



---

### **How we did a 'Thank-you' Dinner for NHS staff: A guide for churches**

Every single person within the UK comes into contact with the NHS. It was initiated to care for the people of the UK, from the cradle to the grave. We believe that God Loves the NHS and wants to bless and thank NHS workers.

This is your chance as a church or community of Christians to bless the people who work tirelessly to look after people. This is your chance to display God's love to those who look after people day in - day out. This is your chance to say a BIG thank you to NHS workers who maybe don't get thanked enough.

-----

**COST:** The dinner was completely free to all the people who were invited – this is an essential part of the model. The dinner cost us approximately £2,000 for 100 guests. This included food, drinks, entertainment, room hire, gifts and décor. This of course can be tailored to individual budgets. We were generously given the money to run this event. More details of the breakdown of cost are available.

**HIGH QUALITY:** The event was of really high quality, which again demonstrates that the NHS workers are being highly valued.

**WHO DID WE INVITE AND HOW?** We have a monthly gathering of NHS workers, and these people invited their own colleagues and hosted a table each. Each could invite a maximum of 9 colleagues, which worked well because the invites were through relationship – not a random invitation. This was vital because the guests had a person there who they could trust and who was familiar. The majority of the people who were invited were non-churched. One of the ladies from our church wrote personally to all the people she wanted to invite – the others invited their colleagues by word of mouth. If you don't have a monthly meeting of NHS workers, then you can ask NHS workers within your church to invite people to the dinner. This is also important because of the potential follow up conversations during and after the event.

**INVITATIONS:** We had professional invitations printed – which were also the tickets for the night too. This again made people feel that the night was professional and well thought out, and it also had the details of the night.

**WHERE WAS IT HELD?** We held the dinner in the Church, which started conversations and encouraged people through the church door who may well not come through otherwise. The dinner was simply a display of God’s love and gratitude towards them – there was no talk or preach. We welcomed the guests and said ‘Thank-you’ for all the hard work they do, and then explained about the gifts that people could receive. Someone also compered the night so the guests knew what to expect.

**GIFTS:** Under one chair on each table we had a tag attached to the bottom of the chair saying ‘Your night just got even better’. This gave one person the chance to choose a gift, these included chocolates, wine and vouchers.

**FOOD:** We had a set menu and people had to choose what they were going to eat prior to the event so we knew what to prepare. We paid for caterers to provide the food.

**DRINK:** We provided drinks on arrival – bucks fizz or a soft drink. We provided wine on each table – enough for ten people – bottles of red, white and rose on each table. We also had a drinks table (manned by a designated person) where people could come and get more drink, drinks included beer and soft drinks. Amazingly no-one got drunk! People really respected where they were, and the event.

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** We invited a local photographer to come to the evening to take photos for people who wanted a photo of their team or an individual photo. They charged for the photos and people were informed of this prior to the event so they could bring money with them if they wished.

**TABLE DÉCOR:** We dressed the tables as if it was for a wedding, with name places, candles, serviettes, wine, wine buckets, centre pieces. We had a table plan in the entrance of the hall, which again put people at ease because they knew where they were sitting and who with.

**ENTERTAINMENT:** We hired a local band that played after the meal. It was great to see so many NHS workers let their hair down on the dance floor!

**DRESS CODE:** The dress code was formal, but not strict. Most ladies wore ball dresses or posh frocks! The men wore suits or DJ’s. This again made the night feel really special.

**DONATED GIFTS:** We wrote to and approached local organisations to ask them to donate gifts. The Lincolnshire Co-op donated to us, and a local beauty shop. However a lot of large organisations already have designated charities to donate to for the year so this was a barrier for us. We however set aside some of the budget for gifts.

**VOLUNTEERS:** We had an army of volunteers who waited on all the guests. We had designated waiters for each table and each volunteer had a task on arrival of the guests e.g. serving drinks, showing people where to go, giving directions to amenities etc. These volunteers were also dressed smart and looked professional.

**WHAT WAS THE RESPONSE?** The response from the guests was overwhelmingly positive. The guests made remarks such as “This is the first time in 20 years that I’ve been thanked ” and “I’ve worked for the NHS for 32 years, and I’ve never experienced anything like this”. Below is Diana’s story, let this encourage you to put on an event such as this.

Diana’s story:

*“When I was invited to the NHS Thank you dinner, I hadn’t been to church for years except for the usual weddings christenings funerals. I thought ‘why not it’s a free meal!’ When I arrived at the New Life church in Lincoln I was amazed at its beauty and also the calm I felt in the building. It was an amazing evening, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all. It also started me thinking about seeing what all this God stuff was about. I asked the person who had invited me to the evening if I could join him and his wife at a Sunday service and he was thrilled. I had been going through some tough times and nothing I tried had seemed to help so I thought why not give it a go!!!*

*I am pleased to say I haven’t looked back since. I attend the church regularly, have joined a connect group and was even baptised in May. So you see the power of God can work in mysterious ways even with those who never believe.”*

For more information about the “Thank you Dinners” – please contact Beth Hutton on [beth.hutton@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:beth.hutton@hotmail.co.uk)

**Beth Hutton - God Loves NHS**  
**June 2012**