

“Wedding at Cana” Wine-tasting Fundraiser

The inaugural "Wedding at Cana" wine-tasting event at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Franklin, TN, in 2009 was a great success. Close to 50 people attended, raising \$760 and meeting the objective of purchasing one share of a village well through Episcopal Relief & Development's Gifts for Life program.

“Wine-tasting events are becoming increasingly common,” said Paul Deepan, the event's lead organizer. “Though I think we were the first to use ‘wine into water’ and tie it into Jesus' miracle at Cana.” Inspired by that Gospel incident, in which Jesus turned water into wine at a wedding, St. Paul's put on a different spin—and transformed cabernet into clean water for people in need worldwide.

(The women of St. John's Episcopal Church in Kirkland, Washington, had the same great idea. Their “[Wine into Water](#)” fundraising event was highlighted in a [Friends of Episcopal Relief & Development](#) installment.)

Attendees purchased tickets for the event and formed teams of two to four people. Each team contributed three bottles of cabernet wine to be judged in a blind taste test. Individuals also submitted appetizers, which were judged separately alongside the wines. The attendees tasted the wines and appetizers and voted for their three favorites, which were awarded points accordingly. The teams and individuals contributing the wines and appetizers with the highest point totals were declared the winners, with all receiving bottles of wine as prizes.

“Everyone at our event had a great time and felt good about supporting a great cause,” said Paul. “It was a total win-win, as well as a nice way to celebrate the end of Lent.”

Event Details:

- Prior to the event's start, the varietal of cabernet was chosen and each team contributed three bottles.
- Two of the three bottles of cabernet from each team were masked and numbered for the blind tasting. (Small holes were cut in the bottom of paper lunch bags, which were placed upside down over the bottles' necks. It is suggested that several hours be allotted for this task.) The third bottle was put into a “prize pool” in prominent view of participants.
- The attendees tasted the masked wines and ranked their top three in order. Each first-place vote received three points, second place received two points, and third place received one point.
- Participants also tasted and voted on the appetizers separately. (Those who contributed them weren't allowed to vote for their own creations.)
- The team whose wines received the highest point total won the event, with the second- and third-place teams and the top appetizer winner also receiving prizes. All were awarded proportionate amounts of wine from the prize pool, with the top winners receiving the most and “best” (as determined by the judging). Both the top and second-place appetizer winners had their recipes published in the church choir's cookbook.

Items Needed:

- Wine glasses
- “Spit buckets” (optional; these are routinely used at wine-tasting events to prevent people from drinking too much)
- Wall or table display about the challenge of clean drinking water for many people worldwide
- Wine boxes for prize wine
- Non-alcoholic beverages: water, juice, coffee (funded through ticket sales or donated)
- Plates, cups and cutlery

List of Volunteer Tasks:

- Publicity - church newsletter/website, e-mail blasts, Sunday announcements and bulletin inserts
- Ticket sales
- Taking tickets at event
- Setting up
- Preparing and serving food
- Childcare
- Wine masking/labeling/opening/tracking/packing
- Cleanup

Courtesy of Paul Deepan, Senior Warden and lead planner of the event, and Susan Longo Cowperthwaite, Episcopal Relief & Development Diocesan Co-Coordinator, Diocese of Tennessee