

How To



host an Op Shop Fashion Show



This guide will help you to plan your Hope25 event.

Purpose

Many churches around Australia have an op shop. Op shops provide a place for community members to give goods for reuse by others and a place to purchase clothes and other items. They are an important ministry of our churches and require a team of volunteers to run effectively. The purpose of this event is to bring together the church, op shop, and local community to celebrate the work of the op shop and learn about the hope that it brings and the hope that we have in Jesus. It can encourage the parish community to “own” the work of the op shop and build relationships between the op shop team, those who use the op shop, the parish, and the community. It can also be a lot of fun!

Planning

Team

Planning an event is rarely a one-person job. For this event, you will need a team that includes key members of your op shop team as well as people involved in the parish. There may already be some crossover between those groups, but if not, it is a great way to begin building bridges between these two groups.

Your team will need to be organised and personable. You will need to have members who can think of the communications and marketing aspects of hosting an event. You will also need those who will ground the planning in prayer and a love of God so that it is not simply about the task of event organisation. Having some people gatherers either in your team or close to the team will also be helpful - you will need many people to be involved to pull this event off.

Before the Event

When your team first meets, you must consider the event's vision. You will need to plan the time and place of the celebration and check with those in the parish that it does not clash with other events. One thing to consider when you plan the timing of the event is whether you want to have children involved. You could have some children model clothes from the op shop or show people the toys there. This could be very cute, but you must ensure that the event is not too late for them and has age-appropriate activities available for the children.

An Op Shop Fashion Show can be a lot of fun and get significant buy-in from people. When you have decided on a date, you will need to think about what location you will use. A church hall or a church where you can move furniture around could be ideal.

You may choose to have a theme for your fashion show that allows you to discuss the link between op-shops and the hope we have in Jesus. Some themes might be:

- Community resilience
- A gathering place
- A place to be known and welcomed
- A place where we love our neighbours

Think about whom the event will attract—the op shop team, customers, the general community, and friends of those in the parish. You may want to invite someone from the local council to be part of the celebration, too.

This event will need significant setup and pack-up time. Ensure you have a group to help with this so it is not left only to a few.

You may choose to have some speakers talking about the hope that we have in Jesus and how this is embodied in the work that the op shop undertakes. In addition to this, you may choose to have people give testimonies about the hope that they have found through involvement in the op shop. You may choose to have someone share what their faith means to them and why they are a Christian. You will need to decide who your speakers will be and ensure that they are invited and briefed on the event.

One of the key things that an op shop fashion show will require is models. This is a great way to get a range of people involved, some people will be excited and others a little nervous but you can talk them through it all. Explain what you are requiring from them as models. You can ask people to model clothes from the op shop (that people might purchase later; you can choose the clothes and models, or you can ask the models to come and choose from a selection of clothes within the shop). It would be useful to have one or two of your team members responsible for the models, to ensure that they are feeling good and know what they need to do.

You will also need somewhere for the models to walk and model the clothes. Traditionally, fashion shows have a T-shaped runway that allows models to walk into the audience. You may be able to hire a stage that can be set up this way, or you may choose to use a different format or no stage at all and just set up a walkway at ground level.

If people are getting dressed in the clothes, they will need an area to do this. You could give them the clothes, ask them to come dressed and made up, and then be in a "backstage" area until it is their turn on your "runway." You may also have space to set up a changing room backstage, taking care that people have appropriate privacy. If you ask people to model multiple outfits, they will need somewhere to change.

You will also need to choose who will be the emcee for the event. This person can introduce each person coming down the runway and tell us about what they are wearing - you may need someone to write this down on cards for the emcee to read from. The emcee can also introduce any speakers that you have.

Decide if you will have categories (babies and kids clothes, teenagers clothing, women's casual/workwear/formal, men's casual/workwear/formal, fancy dress). If you are going to have these kinds of categories, you could have the final model from each group share a testimony or have a short talk between each of the categories. For each model you have in a category, you want to allow that person around 30 seconds to a minute - this gives them time to be introduced, walk the runway at least once, and have some fun on the stage.

You will also need to decide what kinds of foods and drinks you want to serve and whether your budget allows the event to be free or requires people to donate a small amount. You could also ask people who are involved in the parish to bring a plate to share. If you do this, ensure that appropriate food handling is done and that the ingredients of all items are listed for people who may have allergies.

You will also need to ensure you have a first aid officer in case of an issue with a team member or a guest.

You may choose to have an event following this one that you can invite people to. For example, you

Content

How you run your show is up to you. But this is an example of what might work or be able to be adapted for your context. You do not need to use these fashion categories; consider what will work best for you. Some people will prefer to walk with someone on stage (especially kids), so you might want a siblings group, a parent and kids group, or a grandparent and grandchild group.

1. People arrive, nibbles and drinks are served - you will need welcomers (30 minutes)
2. Welcome and Introduction to the event (5 minutes)
3. Category 1 - Kids fashion (5 minutes)
4. Testimony 1 - Asking one of the kids why they love Jesus (2-3 minutes)
5. Category 2 - Teens fashion (5 minutes)
6. Testimony 2 - How teens find hope in Jesus (2-3 minutes)
7. Category 3 - Men's fashion (5 minutes)
8. Short talk on your chosen theme (10 minutes)
9. Category 4 - Women's fashion (8 minutes)
10. Testimony 3 - An adult sharing their story of hope in Jesus and the op shop (4-5 minutes)
11. Category 5 - Costumes/fancy dress (5 minutes)
12. Close, thank you to the team, an invitation for follow-up.
13. Mingling and more refreshments

You could run this as an afternoon event and encourage people in your community to go out for dinner with the family and friends who came with them and talk about the show. If you do this, you may choose to have a little less input and do some training with your community about how to have spiritual conversations. This could be a chance for people to ask, "How did you find that?" after the fun of modelling together or watching the show.

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 able to share any necessary documents with one another.
2. In your parish and the op shop team, make sure that your parish knows what is planned and is joining in prayer for the event, inviting friends, family, and neighbours to attend the event. You can communicate internally through parish email updates, notices during services, information in pew sheets, and any other form of contact your parish uses. You might also call on people in these groups to think of friends who might be models for the event. It could be fun for people to do with friends or family.
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 information sheet and information on your parish or op shop webpage. Ensure that anything you hand out has the date and time of the event. Depending on your context, consider including information on car parking, dietary requirements, and the general shape of the event. You might consider:
 - a. A letterbox drop in your local community
 - b. Give cards to each member of your parish community and encourage them to think of two people they can pray for and invite to the event.

Problem-Solving

What if...

When hosting an event, we always need to be ready for the unexpected. You may have a model, team member, or speaker come down sick just before the event. Flexibility and ensuring that there are people who can take over items at the last minute are important.

Check that any tech you are using (microphones, etc.) is working well before the event and that someone who knows how to run the sound system is present during the event.

If someone rolls an ankle in unfamiliar shoes, you will need ice and your first aid person to be available and ready to help.

Remember, things can go wrong, and God can still use them. Keep in mind the big picture of what you are doing.

2025 is an election year, and an election could be called any time before September. It is unlikely to be called on the same day as your event, but it is worth keeping the possibility in the back of your mind as you plan.

Paths Forward

What now?

When we try new things, we change. 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 invited people to your service. Some will have said yes, and others no. 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: helping with music, service planning, or hospitality. How can these people continue to be supported as disciples of Jesus?

Your op shop team

Some of this group may have gotten to know people in the church community for the first time. How can you continue to foster relationships between the parish and the op shop and support each other?

Newcomers

The people who came along to the fashion show will need a path forward. Some people might have indicated that they would like to hear more about what is happening in the parish or more about what they have heard about Jesus. You can also invite people to an op shop thanksgiving service but for those wanting to hear more about Jesus, a good path forward might be to host a course, Bible study, or baptism class where people can learn more. Some options might be:

- Just for Starters
- Alpha
- Life Course
- Simply Christianity
- Christian Essentials
- The Pilgrim Course

You will also need to put together a team to help lead each of these, so it may be a good path forward for those in your parish to continue to try new things.

Implementation Plan

Firstly

Choose when and where to have your fashion show.

Decide if you will have a theme for your fashion show and who might be good to speak about this theme and/or share a testimony.

Secondly

Communicate internally and externally.

Help people think about who they might invite and provide them with tools to invite others.

Ensure that everything that needs to be done for the fashion show has a name next to it.

Thirdly

Have the fashion show (and have fun!).

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 fashion show?