches that have been used successfully for mission fundraising.



Before You Begin:

- Approach your clergy members and church early on with your vision for the trip or project. Request that the church begin to pray for the success of the mission initiative and for effective fundraising in support of it. If possible, incorporate this prayer request into the church bulletin, website or weekly liturgy.
- Be prepared with an overall budget for the trip, as well as the projected cost per person, if applicable. Have a firm fundraising target and deadline.
- If there is a group, every group member should have input into the fundraising approach and participate in fundraising activities.
- A possible fundraising model is for each team member to provide a portion of his/her own financial support; for the church (i.e. Mission Committee, Mission Fund, Discretionary Fund, etc.) to provide a portion; and for parish-wide fundraising to provide a portion. Give thought to what would work best for your parish, given its resources, fundraising history, and interests. Approach your clergy, vestry, and/or mission committee with your fundraising proposal to determine the degree of direct support that might be possible.
- Consider requesting that the church set up a fund specifically for the trip. This enables potential donors to donate directly through the church and receive the appropriate tax benefits.
- Remember that mission fundraising is an excellent opportunity to involve and educate the entire church or community about the trip. Be intentional about bringing in as much church-wide participation from as many different church areas, groups, or committees as possible (i.e. clergy, vestry, youth group, choir, altar guild, mission committee, prayer group, church school, etc.)
- Choose a fundraising style (e.g. bake sale, fundraising dinner, parish-wide email campaign, letter-writing campaign, Sunday morning plate donation, raffle, car wash, silent auction, gala, crowdfunding, etc.) that fits well with your parish style and is achievable. Be realistic, but also aim high.
- Keep in mind that individualized, targeted fundraising appeal letters to parish members are often the most effective approach, in combination with other fundraising efforts.
- Think about the best way for people to donate, preferably through the church. Determine the exact information to write on the check and/or memo line and the specific address to send it. Put a system in place to track and acknowledge every donation. Be sure that there are at minimum two to three people looking at the transactions in order to protect yourself and to provide transparency and oversight.

Fundraising Ideas:

- **Letter-writing Campaign:** Regardless of other fundraising efforts, be sure to have each person write personal letters to potential donors, including family members, parishioners, colleagues, community members and friends. Making it personal for people and giving them some context can be powerful. You may also find that people may be more likely to contribute, because they feel a connection to you and understand your vision for the trip or project. If there are multiple church members, divide up the letter recipients so that parishioners or community members do not receive multiple solicitations.
- **Bake Sale:** This time-honored approach can yield good results and can be especially successful when the entire parish or specific groups such as the choir or church school are asked to donate bake sale items. Those who bring items are often more likely to buy items as well. It is also especially effective to have a bake sale around Valentine's Day, Christmas, Easter or Mother's Day, so that folks can stock up for the holiday.
- **Fundraising Dinner or Breakfast:** A fundraising dinner or pancake breakfast (with a suggested donation per person or family) is a fun way to promote the mission trip or project. It can have a theme, such as food and beverage items from the target country or region; a chili and cornbread cook-off; karaoke or sing-a-long; soups and salads; a barbecue or picnic theme; a lobster or crab dinner; an ice cream social; pancakes or a brunch; or a buffet of desserts. This is an especially good time to make presentations about the target country and raise awareness for the trip or project. Food costs can be reduced and work can be distributed by approaching a variety of people in advance to each bring a specific item or take on a task.
- **Craft or Product Sale:** Hosting a sale of products or crafts from your region of interest, or fair-trade products such as chocolate or coffee, can be a good way to raise money. Some fair-trade craft organizations can provide products for sale on a consignment basis. It can be effective to sell items over a period of a several weeks, such as Advent or Lent, to maximize the sales. Be sure to be realistic about the profit margin on these types of sales, as well as accounting for up-front costs for unsold products that can reduce your fundraising proceeds.
- **Parish-wide Email and/or Bulletin Insert Campaign:** A very cost-effective way to get the word out about your fundraising is to create a colorful and descriptive flyer or graphic that can be incorporated into parish-wide emails, posted on the website or social media, or inserted into the parish bulletin. It should describe your project and your fundraising goals, with specific information about how to donate.
- **Invite a Speaker or Make a Presentation:** If you are able to identify and invite a speaker or team member to talk about the region of interest and its perspectives or challenges, this can be a great way to bring parishioners on board. In particular, if your clergy is willing to allow the speaker or mission team members to make a presentation in lieu of the sermon, this can be a powerful call to action for the parish. It also signals that the clergy feels that it is an important initiative that the parish should support.
- **Sunday Morning Plate Donation:** In conjunction with a speaker, Mission Sunday, a saint's day, or other designated Sunday, consider approaching the church leadership to see whether they may be willing to dedicate the loose plate donations for that day toward the trip or project.
- **Envelope Campaign:** Consider printing designated envelopes for parishioners to make donations toward your trip or project. Distribute the envelopes widely at services or send them to households in the mail with an explanation of your fundraising goals. Advent and Lent are especially good times to do this.
- **Hold a Raffle or Silent Auction:** Team members will need to solicit donated raffle or auction items for this event. If it can be held in conjunction with another parish-wide event, such as a dinner, breakfast, bake sale, etc. that attracts a large number of people, it can be an especially good way to raise money.
- **Car Wash:** A car wash can be a good fundraiser, particularly for youth groups. It is generally helpful to work with the local community, school, town hall, or even fire station, to advertise this and to put up signs before and during the event. Contact local newspapers and local access TV to get the word out.

GLOBAL MISSION RESOURCE

MISSION FUNDRAISING IDEAS

- **Gala or Wine and Cheese Reception:** Depending on your community, holding an elegant gala or a wine and cheese reception might be a good option. Generally, this would be open to the entire community. Tickets should be printed and sold with the cost per person and a clear description of the purpose for the funds. One good approach is to solicit people to fill a table at the event, by inviting friends or colleagues. Local businesses can often be found to provide sponsorship for food, beverages or rental costs, and may also be willing to sell tickets. This can be an excellent way to raise community-wide awareness of your trip or project.
- **Have a “Buy-a-Brick” Campaign:** If your group already knows of something tangible that it will be doing (ex. giving out mosquito netting, raising funds to go toward a school construction project, taking a contribution for a local hospital, etc.), it can be effective to give people tangibles that they can “purchase.” For example, “buy” a net for \$5; “buy” a bag of cement for \$75; “buy” a medical supply kit for \$50; or “buy” a brick for \$25...
- **Offer Babysitting or Gift Wrapping at Christmas:** Holidays are a good opportunity to provide services for a small charge as a fundraiser. Be sure to encourage parishioners to consider purchasing services for other families or for elders who might need them, even if they themselves do not.
- **Write a Grant Proposal:** If you have a good writer on your team, look around for grant opportunities from your deanery, diocese or from granting organizations or foundations. Sometimes, grant funds can be quite significant, particularly if you plan to be a part of a large project (building a school, building a health center, etc.).
- **Solicit a Matching Donor:** Often a donor can be found who will provide a significant donation that can be used as matching funds. If so, this should be widely communicated to other potential donors and can be extremely motivating for the parish. It is a good idea to keep the parish informed of the progress toward fully matching the funds and to perhaps utilize a deadline to provide a sense of urgency for donations.
- **Crowdfunding:** This is a relatively new option for fundraising online. In general, it is better to raise money through the church or other non-profit for church-related activities in order for the donors to have tax-deductibility. However, if you are raising personal funds for your own trip, especially from family members or friends, this may be a good approach. Popular crowdfunding sites such as [Fundly](#) and [GoFundMe](#) are designed specifically for personal or organizational fundraising (as opposed to creative ventures or business startups). While the sites are free, there is a percentage of each donation charged to process the transactions. There are also features that can help you raise money, including the ability to share on social media such as Facebook or Twitter, the ability to customize your fundraising page with photos or videos, and even the ability to offer donor gifts such as t-shirts or mugs.

Do you have other fundraising ideas that have been successful for you or your church? We would love to add them to our list. Email us at gemn@gemn.org.