



S T A R T I N G Y O U R O W N

COFFEEHOUSE MINISTRY

A COFFEEHOUSE PRIMER FOR THE VERMONT DISTRICT OF THE NEW ENGLAND UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Our Mission is to glorify God through Christian music and fellowship, while serving as an outreach to our communities.

Our church is open to people of all faiths, and this is also the basic principle of our coffeehouse. Our coffeehouse is hosted by the church and staffed primarily by church members; as such, it is regarded as an outreach ministry to the community ... BUT the open mic is a free space for artistic expression of all kinds. Sacred material is not required (the majority of participants offer secular material). We do take our commitment to FREE expression seriously while at the same time having plenty of family-friendly fun for the evening.

If you would like to perform, feel free to offer up your talents during the open mic. If you choose only to listen or sing from your seats – Great!

There is usually decaf coffee, juice, water, and other drinks, as well as an assortment of snacks that people have provided. Please help yourselves, and feel free to move about the sanctuary as the evening goes on, we just ask that you be mindful of our performers as well as those around you, listening to the program.

Coffeehouses are a great place to meet up with friends and family, enjoy music, relax, unwind, socialize, and schmooze.

Coffeehouses also provide an opportunity to connect with other like-minded Christians. Often, a Christian community develops that goes beyond denominational barriers. Coffeehouses can also provide a non-threatening introduction for non-Christian friends.

Coffeehouse ministries are usually quite different from a normal evangelical outreach, tending to be low key and more friendship-based.

Music performed at a coffeehouse is not the same as at a typical concert. At a concert, musicians tend to have the undivided attention of the audience. A coffeehouse is a place where oftentimes the musicians are playing background music, while other private conversations may be taking place.

- A good sound system is critical. It would help to have a person on hand that can do the sound. A fair number of performers rely on electric instruments and will require a sound system to plug into, otherwise they will offer to bring their own equipment, often resulting in the request for reimbursement.
- When booking for your coffeehouse, it is not necessary to look for the most expensive acts. There are many Christian artists or gifted members of the community at large who will gladly perform for free or for the chance to have a “love” offering taken during the show. Some may even have CDs to sell, the sales helping to offset any expense in travelling to your coffeehouse.

If the coffeehouse is to have an accessible piano, for either performers to use or for the accompaniment of the open mic or hymn sing, make sure the piano is tuned.

- Most performers have web sites with streaming audio and lots of PR-bio material. The material for the coffeehouse's web site, poster and flier can be copied from the artist's home page. They have bios, PR, streaming audio, photos, quotes, and lists of CD/music. The coffeehouse's web site should link back to the artist's site. The material can be used to generate the schedule web page and the coffeehouse flyer.
- Start collecting names and emails of attendees so that reminders can be sent to patrons to tell them about upcoming shows. Email reminders are a key component of the marketing and PR strategy. This is a very important way to keep in touch with those who attend your coffeehouse.
- Keep in mind the printing and mailing cost for your coffeehouse. You can keep costs down if you rely on email notifications and web traffic to remind your current visitors, and focus any printing on flyers and posters telling about your coffeehouse, especially posters for each month focused on who the headliner for the next performance will be.
- To make sure that the contact list is built as fast as possible, a sign up list should be put out for people to sign up, but only a few will put their name and address on the list each show. Access or some other data base tool can be used to maintain the list.
- The posters and flyers need to be designed and printed. Both the flyer and poster can easily be up to 8.5 x 14 inches, with both sides of the flyer being used and folded twice.
- A good suggestion is to book performers several months in advance. That way, the coffeehouse can get the desired performers and not have to settle for second or third choice. Having all the performers lined up before the season starts allows the coffeehouse to list the complete season on the web page, and on the flyer if you so desire.
- Send out a PR release to the radio stations and local papers for your next coffeehouse, right after your most recent event. Certain organizations who offer space for community/current events require up to 3 to 4 weeks notice prior to an event. Avenues to consider are: KATV, WCAX, The Light Radio Station, chamber or other community websites, local papers.

The announcements need only to be simple and straight forward:

STANDARD ANNOUNCEMENT WITH ALL PERTINENT INFORMATION

Friday, *October* 11th, from 7 to 9 p.m. the *Yourchurch* United Methodist Church will hold its Joyful Java Coffeehouse. Musicians, poets and storytellers of all ages are invited to perform at this event, to be held on the second Friday of every month. Come join us for an evening of music, fun, food and fellowship, as we listen and sing along to those sharing their gifts with us for the evening. Snacks, coffee and other beverages provided. Email coffeehouse@yourchurch-umc.org or visit YourChurch-UMC.org for more information.

SOME ORGANIZATIONS (WCAX-TV) ONLY ALLOW FOR A WEB ADDRESS

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- A good kitchen crew is mandatory. Most coffeehouses serve coffee, tea, soda, water, (hot mulled cider in the fall), pies, cakes, cookies, cheese and crackers - not necessarily at the same time. Certain companies around the state (Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Cabot Creamery, etc.) will donate a

“years supply” of whatever their product is, to non-profit organizations who fill out the appropriate request or application.

- A set-up and tear-down crew for the sound, stage, lights, chairs, etc. is required.
- It would be good to have some sort of banner or sign out front telling people that there is a coffeehouse performance, and when it is.
- An MC is needed to announce the performers.
- An example coffeehouse schedule (time periods are approximate):

7:00 pm	
5 minutes	Opening & Announcements
5 minutes	Introduction of HEADLINER & opening prayer
30 minutes	HEADLINER
15 minutes	At this time we'll turn it over to the first guest on our sign up board...
15 minutes	Hymn Sing
20 minutes	HEADLINER
15 minutes	At this time we'll turn it over to the next guest on our sign up board...
10 minutes	HEADLINER
5 minutes	Closing Prayer and/or a closing benedictory song
5 minutes	Parting words, and invitation to return next month.
9:00pm	

- Before the first performance, you can do an article for the local paper announcing the new venue.
- Last but not least, make sure the coffeehouse has a great crew of volunteers and make sure they have fun! Don't stress them out.

And remember to support the coffeehouses and musicians you run into! It takes a lot of hard work, dedication and money to run these establishments – not to mention the musicians and other artists that perform there; so support them: not only might you want to consider volunteering for one of these ministries, but bring your friends, purchase some food, buy a CD, and leave a tip!

Curtis H. Larrabee

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www.WestDanvilleUMC.org/Ministries/coffeehouse.html



COFFEEHOUSE  **MINISTRIES**
 VERMONT DISTRICT OF THE NEW ENGLAND UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
MUSIC, FUN & FELLOWSHIP



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