

WATCH PARTY OUTREACH

Why not host watch parties around major sporting events, reaching out to your community and providing opportunities for engagement.

What is a watch party?

'An occasion when people watch a broadcast event together, for example a sports game or the results of an election, often in a public place' (*Cambridge Dictionary*).

Prepare to question

We need to be prepared to ask the right questions of the community that we live in. Here are some key ones to help you get started:

- ⦿ What is God saying in all of this?
- ⦿ What are people already interested in?
- ⦿ How could [insert sporting event] have the biggest impact possible?
- ⦿ What could help us build relationships with people?
- ⦿ What could help people build relationships with each other?
- ⦿ How will people physically use the space?
- ⦿ What are other churches doing and how can we partner and work alongside them?

10 considerations

1. Vision casting - it takes a whole village to be effective with outreach through sport.
2. Team - teamwork makes the dream work! Assemble a group of people who can help with the practical side of things, as well as those who are confident in building relationships and authentically sharing their faith. Both are important for your watch party outreach!
3. Budget - how can you put a price on this kind of outreach? Well, you have to! Conversations with your leadership team or the people who look after your church finances are essential - sooner rather than later. There may be pockets of money that have been set aside for 'mission and outreach'. Be bold and transparent in your dialogue.
4. Location - where are you going to host your watch party?
5. Timings - be aware of the fixtures and plan accordingly. Some sporting events are very late in the evening or early in the morning.

6. TV licence - if your church or venue hasn't got one, then this will be one of the costs you will have to factor in. Visit tvlicensing.co.uk/check-if-you-need-one/business-and-organisations for further information.
7. Other licences - go to ccli.com/uk/en/showing-films-and-tv for more information on church-specific licences. If the sporting event is being shown on terrestrial television, the licensing is likely to be much cheaper than pay TV and subscription streaming services. There is also some guidance prepared specifically for corps screening [FIFA World Cup 2026 matches](#) and [Commonwealth Games 2026 events](#) (follow links). You'll only be able to access this guidance if you are logged into The Salvation Army IT network. Please speak to your local Salvation Army leader if you need access to this.
8. Invitations - invite people in your square mile, focusing on how the watch party is a chance to come together around sport. Word of mouth and internal communications are great - don't position your event as an 'official' watch party. As you invite others, you might like to use the opportunity to pray blessing over the people who live in your community.
9. Decoration - make the location come alive and feel welcoming, party-like and 'sporty' with streamers, flags, scarves etc.
10. Hospitality - this is vital when it comes to how you welcome people and make them feel like they belong. Food and drink are a great way to draw people in and build community.

Discussion questions

Watch parties are a prime opportunity to meet new people. Rather than people just arriving, watching the game and going home again, discussion questions are a great way of prompting conversations and building relationships.

Here are a few questions you could place on tables. You don't have to answer them all, or in order. You might think of your own to add to or replace those below.

However, consider your audience - do they have a faith? How 'deep' do you want the questions to be? These questions are designed to be accessible to everyone:

ADULT FOCUS

- ⊙ Who has made the biggest positive impact in the match or game so far?
- ⊙ Has anything happened that you think is unfair?
- ⊙ What's been your best moment so far?
- ⊙ What makes a good sportsperson?
- ⊙ What makes a good team player?
- ⊙ What examples can you think of where players/athletes have shown acts of faith on the pitch or track?
- ⊙ Do you watch players/athletes who you know have a faith in a different way? Do you judge their attitudes and behaviours differently?
- ⊙ Do you think there is any distinct difference between players/athletes who have a faith and those who don't?
- ⊙ Would you ever be able to tell a player/athlete has a faith by just watching a game? Should you be able to?

CHILDREN/YOUTH FOCUS

- ⊙ Who's your favourite player or athlete? Why?
- ⊙ What can you learn from people who compete in sport?
- ⊙ Why do you think sportspeople might be good role models?
- ⊙ Can you think of an example when a sportsperson might not set a good example to follow?
- ⊙ Do you think that players/athletes who believe in God play differently from those who don't? Why?

Follow-up

- ⊙ Constantly evaluate throughout your watch party - what's going well, does anything need to change or be adapted?
- ⊙ Build on the relationships you've created - the challenge is always to follow them up.
- ⊙ Make sure you have next steps in place to invite people to something after the watch parties. If possible, produce and distribute a flyer that helps people know where, when and who to contact.
- ⊙ Some churches have different clubs or events that they run, so be bold enough to invite people to sport or family-focused activities like reflective walks, family gatherings, camps and clubs, Messy Church, Get OWT! etc.
- ⊙ Don't make this a one-off activity - be proactive!

For many churches that have hosted watch parties during major sporting events over the years, this has been an eye-opening experience - an effective way to both meet and learn more about people in their community.

So, enjoy planning and running your watch party outreach, and see what God might do!