



Consider the Church Garage Sale...

Our church had a Garage Sale April 26th & 27 in 2024. The idea was introduced as part of a creation care initiative. We decided the **GOAL** of the garage sale was to pay down the church roof mortgage, to form relationships with our community and to recycle items that were not being used. These goals complement our Christian faith, and we feel we accomplished all of them. A garage sale gives permission to those who would never enter a church building to walk in.

ORGANIZATION: Except for one person, everyone volunteered on their own. They emailed me, called me up, signed up and tapped me on the shoulder. No sooner had the organizing committee decided that this would be a good way of connecting with our community, when a member called to volunteer to run the food kitchen. At least 80-90% of regular attendees either volunteered or donated items. Now that is grace and community!

We had three planning meetings. This revolved around food sales, advertising, wayfinding at church, security, sorting and pricing, and scheduling. We asked that people not donate junk, but high-quality items and we asked that no clothes be donated. There were no free tables at the sale, however on the second day, items of lower quality were placed in a free box and were taken. All donations needed to follow provincial laws. We did not accept car seats and baby cribs.

Early on we ran into a problem. We rent out the church and where would we store items for pricing if the church was being used? Thinking out of the box, we came up with a solution. We weren't using the sanctuary! Items were priced and laid out in the pews ready to go into the fellowship hall the day after the rental.

FOOD SALES: Approximately \$1000 was made in food sales such as Chili and Bun, Spring rolls, coffee, tea and baking. The tables and chairs were popular, and some church members made time to sit down with neighbours just to listen and chat. Next time, I would name our café - The Grace Café.

ADVERTISING: We advertised on our church sign 3 weeks ahead of time. A week before we put flyers on colourful paper in mailboxes in the neighbourhood. Dollar Store garage sale signs were placed at 5 major intersections around the church. The sale was shared on the church Facebook account. Photos of items on tables was posted on Facebook marketplace. An announcement was in the Sunday bulletin as well as from the pulpit.

WAYFINDING and SECURITY: Two garage sale signs with arrows guided people to the side door with only one entrance, to ensure people weren't just roaming about. We limited the sale area to the fellowship hall and the front foyer which meant people could see the church sanctuary in case they were thinking of coming Sunday morning. Having many church members help, meant few items (if any) were stolen.

SORTING and PRICING We took 2-3 days to sort items into categories and 2-3 days to price everything in round numbers \$1 \$5, 8\$ 100\$ etc. The cash table location worked well. A few people thought they had to pay to enter, but we assured them they did not! Items sold by e-transfer went through and noted on our email before the buyer left. A float and a cash box were used. A member who runs a garage sale every year at her house

priced everything. If I had done the pricing, we would have made half the money! And I would have had exorbitant prices for things that don't sell - like books. We had a lovely sitting area where people could browse the books. One member knew that the inexpensive stuffed toys should be given to children as they exited so people leave with a positive experience. Having people who know about garage sales and pricing is important!

SCHEDULING - People signed up on a volunteer sheet and a bulletin item was also included. In total we may have had 30 volunteers on 2-4 hour shifts over two days including kitchen staff. The kitchen organized on their own.

AFTER THE SALE, on Sunday, the congregation could take back what they donated **before** the church service and **after** the church service members could take things they needed if not picked up before church. Oh the joy of sharing free stuff even if it was the leftovers! Community Living came on Monday to pick-up left-over goods and they too were pleased with the donations. Everything needed to be boxed up and this was done Sunday and Monday by 4 people. A few higher priced items (e.g. a beautiful rocking chair) were held back and one person volunteered to sell these two or three items on Facebook Marketplace.

It took the whole church to run this garage sale. We had hoped to make \$2000 and when we nearly made \$6000 we were all shocked. Many compliments were received at the cashier as people exited. The compliments included: how well organized the event was, the clean condition of the building and the quality of the items. Looking back, we bonded as a church, we met our neighbours who normally would never enter a church building and we took care of our community and creation by selling used stuff at a reasonable price.

PRAYER – Our meetings started with prayer and our church secretary led us in prayer before the doors opened and I certainly felt God's spirit present in the experience. You can have a garage sale without prayer but then its just a garage sale. If you invite God to your garage sale, acknowledge his presence and ask for his blessing, good things happen.

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