

Planning a Charity Ride

When word gets out that you have an organized biker group you will probably be approached by organizations and individuals who want you to organize bike rides to raise funds for their program or need. These opportunities can be a great tool for outreach if done correctly.

Identify and Verify the Cause

Part of doing it correctly is being sure who you are raising funds for and how those funds are to be used. There are many good reasons for raising money. But knowing how to use the funds raised in a responsible way takes planning. Get the facts before you commit.

- How much of the money collected will actually be used for the purpose for which it was intended?
- Who is going to be accountable for the distribution of funds?
- When will the funds be distributed to meet the need?

Once you have determined that the organization or individual is a good, legitimate cause and your ministry will not be harmed from your association with the cause, then it is time plan for the event.

Choose an Event Date

Where you live will be a determining factor in selecting a date for the event. Sunny and warm makes people want to ride; cold and wet, not so much. Choose a date that makes the ride attractive to all riders. That date may be six or seven months from the time of the initial discussion. If an organization insists that they must have the money immediately and they cannot possibly wait that long for the ride to be scheduled, that should be an indication to you that the organization is not one you want to be associated with. Legitimate organizations that have their act together plan ahead.

It is important to allow plenty of time to make plans to participate in an event. Most bikers are busy people especially in the riding months. The further out you can post a date for a ride the better your chances are of drawing a good crowd. Do not select a date on the weekend of a major holiday. Check out local and national biker magazine to see when club rallies, bike shows, or bike rallies (i.e. Daytona, Sturgis, Laconia, Myrtle Beach) are scheduled; avoid those weekends. Make sure the local H.O.G. (Harley Owners Group) is in town and not at their state rally.

Designing the Ride

Start and End Location

If your church has a flat paved parking lot, then you have a great place to start and/or end a ride. We encourage groups in our area to use our church parking lot as a starting or ending point for their rides. Because every biker in our town has been on a ride (that started in our parking lot), they know where our church is located. When we have our Biker Sunday those who we hope to reach already know where to come.

If your church is unavailable, a shopping center with a corner parking area could be used for a starting point. You just need a place that is paved, relatively flat, and where people have access to restrooms and, if possible, food.

Provide tables where riders can register and sign a release form and where organizers can take care of pre-ride details. A sound system for announcements and ride details is recommended.

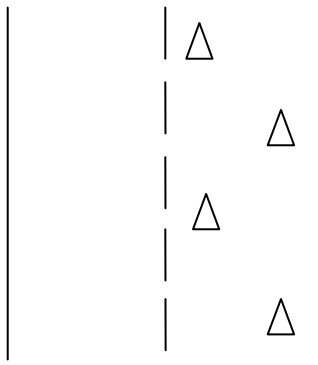
Bike dealerships usually welcome benefit rides beginning and ending at their places. While everyone is registering and looking at each other's bikes, many will shop in the dealership. Many dealerships will provide tables for registration as well as a PA system for music and announcements. Don't assume these things will be available; check it out with the general manager or the sales manager of the dealership.

Choosing the Route

The route should be designed with safety as the primary consideration. You never know who will show up for a ride, so design it for the least experienced riders. Limit left hand turns that cross oncoming traffic if possible. Work with local law enforcement to block large intersections. This requires a good relationship with law enforcement that needs to be established over time. If at all possible, get out of town and on two-lane roads where traffic is less restrictive.

Depending on the length of the route you may want to plan several rest stops. A good rule of thumb is to stop every 30 miles or 30 minutes for rest and to regroup in case the group gets separated. Let everyone know where these stops will be as a part of the pre-ride instructions. Gas station and convenience store combinations are good choices for rest stops.

Assign a road captain to be the lead bike. He or she will be responsible for pre-ride instructions. This person should be your most experienced rider and have experience leading group rides. The road captain will need to be involved in designing the ride from the beginning. He or she should ride the route the day before the event or the day of the event to verify the route is safe as designed. The road captain should explain that the ride formation will be full stagger. Full stagger means that the right lane of the highway is divided into two lanes. The lead bike is bike one and is positioned in the left portion of the right lane. Bike two is behind bike one and in the right portion of the right lane. Bike three is to the left of and behind bike two and directly behind bike one and the pattern continues through the column as seen below.



It is also a good idea to pre-ride the route with several experienced riders. Placing those riders at equal intervals in the actual ride will insure that if the column is broken by an intersection an experienced rider who knows the route will be close at hand.

It is advisable to have a chase vehicle towing a trailer rigged for bike transport and carrying a container of fuel. Believe it or not some people do not maintain their bikes well enough to complete even a short ride, and many more forget that it takes gas to run the bike. If it can happen, it usually will, so it is best to be prepared.

Advertising the Event

Advertising for the event is the responsibility of the organization or individual who has requested your help. There are costs involved with advertising so try to get those costs paid for as a contribution from the printer. Invite the printer to advertise that the printing was done as a contribution to the cause. The flyer or poster should include the following information:

- Name of the ride (usually includes the name of the cause--i.e. The Alzheimer's Memory Ride)
- Date of the ride
- Location of the starting point
- Time of registration
- Time of departure also known as "Kick stands up"
- Donation per bike as well as a donation for two-up rider and passenger
- Details about door prizes, entertainment, food, special guests
- Contact information
- Rain out date if one is possible

Flyers or poster should be placed in as many places as possible where bikers might see them (i.e. bars, clubs, and bike dealerships). Be aware that biker demographics have changed in the last decade. Bikers are everywhere and they go to the same places that everyone else goes, so place advertising where ever people go to shop, eat, work, and play.

Registration and Release Forms

Every time you have an organized ride where an organization, or business, or church is a sponsor you **MUST** have a release form. A release form releases the organization from liability should an accident occur during the ride. The form must state the names of those being released, the date and name of the event, and the type of event. The form must require every person who is going to be on a bike either as a rider or a passenger to fill out the form completely and sign the form before the ride. This is done as a part of the pre-ride registration. Some type of visible indicator such as a wrist band is recommended so that organizers can see who has registered and who has not. If you do not register and you do not have a wrist band, you do not ride. This form also allows you to build a contact list for future rides. Name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and club or ministry affiliation gives you valuable information for future outreach.

See [Sample Release Form](#) on the NMF web site.

If you have never been on a group ride, do not try to organize one. Go on a couple rides and see how it's done.