

How To



host an Op Shop Ball



This guide will help you to plan your Hope25 event.

Purpose

Op Shops are a way for members of the broader community to interact with our parishes. However, many people do not realise that the parish and op shop are connected. An Op Shop Ball is an event to celebrate the ministry of the Op Shop and help people see the Hope that we have in Jesus as embodied in the work of the Op Shop.

Planning

Team

For any event, a team is vital. On your team, you will want to ensure that you have people who are part of the Op Shop team and people involved in your parish. There are some skills that you will need to have across your team, including people who are good at planning events, people with skills to communicate about and market the events, those good with computers and social media, people who can keep track of your budget, those who are good at gathering people to help with bits and pieces and, most importantly - those who will be praying for your event and be able to help with details but also see the big picture of sharing the hope of Jesus.

Before the Event

When you have gathered your team, you will need to decide:

- When will you have your event?
- What is the budget that you are working with?
- Where will you host the event?
- How many people would you like to come (and how many can fit into your building)?
- Will you provide sit-down meals, a buffet, dessert, or nibbles, or will you share a plate or something else?
- Will you need to charge people for entry? Can you find donors to cover costs? This needs to be carefully considered. Hospitality and generosity are essential when sharing the hope that we have in Jesus, so this may not be the time to use the event to fundraise.
- Will you sell tickets?
- What decorations will you need?
- What will the dress code be (ball gowns and black tie)? Will you have a theme (80s, 90s, Rock and Roll, technicolour, etc.)?
- Will you have any competitions?
- Will you have a theme, such as Community Resilience, hOPe, or A Place to be Known? This could guide the speakers and those sharing during the event.
- Will you get a band or a DJ? How will you play music?
- Do you need to consider ensuring that there are enough ball-appropriate clothes available for sale at the op shop before the event so that people can get their clothes?
- How are you going to tell people about the event? Will you encourage people in your parish to invite friends? Will you approach the local newspaper? Will you advertise on social media?
- How will you greet people at the event and help them to feel welcome?
- Will you have any flyers for the parish's ministries or inviting people to hear more about Jesus?

Importantly, you will also need to consider how you will share your hope in Jesus during this event. Will you have some speakers or testimonies during the evening? Who will you ask to speak or share? Ensure people don't feel this is a "bait and switch" scenario where they come for a ball, which is not what they thought they were signing up for. You might consider a name like "The hope we have in Jesus Op Shop Ball", or "Celebrating the Hope behind the Op Shop", or "Thanksgiving for the work of Op Shops Op Shop Ball."

Content

What will your run sheet look like as you include your different content for the evening? Often, it is a good idea to have a run sheet for your team that provides everything happening during the night and a little program for your guests. If you have tables for people to sit and eat at, these can be printed nicely and put on the tables.

Start with some drinks (with or without alcohol; consider some great mocktails for those who prefer not to drink) and mingling. If you are having dinner, have that once people have arrived and had a chance to mingle. Talks are often best done during a meal, so consider having talks and testimonies once everyone has food.

If you are doing dinner and dessert, then between these times, you might have a trivia competition on the table that the table group can complete at their leisure. You could have a best-dressed category or a lucky door prize, too. These can be announced during dessert, perhaps with another testimony or a time thanking the op shop volunteer team.

Then, you will want to have some time for dancing. Consider a mixture of songs for different generations and paces.

Ensure that there is a place for people to let you know if they would like to hear more about the church's work or the message of Jesus. One way to do this could be a competition or quiz with interest in church and Jesus as questions at the end so that when you look at the competition results, you can also see if people would like to be contacted in the future.

Communication

Three key areas of communication will be essential to hosting this event.

1. Within your team: You will need to ensure that your planning team is on the same page and can share any necessary documents.
2. Within your parish: Ensure that your parish knows what is planned and is joining in prayer for the event. Also, invite friends, family, and neighbours to come to the ball. You can communicate internally through parish email updates, notices during services, information in pew sheets, and any other form of contact your parish uses.
3. With your community and invitees, inviting others to an event is often easier if they have something to give them. Consider a postcard-sized invitation as well as some information on your parish webpage. Ensure anything handed out has a way for people to RSVP to the event on it (website, phone number, QR code). Depending on your context, consider including information on car parking, kids' ministry, and the general shape of the event. You might consider:
 - a. A letterbox drop in your local community
 - b. Giving cards to each member of your parish community and encouraging them to think of two people they can pray for and invite to the service.

Problem-Solving

What if...

When hosting an event, we always need to be ready for the unexpected. All sorts of things can happen. Ensure that nobody is irreplaceable within your organising team so that if someone gets sick and cannot attend, another person who knows what needs to be done can step in and help.

You must ensure that first aid people are on hand in case someone gets hurt or sick. Be sure that all leaders and volunteers have the appropriate clearances for your diocese. If you involve children, ensure that appropriate child safety requirements are met.

Ensure that someone is there to help with sound and that your sound system is tested before the event begins.

Do what you can to ensure that you have correctly recorded dietary requirements and that appropriate food and beverages are available for your guests. Also, check that you are following appropriate food handling regulations.

If you have a lot of dancing, ensure you have water available so people can easily stay hydrated as they dance.

If you have alcohol provided, ensure that state and local guidelines are adhered to and encourage people to take alternate transport home if necessary.

Given that an election must take place before September 2025, it might be called early enough to clash with your event. If this is the case, ensure that your volunteers have voted (early or sometime on the day) and try to make the best of it. Some people will not care, and others will be listening to coverage covertly throughout the event. Unless the location you are using is also usually a polling place, it should not cause serious issues.

Paths Forward

What now?

When we try new things, we change. When working on an Op Shop Ball, there are three key groups to consider as you chart a path forward:

Your existing congregation

Some of these people have stepped out in faith and been involved in organising, hosting, or speaking at the Ball. Some have invited friends or family to an event where their faith will be shared. This is exciting, and you can celebrate the asking. Remember that it often takes multiple invitations and experiences with faith before people respond and are encouraged. Some people in your parish may have stepped out in faith to try something new. How can these people continue to be supported as disciples of Jesus?

The Op Shop Team

Some of your Op Shop team may have attended a church event for the first time. They might see their role in the Op Shop through a different lens and have built relationships with people from the parish through working together. This is something to celebrate. You might like to think about having a yearly service of thanksgiving for your Op Shop team in the service. Now that they know some more people from the congregation, they may come along, and it is a great way to honour the work that they are doing.

Guests

Some people without contact with your parish or church may have attended this event. Hopefully, you have given them the option to share if they are interested in hearing more about the ministries of the church, about faith in Jesus, helping in the op shop, etc. Ensure that you have prepared a team to help follow these people up, have a coffee with them and talk about what they are interested in. This is an opportunity to build relationships. Think about what you might do next to help people take the next step, whatever that next step is for that person.

Implementation Plan

Firstly

Gather a team.

Set a vision for what you want from the event.

Set a date and find a venue.

Choose a theme and find speakers.

Secondly

Communicate internally and externally.

Send out invitations and have people in the parish consider who to invite.

Ensure logistics are taken care of.

Ensure that you have a prayer team set up who are praying for the event.

Thirdly

Have a fun time at the Ball.

Deal with any issues that come up with care and compassion, knowing that God works in our weakness.

Be welcoming, caring and loving as you greet people.

Finally

Think about what happens next.

How will you support people in their discipleship of Jesus after the ball ends?

What new relationships can you foster between the Op Shop and the parish?