



Creative Ideas for Food and Cash Drives: Congregations and Other Faith Groups

Food Drive Ideas

- **Choose a worship day to hold a food collection.** The week before, pass out grocery bags with lists of suggested food donations pasted onto the bag. It is helpful to have the food drive promoted from the pulpit, or from the worship leader. On the day of the food collection, have members bring their bags of food and place them in an area in the sanctuary or worship hall. The visual effect of many bags of food gathered in the sanctuary is a powerful symbol of the congregation's commitment.
- **Use helium-filled FoodShare balloons to decorate the food collection area.**
- **Organize a "Battle of the Ages"** (or "Battle of the religious ed classes") to promote friendly competition. Members place their food donations in the appropriate barrels or boxes. The group collecting the most gets a special treat, reward, or recognition.
- **Challenge a neighboring congregation** (or another congregation of the same denomination) to compete for donations to the food shelf. Weekly updates on progress will keep the competition fueled throughout the month. The "losers" can host a supper or worship service for the "winners," or the congregational leaders can agree upon a stunt that will be performed by the leader or minister of the "losing" congregation.
- **Youth group members: "kidnap" your youth leader, minister, or rabbi.** The ransom is food for the food shelf from the adult members.
- **Sponsor a "Pack-up-a-pick-up" day** when congregation members bring their bags of donated food and place them in a pick-up truck (or trucks). The caravan of trucks then delivers the food to the food shelf.
- **Have a "Scavenger Hunt for Food."** Youth groups bring a list of food items needed by the food shelf, and go door-to-door in a neighborhood (with appropriate adult supervision) to ask for donations. Assign point values to most needed items.
- **Set up a "Country Store Day."** Members of the congregation can purchase cans of vegetables at the door on worship day and deposit their cans in the collection box a few feet away.

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- **Place an empty canoe (or other large container of interest) in the narthex** and challenge members to fill it up with donations by the end of the month.
 - **Have the congregation try to match the total weight of the congregation's council or board in food donations.**
 - **Have the minister, rabbi or youth group leader can perform a stunt** (including shaving beard or mustache, dressing like Elvis, etc.) when the youth group reaches their food donation goal.

Sales Ideas

- **Run bake sales, donut sales or sell bagels.** Sales are often the most brisk right after worship or before classes begin.
- **Use a traveling dessert cart** to sell homemade desserts at a congregational dinner.
- **Issue a "Chili Challenge."** Hold a congregational dinner where batches of progressively hotter chili are served (have the server of the hottest batch dressed as a fire fighter). Or, challenge members to make their best pot of chili and donate it to the event. Sell tickets to benefit a food shelf.
- **Sell ice cream cones** at a congregational dinner to benefit a food shelf.
- **Rent a popcorn machine** and sell fresh popped popcorn during the afternoon.
- **Barbecue brats and/or burgers in the parking lot at noon after worship services.** Charge for the meal to benefit a food shelf.
- **Sell singing telegrams** with proceeds to go to the food shelf.
- **Fill a jar full of jelly beans or other small items and sell guesses** of how many are in the jar. The proceeds go to the food shelf. The winner gets the jar.
- **Hold a rummage sale** to benefit the food shelf.

Auctions & Raffles

- **Have a live or silent auction** of merchandise, weekend get-aways and dinners, services like dog walking or child care, skills like carpentry or special items like quilts or homemade pies. Solicit local business owners for merchandise and tickets. Solicit friends, family and coworkers for special skills and homemade items.
- **Sell raffle tickets** for any valued item. Approach local businesses for merchandise, services or event tickets to raffle.

Special Events

- **Organize an “Empty Bowl” event** where artists and students donate a handcrafted ceramic bowl. The public attends the event and pays a flat fee for a bowl and a soup dinner (donated by area restaurants to add interest).
- **Hold a “Fast for hope” day or meal.** Participants give up a specified meal and donate the cost of the meal they would have had for the food shelf.
- **Host a “celebrity waiter” lunch or dinner.** The meal can be donated, and leaders and other personalities in the congregation serve the participants. The celebrity waiters donate their tips to the food shelf.
- **Hold an annual brunch or tea** (have a special guest of interest to attract attendees). Proceeds go to the food shelf.
- **Sponsor a run** (or walk, skate, bike or dog walk) around the lake and raise pledges for the food shelf.
- **Sponsor a _____ a-thon.** (Dance, karaoke, checkers, storytelling, bowling, etc!) You fill in the blank with an activity that your congregational or youth group would be willing to do for an extended amount of time. Take pledges.
- **Hold a pancake supper** on Shrove Tuesday, or a “Soup and Sermon” series during Lent. Proceeds go to food shelves.
- **During a Purim celebration, have a costume parade for children,** and bring food or cash donations to the food shelf.

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- **Hold a “Homeless sleep-out,”** where members sleep outdoors to raise awareness for the homeless and hungry. Take pledges for the hours spent, and encourage food donations on site.

Cash collection

- **Collect spare change for hunger.** Encourage group members to bring either all of their change on a given day, or specific coins on specific days. Provide a coin rolling machine.

Entertainment

- **Coordinate a fashion show** with a local clothing store, or a funny/silly fashion show of self-made items. Admission fees go to the food shelf.
- **Organize a bus tour** of historic local sites or historic churches. Ticket sales will benefit the food shelf. For historic churches, add an organ concert at one or more sites.
- **Sponsor a choral concert** to be aired on the local radio station. Cash donations are phoned into the radio station.
- **Hold a benefit puppet show** or clown act for donations.
- **Host a concert** of solo vocalists, choirs, and instrumentalists in a house of worship. Ticket proceeds benefit a food shelf.
- **Host a FoodShare party at your home.** Individuals invite guests and serve dinner and pleasant company in exchange for either food donations or cash.
- **Host a tacky “debutante ball” or “prom” party** as a fund-raiser. Encourage participants to dress as tackily as possible in old formal wear. The admission cost goes to the food shelf.

Competitions

- **Hold “Tacky Outfit” and/or “Tacky Tie” Day:** invite everyone to wear their tackiest. Take cash “votes” for the person wearing the tackiest outfit and/or tie.
- **Run a putting challenge** — set up a single hole, provide a putter and a ball. Participants pay \$1 per stroke until they sink the ball. Those achieving a hole-in-one are posted for recognition.

Other

Looking for new ideas to encourage and collect nutritious food donations? Try these:

- **Ask congregants to bring “meals in a bag,”** such as the following:
 - Spaghetti sauce, pasta noodles, Parmesan cheese, canned fruit, and salad dressing.
 - Tuna helper, cans of tuna, canned fruit, and muffin mix.
 - Cans of beef stew, cans of green beans or corn, muffin mix, and fruit cocktail.
 - Cans of chili, cans of pears, canned vegetables, box of soda crackers, and jar of peanut butter.
 - Cans of soup, box of soda crackers, canned fruit, juice, and jar of peanut butter.

- **Invite the group to bring a different meal each worship day** during March:
 - Week 1: Breakfast. Hot cereal, canned fruit, bags of sugar, canned juice, muffin mix, and hot cocoa mix.
 - Week 2: Lunch. Soup, crackers, pickles, tuna, mayo, cookies, and juice.
 - Week 3: Dinner. Canned beef stew or canned spaghetti sauce and pasta, canned fruit, and dinner roll mix.
 - Week 4: Personal products. Toothpaste, tooth brushes, toilet paper and paper towels.

All of the resources you need to plan a great March Campaign are available at:
www.gmcc.org/foodshare/marchcampaign