REACH OUT TO YOUR COMMUNITY

There are many people in your community who haven’t crossed the doorstep of a church in years; in fact, some may have never been to church. Still, that doesn’t mean they won’t be receptive to the Gospel. Sharing God’s Good News in Jesus doesn’t need to be an awkward or anxiety-filled encounter. Making one-on-one contact with others is a privilege but, as we all know, that doesn’t make it easy.

Outreach is a great opportunity to touch people in your area. Below, you will find suggestions on how and where to share Project Connect booklets in your community. Following the booklet and topic list, I’ve put down some possible outreach ideas your church can do. From the extrovert to the introvert, everyone can participate! LHM is dedicated to equipping your congregation with valuable resources that make outreach less stressful for the doer and of the no-guilt variety for the receiver.

TIPS FOR SHARING PROJECT CONNECT BOOKLETS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Purchase a PC Junior (the small, tabletop, four-booklet display) and load it with titles that are most appropriate for your target audience. These easy-to-read booklets resonate with readers and help meet the needs of those struggling with demanding life issues they are experiencing.

On the back of these booklets you can easily affix a label that gives church information, service times, etc. I have found if an individual’s name (i.e. the person handing out the booklet) is added with an e-mail address, it is more personal and less threatening than calling the church office.

Here are some suggestions for business placement of displays, along with booklet titles you can offer:

Beyond these business or service venues, there are public locations where Project Connect booklets can be placed as a quick, takeaway resource. These include street festivals, food pantries, blood drives, voting polls, church rummage sales, etc. I’m sure you have a few places you can think of too.

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OTHER OUTREACH IDEAS

As Jesus has given us the example to share the love of His Father, we too can follow God’s lead!

Street Teams

If your church has an outreach team (or would be interested in putting one together), these suggestions can be accomplished with teams of two to ten people, depending on the area to be covered. Always remember it’s important not to overwhelm the person(s) you are connecting with, so a one-on-one encounter moment—with no strings attached—is often the most natural kind of approach.

Keep in mind these initial face-to-face encounters aren’t really meant to result in long conversations; instead, they should be viewed as an easy-going, low stress, chance to establish rapport, where a positive connection can be made, and the person feels encouraged to find out more.

Below are a handful of outreach ideas, along with the resources you will need, and a thought or two on how a conversation might unfold during your event. Regardless of age everyone is capable of doing outreach! Adults, teens, youth—even the very young—can all make a difference in the lives of others!

PARKING METER FEED

Resources needed:

• A roll (or more) of quarters
• Business-sized cards with your church information on the front and a sentence on the back saying, “You deserve some free time today!”

Watch for those pulling into a parking space; as they exit their vehicle casually approach them and say, “Good morning/afternoon. I’d like to get this for you!” (Say this as you add change to the meter). The receiver may be speechless for a moment or say, “No, you don’t have to” or “Why?” Your reply could then be, “It’s just a simple way to say God loves you! Have a great day!” Hand them your card or booklet with your church info and stroll off to the next individual.

Side note: Be sure to put the money in the meter in their presence. This allows for a quick interaction; however, in many states some are finding trouble in adding to an almost expired meter. The motive in this random act of kindness is the chance for a one-on-one encounter.

LAUNDROMAT OUTREACH

Resources needed:

• Rolls of quarters
• Business-sized cards with your church information on the front and a short sentence on the back saying, “Washed or dried and clean today. Have an extra special day!”

(Teams of two women seem to do best at this as the receiver feels less intimidated.)

An approach would be to say, “Good morning/afternoon. I’d like to get this for you!” (Say this as you place change in the washer or dryer). The receiver may be speechless for a moment or say, “No, you don’t have to” or “Why?” Your reply then might be, “It’s just a simple way to say God loves you! Have a great day!” Hand them your card and move to the next person.

COFFEE/COCOA GIVEAWAY

Resources needed:

• One table (A six-foot table works best.)
• One plastic table cover (available at most dollar stores)
• Insulated coffee/beverage containers with spout; one hot regular, one hot decaf, one hot chocolate
• Creamers, sugar, sweeteners, stirrers, Styrofoam cups and a sign announcing “Free Coffee!”
• Business-sized cards with your personal/church information on the front and a short sentence on the back saying, “This coffee is given to you on the GROUNDS of LOVE” or “A free cup of Brew-therhood. “

Be sure to ask permission when setting up near or adjacent to a place of business, Goodwill outlet, or local library. First, to do so shows you’re sensitive to their situation and second, your effort will be better received if it’s not in competition with an item the business offers for sale.

CAR WASH OUTREACH

Instead of offering a free car wash that people need to pull over for, try going to a self-service car wash.

Resources needed:

• Rolls of quarters
• Towels for drying
• Business-sized cards with your church information on the front and a short sentence on the back saying, “You’ve been served! Have a great day!”

Again have a quick conversation and pay for the wash. Have one of your team members wash as the other team members wait to dry. Often there is more time for one of the team members to speak with the recipient, while the car is being washed. This is not the time to go deeply into the Gospel or work on them to come to church. Remember during these events we are the seed-flingers, and He is the Master-Gardener. Keep the conversation light. Perhaps you can mention something about the nice weather or how getting the car washed ticks another item off the to-do list. The act of kindness and the card you leave with them is enough to give them something to think about and maybe act on later.
IDEAS FOR YOUTH GROUPS

Adults, teens and younger people can all make a difference in the lives of others!

NURSING HOME OR RETIREMENT CENTERS

Resources needed:
- Cards
- Cupcakes
- Project Connect booklets

Senior citizens enjoy interacting with younger generations. Have a group (two or more) call ahead, asking permission to stop by for a visit. Many facilities have a common area where visitors and residents can gather for meals or conversing. One of the easiest ways to strike up a conversation is by asking senior citizens about their past. These can be questions like, “What was your favorite treat when you were younger?” or “What is one of your favorite childhood memories?” All of us enjoy reminiscing about our past and getting a chance to talk about ourselves. This is an excellent way to show these folks you’re interested in their lives and would like to get to know them better!

During these exchanges youth can offer the resident a cupcake and give them a card telling the person he or she is being prayed for and that the young person cares. Giving them a Project Connect booklet gives them something to read and think about. A couple of booklet suggestions here might be Forgiveness Is a Choice or The Bible: What? When? Why?

POPSICLE, WATER OR BALLOON GIVEAWAY

Resources needed:
- Ice-packed cooler with water or single-wrapped popsicles (Dry ice helps keep popsicles frozen too.)
- Helium-filled balloons
- Project Connect booklets
- Ideally, a hot sunny day

First, find a community park where there are kids with their parents. Be sure to ask the parent or guardian for permission to give the child a free popsicle or balloon. As you do this, offer the parent a bottle of cold water, wishing them a great day, and leaving a Project Connect booklet with them. (For the bottled water, one neat idea is to print up a label for the bottle that gives your church info and a thoughtful, little saying.) Booklet suggestions for this outreach are one of our children’s booklets. Either Do You Know Who Jesus Is?, Learning to Pray, Sharing Your Faith, The Bully, The Easter Story, or The Christmas Journey would work well.

LAWN AND GARDEN CARE

Resources needed:
- Rakes
- Shovels
- Clippers
- Trash bags
- Project Connect booklets

Your youth group can (with adult supervision) bring a lawnmower to cut grass if they like or bring tools for other types of yard work. Another idea may be to purchase some four-pack trays of flowers to plant in the yard with the homeowner’s permission. The flowers will be a reminder to the homeowner that your youth group planted them and is concerned for how the person is doing.

When it comes to yard work, there are numerous options: raking leaves and debris, picking up those messy gumballs, gathering tree limbs, trimming bushes, weeding, etc. Of course, the more participants involved, the faster the work gets done. The benefit here goes both ways: those who are served are greatly assisted, and those who do the work experience the positive effects of working alongside each other. Project Connect booklet suggestions to leave behind might be Prayer: When You Don’t Know What to Say.

Reminder: before any team goes out, take some time to pray together, asking God for guidance in the task and to give those who are served an open heart. When the team has finished, gather again to talk about how the effort went and to see if anyone had an encounter he or she would like to share with the group. Close the event with prayer, giving thanks for the blessing it was to serve.

HOMELESS MINISTRY

Resources needed:
- Group of teens (two or more)
- Project Connect booklets

There are so many homeless people on the streets these days. Whether you live in a small, rural town, the suburbs, or a big city, there are plenty of opportunities for your youth group to help the homeless. One quick way is to contact an area homeless shelter to see what your group can do to lend a hand. Here Project Connect booklet suggestions would be Why Do Bad Things Happen, and Has God Abandoned Me?
OUTREACH IDEAS FOR YOUNGER KIDS

As Jesus has given us the example to share the love of His Father, we too can follow God’s lead!

SPREAD JOY WITH A TOY

Resources needed:
• Gently used toys for boys or girls
• Project Connect booklets Do You Know Who Jesus Is?, Learning to Pray, Sharing Your Faith, The Bully, The Easter Story, or The Christmas Journey (Use two booklets for each child here—one for the child receiving the toy and one the child can attach to the toy or toys he or she is giving away.)

As we all know, many children are abundantly blessed with toys, while other kids have next to nothing. You can begin this effort by announcing to the congregation or school that children can serve Him in a big way by sharing what they have! To preface this, parents can converse with their kids about the value of sharing. They can then ask them to go through their toys (I encourage gently used toys here) to see if there are items they no longer play with and are willing to let go of, so another child can get some fun out of them. Parents may get a big surprise here. Their kids may be willing to give up more toys than they thought they would.

Chose a church service, or maybe two Sundays in a row, where children can bring in their donated toys. The pastor or DCE can make an announcement for the children to bring them up to the altar. Once this is done, it’s a good time to communicate with kids about the value of sharing. This can be reinforced by what the Bible says about selflessly giving to others. This is also an ideal time for the church to recognize the efforts of older youth and how they too can be a part of outreach.

The collected toys can be taken to locations caring for children in crisis, daycare centers, or even a welfare office, with the department’s permission. They can then be left in a box marked “FREE!” Another idea would be for the children giving the toys to tie a ribbon on the item that they can sign, letting the receiver know how glad they were to give it to them. The card can simply say, “I wanted to share this toy with you, and I pray it brings you joy!”

MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH DONUTS

Resources needed:
• Donuts
• Cards
• Project Connect booklets

Get children in your congregation, Sunday school classes, or school to raise funds to purchase donuts. Once funds have been secured to purchase donuts, determine a few, local businesses in the community to serve (i.e. auto repair shops, fire or police departments, senior citizen centers, etc.)

Using adult volunteers as drivers, the kids will be taken to one of the pre-selected destinations. Upon arrival, have the kids enter the place of business. As much as possible, let them take the lead (with an adult chaperone nearby, of course), offering donuts to the business owner and having them say something like, “Good morning! We want to make your day a little sweeter by offering these donuts to say thank you for your service in the community.” Suggested Project Connect booklets to use with this effort would be First-Class Faith Sharing: Methods & Motivations, Live the Six: Learning to Live as an Everyday Missionary.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OTHERS

These and other outreach ideas like them are simple and effective ways to make individual connections within the neighborhoods and communities where you live. We pray these (or some variation you come up with) will motivate your team to go and serve. As the saying goes, “People don’t care what you know until they know you care.” It’s that easy. Give those you talk to something to think about. It might even get them scratching their heads with a few questions, as they wonder what this God stuff is all about and how it has any meaning for them.

If you have any questions or suggestions, be sure to contact me. I can be reached by calling 314-317-4214 or the toll-free number 1-800-876-9880, ext. 4214. Just ask for Suzie Sallee. I can also be reached by e-mail at Suzie.Sallee@lhm.org.

Many blessings as you serve the Lord,

Suzie Sallee
Community Facilitator, Congregations
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