

New Member Potlucks

We have 4 potlucks a year and invite our new members for the four dinners during the year after joining. We change themes during the year: a bar-b-q during good weather; a luau in the winter is fun (beach clothes optional); Mexican is always popular; International (especially if you can find a special ethnic caterer). The Membership Group pays for or provides the entrée and beverages. Invitations ask members to bring side dishes, salads or dessert for 6-8. Following the theme is optional but many love to bring compatible dishes.

We've found Sunday evenings at 6pm to be a good time. The Membership committee comes an hour earlier to heat the entrée and set everything up. We keep it all very simple, serve punch, decaf coffee and tea.

When scheduling, be sure not to schedule on important weekends like Mother's or Father's Day, the Superbowl, etc. If you want a good turnout, schedule when nothing else of importance appears to be going on.

Besides membership committee and new members, our ministers and various members of the Board of Trustees attend. We also welcome non-member spouses of our new members, any guests they may ask to bring, and all children. If you have enough kids, you can set up a small table just for them. Be relaxed and inclusive; this is money well spent to honor and integrate your new members.

Occasionally, we schedule an informational meeting or forum just for new members after dinner. When in search for a new minister, we had a forum on what they wanted to see in their new minister. When in the midst of a capital campaign, we gave them information on our expansion project, asking them to consider making a contribution. But usually, we reserve these potlucks just for a welcoming good time!

1. Arrange date, menu and price with caterer.
2. Send invitations out at least two weeks ahead to all those who have joined in the past 12 months.
3. Call each invitee if they have not RSVP'd to invite them personally (this is very important since this kind of invitation is often set aside without responding).
4. Call caterer several days before event with exact number. Many caterers will deliver and pick up empty pans.
5. About 6:10, we ring a bell to get everyone's attention, make a circle, welcome our new members, and go around the circle with introductions. Someone, usually the minister, offers a grace or we sing a grace all together, often holding hands. This is a bonding beginning to our meal and very important.
6. Membership folks pour punch as the group files by, greeting all.
7. About 7:15, membership committee begins cleaning up, accepting help from new members when offered. Tables and chairs are put away, carpet vacuumed if needed. Guests usually leave by 7:30 or 7:45; clean-up is usually done by 8:15. When we have lots of left-overs, they go to a local shelter the next day.