

How to Host a Successful Special Event

Hosting a guest musician for your morning music and a concert is a perfect way to create an interfaith event, draw new folks to your church, and uplift and inspire your music ministry. The guest artist is working in partnership with the host church to create a special service or event. Let's explore ways of making sure this is a win/win situation for everyone. Clear communication between the host and the artist is the best way to avoid disastrous results. Here are some suggestions to ensure that your artists will want to return, and that you will want them to return.

Artist Relations

Guest musicians are usually independent artists who travel the country on their own money to share their gifts of music and ministry. Treat them as an honored guest.

Spell out all pertinent information in an agreement with the guest musician so that everything is clear to all involved parties. Determine ahead of time what the church and the artist expect in the way of gross revenues for the visit. Make sure that these expectations are realistic for both parties.

Talk with the musician, in advance, so that you are both clear on the technical support needed and the time of the sound check. Make sure the person running sound actually knows how to do it.

Be clear about the amount of honorarium to be given. For providing special music in the service, this is usually \$100-\$150; for Sermons in Song that take the place of the lesson, it is usually \$150-\$200 for one service or \$300-\$350 for two services. If the guest musician is also filling in for your service music, add \$50 per service. If the guest is a two-member team, be more generous, perhaps \$200 per service for the special music. This honorarium should be given to them after the service.

Arrange host housing for the musician. This should be a non-smoking home, with a private room if possible. Check to make sure they are not allergic to pets. Be clear about what meals, if any, the host home will provide. If the guest artist is also doing a workshop or a concert after the church services, will the church provide lunch and a place to unwind and rest up for the evening event?

If possible, offer the guest a ride to and from the airport.

Have your music director speak with the musician in advance to choose the perfect songs to partner with the minister's message.

Decide on an equitable split for concerts and workshops. The customary way to do this is by percentages. If the artist is covering all of their own expenses, the split



could be 80/20. If the artist is covering their own travel, but the church is providing housing, the split could be 70/30. If the church is providing travel and housing, the split could be 60/40. But, discuss this in advance with the artist.

Check to see if the artist offers workshops on songwriting, vocal coaching, guitar, Native American flute, etc., and encourage your music ministry to attend. You never know what spark might ignite and bring bountiful blessings to your music ministry.

See if the guest musician is open to allowing members of your music ministry to open their concert with 2 or 3 songs. Your house musician's family and friends will often attend an event where their loved one is sharing the stage with a known musician. It brings in new people to your church.

Keep the quality of your guest musicians high. This way, the congregation will come to trust your musical judgment and will attend events featuring new artists.

Promotion

Start advertising the concert early. Don't wait until the week before they arrive to mention they're coming. Some folks need time to plan to attend a special event.

Hang flyers throughout the church. Encourage your music ministry to attend the concert.

Agree to advertise their concerts in advance to your congregation and other interested parties. Put their picture on your web page. When speaking of the guest, speak with an air of anticipation.

When doing the announcements, sound enthusiastic. Pronounce their name correctly.

If at all possible, the minister and music director should attend the concert or workshop. Why book something you aren't interested in? The congregation watches you for guidance.

Consider pre-selling tickets. If you use the love offering system, give a suggested love offering guideline. This puts a value on the music folks are about to hear. Many folks have no idea how much to give.

Put a reasonable amount of time between guests. Some churches can support a monthly guest. Some churches would fare better with every other month, or several times a year.



If possible, have your music ministry perform some of the artist's songs in the weeks preceding their visit. Be sure and mention that the artist who wrote these songs will be doing music on such-and-such a date. If your music ministry opens the show, consider performing one of the artist's songs. This shows the music is accessible and it honors the musician. All artists love to know that their music has wings and is being used around the country.

CD Sales

Have the artist's product table in a central location. Mention their CDs several times during the service announcements (with enthusiasm). Many artists tithe back 10% of their CD sales.

Artists make much of their money in CD sales. If they have no new CDs and they've been to your church before, you might want to wait a year before bringing them back. That way, everyone won't already own their CDs.

Arrange for a music team member or volunteer to help with CD sales after services. This frees up the guest artist to mingle and speak with your congregation. Most artists will give the volunteer a free CD for their help.

If possible, create a yearly event which features your music ministry. This could involve those who are not quite ready for a Sunday morning solo. Involve your youth and children's ministry. Some churches do a yearly Christmas presentation with songs and scripts, featuring the whole music ministry. This could be offered for a love offering. Advertise this in the same way you would for any guest musician.