

Brainstorming for a Church Fundraising Campaign?

Here are some tips and fundraising event ideas

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The COVID-19 pandemic has forced a massive shift in the day-to-day operations of parishes in our diocese and beyond. As we continue through the pandemic you may be wondering how your parish is going to continue fundraising for your mission and ministries during this uncertain time.

Here are some fundraising ideas a parish can incorporate into their fund development strategy. These fundraising activities can be used to support the general fund of the parish; however, you will receive more donations if you focus on a specific ministry, program, or project of the church. This type of fundraising is called a campaign.

Often when we hear “fundraising campaign” it’s related to buildings and a large monetary goal, but this is not always the case. A campaign can also be a short-term effort to raise funds for a specific program, piece of equipment, minor renovation, etc. that has a defined financial goal.

Offering Donors an Easy Way to Give Online

To ensure your campaign is as efficient and effective as possible, your parish will want to have online donation capabilities in place. Then your parish is ready to fundraise during COVID-19.

If your parish does not have its own online donation platform you can use the one provided by the diocesan office for your parish. However, if you want to create a fundraising webpage that matches a specific campaign then your parish’s CanadaHelps page is a great option.

To use CanadaHelps all you need to do is [claim your page](#) from the CanadaHelps website. From there you can [set-up a specific campaign for your fundraiser](#). The campaign webpage you create through CanadaHelps can be made to look and feel like your parish’s website or the campaign you are promoting. When you claim your CanadaHelps page you will also be able to thank your givers promptly rather than wait several weeks to receive the information to do so. A bonus in using CanadaHelps is that they do the receipting. CanadaHelps can also do split receipting which is needed when there is a purchase of an advantage mixed with a donation.

A well-designed online campaign page and the secure giving platform provides givers confidence to donate online. Moreover, with a dedicated donation page, parishioners can quickly share the link with friends and family via email or social media. Easy access to the parish’s fundraising page makes it convenient for people to support rather than give-up when they can’t find the right webpage or link. It is paramount to make giving easy, quick, and convenient when fundraising, especially when inviting people from beyond the parish to participate.

While there is concern over the 2% to 4% transaction fee provided to CanadaHelps per gift, isn’t it better to receive 96% to 98% of the gift than no gift at all? Also, when you factor in the receipting being done for the parish and the capabilities to provide a thank you letter promptly, CanadaHelps more than pays for itself. And for givers not connected to the parish or even those marginally connected, they are less inclined to mail a cheque, complete an e-transfer or drop-off money. When providing the convenience of online giving through PayPal and Credit Card (as CanadaHelps and many other donation platforms do) you are ensuring more gifts.

Pro-tip: 31% of donors are less likely to give again if their thank you letter arrives late – late is after 2 weeks of making the gift. When you claim your CanadaHelps page the parish is informed weekly of donations made and who the donors are, assuming the donor did not choose to be anonymous. 45% of donors have given again because of a great thank you letter; 23% made a larger gift. A great thank you letter is not late, and it arrives by mail even if the gift is made online because only 1 in 5 givers prefers an online acknowledgment. (*From Penelope Burk, Donor Centered Fundraising: How to hold on to your donors and raise much more money, 2nd Ed. 2018*).

If you need support with claiming and setting up your parish's CanadaHelps page or you're interested in a more robust giving platform, please connect with Gillian Doucet Campbell, Director of Stewardship and Development. Gillian will be happy to discuss some options already being used by parishes in our diocese and beyond. She can be reached via email at gillian.dc@niagaraanglican.ca.

Fundraising Campaign Tips

A Sense of Urgency

Part of the success of a campaign is the sense of urgency. Therefore, a campaign has a defined start and end date. When campaigns are short, they foster a sense of urgency. This gives more reason for people to donate now, rather than putting it off and potentially forgetting. A clear timeline also keeps parish volunteers accountable and on track.

Use campaigns sparingly as people don't want to be nicked and dimed or feel like ATMs. For instance, if your parish wants to raise \$5,000 to extend the season of its outdoor café area by purchasing commercial grade patio heaters and also wants to raise \$3,000 for its free meals-to-go program make a plan to focus fundraising on one or the other - not both at the same time. That said, you can run two or three campaigns simultaneously if the parish is large, such as a program church (400-800 members) or corporate church (800 or more members).

A parish can work on one small campaign over one week to three months depending on the goal and potential buy-in from parishioners. It is then best to wait a month or two before starting the next campaign. But again, this will only work well if donors feel thanked. It is also important to keep parishioners well-informed of what is coming up and what is needed. Mailed quarterly reports with both letter and up-to-date financials work well for this. In addition to thanking volunteers and donors as soon as possible after each gift or event, you must also ensure each is thanked and provided an update on the outcome of each fundraiser and the whole of the campaign. When thanking make sure it is meaningful and significant to each donor or volunteer.

Social Media

With 64% of the Canadian population using Facebook, social media is an important channel for spreading the word about your parish's fundraisers (Sherpa Marketing, July 2020). Use social media to tell people about your parish's work in the community, upcoming events, and fundraising initiatives. Share a link to your online donation page and encourage people to share it with their friends in turn. In fact, for any of the following fundraising ideas, social media is a great way to generate excitement and support leading up to fundraising events and throughout the campaign.

From Facebook to Instagram to TikTok and more, there is a myriad of social media channels. But the parish doesn't need to utilize several forms of social media. I recommend surveying your parish to find out which social media is regularly used by most parishioners and start there. It is likely, however, being in the Diocese of Niagara, the preferred social media platform is Facebook. Facebook can be used to encourage engagement through its "Event" feature. A parish can use this to invite specific people, encourage the event to be shared, and people can indicate if they plan to attend, not attend, or are simply interested.

Film A Video for the Campaign

When a clergy person or parish lay leader makes a personal ask through a video the appeal can be stronger than a photo on a website with a written story. With video, a personal appeal to attend an event, or provide a donation, or sign-up to volunteer can be captured and shared.

A video can be ideal for telling the story and impact of the parish's work, particularly for a certain ministry or project. Interviews with people who have been served or with volunteers let others clearly see the impact the parish is making, and it encourages them to get involved. Embedding video into a dedicated campaign webpage is a good way to keep everything centralized. The link can also be sent out in emails and posted on social media.

Caution: Use good and ethical judgement when considering who to interview, particularly when thinking of interviewing a beneficiary of a ministry or program. Keep the video short and the sound quality excellent. On average a video should not exceed 2 minutes. However, a video of up to 4 minutes with clear picture quality, exceptional sound, and a very compelling story may be O.K. While a video can be impactful, it is still important to have photos and a written narrative on the campaign website.

Pledging

Pledge fundraising is fantastic for members of your parish who may not be able to donate right away. Pledges are promised support of donations to be paid and processed in the future or over time. A pledge is not legally binding; however, it is rare that an individual does not follow through on a written pledge. When undergoing a time-sensitive campaign it is best to limit the pledge time frame. If it must go longer than the defined campaign end date, then regular payments on a set date are strongly encouraged. Setting up a monthly or bi-weekly donation for a set time frame may help some givers fulfill their pledge and provide a larger sum.

To get started with pledge fundraising, look for online or mobile pledge fundraising tools. Make sure you look for a tool that prioritizes speed, ease of use, and flexibility in its fundraising options. Alternatively, a form that can be filled out and emailed back, such as a fillable PDF might be a good option. Scanning and emailing back a pledge form is also O.K. but not convenient for many households and has a low response rate just as only permitting fax has a very low response rate.

Peer-to-Peer Fundraising

Peer-to-peer fundraising is when supporters raise funds on your behalf. Through CanadaHelps parishioners can [set up a fundraising page](#) and ask their friends, family, and online network to donate. The great thing about peer-to-peer fundraising is that you can gain new supporters in the process. Peer-to-peer works well for campaign fundraisers such as a walk-a-thon or other activity-based challenges.

Text-to-Give

A growing way of giving among younger Gen-Xers to Millennials is text-to-give. Text-to-give for a campaign can be a highly effective fundraising tool for the right event because of its ease, simplicity, and speed. During a live event, with only two clicks, a donor texts a keyword (such as "give") to your parish's text-to-give number, then confirms the amount they'd like to donate. That's it. It takes just a few seconds to support the parish or ministry they love.

Also, note when a parish has text-to-give capabilities it can also be text-to-tithe. This is a terrific way for those attending church online to give an offering. Consider it the 21st-century version of the offering plate.

To start accepting text donations, you'll need to find an industry-leading text-to-give secure software platform and promote this way to give to your parish both on-line and in-person. Again, please connect with Gillian Doucet Campbell, Director of Stewardship and Development to discuss some options already being used by parishes in our diocese and beyond.

Fundraising Ideas

As mentioned, a campaign can mean a short-term effort to raise funds for a specific program, piece of equipment, minor renovation, etc. that has a defined start and end date and financial goal. During this short timeframe of one week to three months, a parish can host one or more fundraising activities to encourage both donations and community engagement.

Once your fundraising event is planned, begin to generate hype several weeks beforehand. Let parishioners know about it through social media, the church's website, email, and any other communication channels the parish uses. Ensure your donation webpage is easy to find and simple to fill out for your specific fundraising events. Utilize all the tools at your fingertips to tell the story of why this campaign is important now. Keep people updated on how they can participate, the amount raised to date, and encourage parishioners to invite others outside the parish community to participate when possible. And, as always, make sure you thank each giver and volunteer promptly.

While it is difficult during COVID-19 to have traditional fundraising events such as a spaghetti dinner, pancake breakfast, or jumble sale, check out the following fundraising ideas – you may find a couple that will work for your parish.

1 Buy One, Give One

The concept behind TOMS shoes and other for-profit companies with their “buy one, give one” model is game-changing and inspirational. It can also be emulated by your parish. Let's say your ministry provides take-home dinners for homeless or precariously housed citizens. Hosting a dinner pick-up sale that offers “buy a dinner, give a dinner” with meals priced at a slight premium can be a creative way to promote your cause and generate income.

Make sure to encourage social distancing and mask-wearing during pick-up. You may also consider meal delivery, again for a slight premium.

A spin on this fundraiser is challenging individuals or families to commit to donating to the campaign the same amount they spend/spent on dining out for a month.

2 Online Silent Auction or Market

Online silent auctions can raise lots of money which is why they're a favorite fundraising method. Have members of your parish source or donate items or services to be auctioned off to the highest bidder. You might be surprised—and you'll surely be inspired—by what people will offer up.

You'll need the technology in place before the auction can go live. From the first donation to the last pick-up and all the bidding in between it's important to be organized. Many small organizations simply use [Facebook as the silent auction platform](#). Essentially, photos of the item or service are added to a group site with a starting bid. Giving increments are also provided with the photo description. People then bid by commenting on the photo.

What's great is people can follow the item they have bid on to ensure they remain the top bidder.

Other platforms can be used – some are free, but have ads embedded in the auction site, and some have small to large fees. Here is [a list of free or low-fee online auction sites](#) and here is a free option, [eflea.ca](#), that places ads mixed in with your auction site.

Also consider alternate giving methods so everyone can give, whether they win their bid or not. Set up a text-to-give campaign with a keyword such as “auction” or simply provide a link to donate online or a way to provide an additional donation when winners pick-up their items.

You might consider a [Square](#) or other mobile payment processing device. This is important too as not everyone has cheques or carries cash. The online silent auction could also have a theme such as baking, travel, Christmas, etc.

Like the online silent auction, an **online market** can be set up through Facebook or even on the parish's website using photos that note prices, the numbers available, and product descriptions. People then make comments to purchase or send an email to reserve the item. Ultimately, it is best to have it "live" or in real-time, so people aren't disappointed if the item sells out.

3 Shirt Fundraiser

From a t-shirt to a polo shirt, to a sweatshirt, everyone loves to show off that they're an active member of an organization. It's easy to have a shirt designed. Then you can sell it from your website, through social media, spreading the word through e-communications, or showing it off at an in-person or online church service. Only order what you need and add a premium to make some profit. Have a chat and check-in with parishioners as you coordinate a date and time for pick-up or delivery. Never waste an opportunity to strengthen community.

4 Indulgence Drop

We all indulge a little here and there, and that's 100% okay. But imagine the kind of money you could raise for your parish if you challenged parishioners to go one month without that one thing they indulge in regularly. Instead of buying that expensive cup of coffee, junk-food snack, or bottle of wine, parishioners set that money aside as a donation. At the end of the Indulgence Drop, invite parishioners to donate the amount they saved. Perhaps you might consider hosting this fundraiser for the full 40 days of Lent. Lent and indulgence drops can go hand in hand.

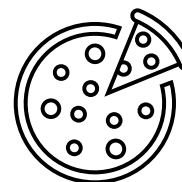
5 Pizza Sale to Dinner Together But Separate

Who doesn't love a good slice of pizza? At my house, we have pizza and a movie almost every Friday night. It's cheap, easy, and hard to resist. Many pizzerias will offer up deals and specials to churches and schools that are fundraising.

By creating a form that is embedded on your website or through a tool like [Survey Monkey](#) or [Google Forms](#) you can take pizza orders. Then you can collect the funds either online, through electronic-transfer, or other methods. On the parish's campaign webpage there could be a pizza-themed thermometer to show your donation goal and how far you are from it. Each donation level could be represented by a different type of pizza or a slice of pizza. Fundraising thermometers are an effective visual tool to motivate donors to give.

A spin-off of this fundraiser is to choose a local restaurant that delivers and works with them on a special menu for your parish. Plan to have that meal delivered on a particular evening.

Then meet as a parish for dinner that evening online, perhaps through Zoom. Spend some time all together starting with grace and a quick word from a clergy member about the campaign. Then, over the course of an hour send 8-10 households to different break-out rooms for about 15 - 20 minutes to chat, perhaps with some prepared questions. In the Chat section of Zoom provide a link for an additional donation.



6 Envelope Fundraiser

The basic premise of the envelope fundraiser is that your parish labels envelopes with different numbers on the outside. Parishioners that attend the in-person service can pluck a random envelope from the bulletin board. Another way would be to mail the envelope with a letter talking about the campaign. Parishioners then donate the amount that matches the number on the envelope. If all the envelopes are numbered between 1 and 100, you could end up with \$5,050!

This can also be done online by using a random number generator. Using [Random.org](https://www.random.org) and selecting [Dice Roller](https://www.random.org/dice/) participants can choose to roll one dice or two di. Whatever someone “rolls” is the amount they will donate. For instance, if someone rolls two 4s then they would donate \$44 to the campaign. If they rolled one 8 and one 9, they would donate \$89.

7 Online Trivia

If your church members are looking to have a little bit of family-friendly fun, you can host a game of trivia online. Charge a small entrance fee to raise a little money while your parishioners have a great time.

Start by coming up with a list of questions and categories. Once you have them, you can create a presentation such as through PowerPoint and share your screen via Zoom. Have participants take a picture of their score and text it in to “prove” it. Provide some prizes for the highest-scoring team and most honest (lowest score). Designate one member of the parish as a game-show host, and let the game begin!

You may want to check out [Kahoot.com](https://www.kahoot.com) depending on how often you plan to use Trivia as a fundraiser.

8 Calendars

Get crafty! Your parish can create a calendar to sell to parishioners. Put together a calendar parishioner will treasure forever. Use photos from past events – you can dig up some historical pictures of the church and pictures of parishioners from years gone by. Get everyone involved by asking for photos.

Don’t forget to pack the calendar full of upcoming church events. Sell the calendars by donation as you’re more likely to generate more funds that way. Depending on how much the calendars cost you may want to provide a suggested donation amount.

9 Baby Picture Contest

The baby picture contest doesn’t answer the question, “Who’s the cutest baby?” It’s a guessing game using baby pictures from parishioners. All your parish needs to do is gather 10 to 20 baby photos of church leaders and parishioners. You can post them on the parish’s website or Facebook page and set a time limit for when responses must be sent in – make sure people cannot post comments online and give away the answer.

Everyone then guesses who’s who and provides an entrance fee – by donation always guarantees better funds raised. You’re sure to get some outrageous guesses and provide a fun activity.

10 Beer or Wine Tasting or Create a Cocktail at Home

Get together with parishioners and others for an online digital happy hour to raise funds, have fun, and support a local winery, brewery, or distillery during COVID-19. Attendees are provided several different wines, beers, bitters, or a mixture of these.

They are then walked through a tasting, learning more about the beverage or with the Bitter, how to make cocktails from home. Make sure to include a list of the additional ingredients and supplies needed for the cocktail(s) ahead of time.

Many local wineries, breweries, and distilleries provide experts to lead an online tasting, or perhaps your parish has such an expert. Delivery of the beverages can be arranged to a central location for participants to pick-up. You can charge a ticket price and during the event make an ask for the ministry, program, or project you are raising funds for or you can add a donation to the ticket price.

11 Move-a-thon

Bike, run, walk, swim – get active for a good cause. This type of “a-thon” is great for peer-to-peer fundraising. Have participants pledge a specific number of kilometers they plan to bike, run, walk, swim, on their own. Then they gather support to complete this endeavour by reaching out to friends and family. An online way to collect donations will be needed that can demonstrate who the funds were raised by. CanadaHelps is a good tool for this.

An additional feature to this is to use a number that is significant to the parish or this campaign. For instance, if you’re raising funds for a new 48 cu. Ft. freezer to support your food bank ministry perhaps people will commit to run 48km over 6 days, or bike 48km in a day, etc. Overall, the participant decides the parameters but uses the number as the goal.

12 Meet & Greet

Offer an online evening or matinee of theatre or Opera, or maybe tour a museum, zoo, aquarium, or wildlife preserve. Support a mission in a mission – ticket sales provide a donation for the parish as well as supporting the arts or animal organization chosen. With so many organizations offering virtual tours there are many options to choose from. Guided tours can include seeing staff feed animals, informational sessions, and seeing behind the scenes with an expert.

Here are a few places offering tours or events. It is recommended you call for more details and to create a plan that suits your needs and number of participants. You may also want to reach out to other places and ask if they can provide a live virtual tour for your group.

[Ripley's Aquarium of Canada](#)

[Art Gallery of Ontario](#)

[Stratford Festival On-Demand](#)

[McMichael Canadian Art Collection](#)

Overall, get creative, create a plan, and have fun.