

“Light in the Darkness” – Engaging the Unchurched through Community Involvement

Presentation ideas

- Rationale
 - Quotes from *Essential Church* and *Joining Jesus On His Mission*
 - The common ground for us - the Church - and the 21st century unbeliever
 - Increasingly so, for many it is no longer children's ministries or programs held on our church campus – church not respected as a safe place; morals are not shared by the unchurched
 - People want to leave the world a better place, make a difference, contribute in meaningful ways
 - As Christians this is a scratch we ought to already want to itch . . . much reason for us to be in this same space
 - “Let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)
 - “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mark 12:31)
 - “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress.” (James 1:27)
 - Important outreach concept: thinking less about “What do we need to do to get all those people out there into here (church)?” and more about “What do we need to do to get all these people in here (believers in the church) out there (into the world)?”
 - Light into the darkness (vs. expecting the darkness to come into the light . . . won’t happen – “Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.” - John 3:20)
 - Simply exercising and demonstrating the love of Christ (this is not social gospel . . . this is faith in action . . . this is love for Christ and for others)
 - Expanding our FRAN network (Friendship Evangelism by far the most effective form of evangelism) – “I don’t know anyone who’s not a Christian.”
 - More natural / relationship context within which to have a spiritual conversation (vs. knocking at the door, don’t know you from Adam, let’s talk about your spiritual and eternal welfare)
 - Already like / trust / respect you because you are here dedicating 3-4 hours of your time doing something that I’m passionate enough about to get me out of bed on a Saturday morning or keep me up late after work on a weeknight
 - More time (3-4 hours vs. 15 seconds)
 - Building bridges / establishing relationships with three different layers of individuals in the community
 - Beneficiaries of the service
 - Fellow volunteers
 - Organizers / leaders of the nonprofits (often these are people who know people . . . are connected in the community)
 - Begin to earn a (positive) reputation in the community as a church that genuinely cares about others / about your community; genuine people who are kind, trustworthy, caring

- Explanation
 - Service – a core value of your congregation
 - Service in the community is an equal win (and celebrated as such) as service in the church
 - Not a program created by the church
 - Not a program run at the church
 - Not taking a monetary/clothing collection from members and having one person drop it off at the agency
 - Secular nonprofits
 - They create the program, fund the program, have the facilities for the program, provide materials for the program, train people, advertise and get the people there, etc. . . . just starving for volunteers
 - Vetting:
 - % won't want to work with you because you are a church
 - % you won't want to work with due to fellowship reasons (run by other churches)
 - Preferably not an agency where lots of other churches participate (the whole idea is to be rubbing shoulders and spending time with the unchurched)
 - Illustration: Bentonville, AR nonprofit organization leader (Literacy Council of Benton County; atheist . . . pushing me away hard . . . exactly who I want to be talking to!)
 - Ministry Team / coordinator – vetting, developing relationships, lining up opportunities, promoting, recruiting, sending out reminders
 - Model this corporately as a congregation, with the hopes that in time people in the congregation just start doing some of this on their own as well
 - Quarterly? With at least one a year being more than a one-off (3-6 weeks running)
 - Invite nonprofit representative to address the congregation after worship one Sunday – explain the program, the service they provide, opportunities to serve
- Examples (handout?)
 - In addition to having a booth at a local festival/event . . . just as good or better to have people (wearing your church's swag?) setting up/taking down/emptying trash/handing out information, etc.
 - Housing community events/activities association – Cross of Glory, Vistancia, AZ
 - Handing out Idaho State Rodeo programs – Cross of Christ, N. Nampa, ID
 - ??? – (Shepherd of the Valley, Candelas, CO – Belter)
 - ??? – (The Vine, Coeur d'Alene, ID – Kevin Schultz)
 - Neighborhood Clean Up – Savior of the Nations, Vancouver, BC
 - Windsor, CO mission – food drive outside grocery store
 - Kids Meals Houston - Hope in the Heights, Houston, TX
 - Food Drive canvassing (three opportunities for contact – 1) handing out the note – and grocery bags – the week prior; 2) collecting the food; 3) stopping by with a thank you to those who donated a week later)

- Amazing Grace Amarillo – High Plains Food Bank (note that was passed out the week prior – pic; 300 homes / 2 vehicles / 8 door to door canvassers / 1,100 pounds of food / 900+ meals . . . 3 hours); Facebook page – pic)
 - Clothing Drive canvassing (same as above, but clothing – especially for teens)
 - Yard cleanup / snow removal / hanging outdoor Christmas decorations – for the elderly
 - Tutoring for immigrants
- Best practices / pitfalls to watch out for
 - Written statement defining what meaningful service means to Shepherd of the Valley in the community: [Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church will continually evaluate our community's pulse to identify ways SVL members can share the Love of Jesus to bring joy and hope to our community. SVL members will make an impact in our community through defined service projects. All age groups will be encouraged to use their gifts in service to their community and Savior.](#)
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