


25



**PROVEN  
OUTREACH  
IDEAS**

---

**for YOUR church**



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**for YOUR church**

FROM THE EDITORS OF *OUTREACH* MAGAZINE

**OUTREACH**

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**Disclaimer:**

Ideas excerpted and/or adapted from stories that appeared in *OUTREACH* magazine January/February 2003 through May/June 2005. Implementation steps and checklists do not necessarily reflect the actual steps used by the churches or ministries described but are provided as a guideline. Please direct any questions or comments to [Editor@OutreachMagazine.com](mailto:Editor@OutreachMagazine.com) or to the individual ministries.

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# INTRODUCTION



In each issue of *OUTREACH*, we spotlight the ideas, insights and stories of churches from across the United States and around the world. In this booklet, we offer just a few ideas based on actual local church stories we've shared. To help you think through the steps involved with launching an outreach similar to the one described, a basic checklist is provided with each idea. However, we hope that more than anything these ideas challenge you to take a fresh look at the people, resources and community needs that are already present in and around your church, and then ask how you can meet God there.

In a hundred different ways, *OUTREACH* magazine says "love and serve." We believe that by loving and serving our communities with the hands of Christ, the Church will both expose people to the magnetic heart of God, and give local congregations a worthy platform from which to reach out and share the Gospel message.

Live the Gospel. Be the Gospel. And be creative and generous as you love and serve your community authentically (no strings attached) leaving the results to God. What kind of outreach will be born in your midst? It will be exciting to watch it unfold. E-mail and tell us what happened so that we can share your story with other churches.

Thanks for being part of the community of outreach. It is our privilege to serve with you.

The Editors  
Editor@OutreachMagazine.com

## SECTION ONE

# WHO DO YOU ALREADY HAVE?



Most churches go in search of new people to reach out to, when enhancing ministries to serve those they already have may be the easier and more obvious outreach channel. Who has God *already* brought to your church? Using your existing congregation as a springboard, launch new ministries that capitalize on those God has placed in your midst.

# DEAF MINISTRY SPEAKS VOLUMES

Brentwood Baptist Church in Brentwood, Tenn., has attracted hundreds of families to the church because of their commitment to serve deaf attendees. This ministry started with a few, but the church actively promoted it and the word spread quickly throughout the deaf community. The church offers classes, socials, support groups and services, all for deaf attendees and their families. In 2003, Brentwood built a new worship center, designed specifically for their deaf members, including more spacious rows and seating to accommodate signing; subwoofers in the floor to channel the vibrations of the music; and screens and lighting to accommodate visuals. The church was faithful with a few people and God brought the increase.

## BUILDING A DEAF MINISTRY IN YOUR AREA

*Of the 750,000 Americans who are deaf, only 2% to 4% claim to know Christ as their Savior.*

- **First**, consult with your deaf members to get their input on what will enhance their enjoyment of your worship services.

- **Locate** a paid or volunteer sign language interpreter, as well as back-ups to rotate. As interpretation is more crucial than translation, it's important that these people have a strong spiritual walk and can sensitively communicate not only information, but inspiration.

- **Provide** interpreters with an advance copy of the sermon and

worship songs. If your church offers multiple services, it can be helpful to have the interpreter attend an earlier service and then sign a later one. However, advance preparation is the best option.

- **Increase** the row and chair spacing in a designated deaf section. People who use sign language need more room to “sing” and “talk.”

- **Make sure** your deaf section has excellent visibility of your projection screens.

- **If lights** are dimmed for some

or all of your service, make sure you provide supplemental lighting in your deaf section. If deaf attendees can't see, they can't "hear."

- **Add subwoofers** to your sound system and direct them to your deaf

section. Many deaf people are very sensitive to the vibrations of music, and feeling those vibrations can greatly enhance their enjoyment of your worship music as well as what they will get out of it.

Once your services have been enhanced to better serve the needs of your deaf members, promote your church to the hearing-impaired community through ads and articles in the local deaf newsletters, and by hosting social events for the deaf at your church. The deaf community is usually very well networked, and it won't take long for the word to get out that your church is "deaf-friendly."

- Designate a paid staff member or volunteer leader to provide advocacy for your deaf ministry both within your church and to the community.

- Include outreach to the families of the deaf (i.e., parents of deaf children, spouses/significant others) in the form of socials, outreach events and support group ministries. Strive to make your church the spiritual center of the deaf community in your area.

*For more resources on deaf ministry, contact Brentwood Baptist Church in Brentwood, Tenn., which offers training, tools and an annual conference.*

# ESL TRANSLATES GOD

With no official language, the United States has more than 300 different languages spoken today, representing a diverse and increasing population that doesn't speak or understand English. Covenant Life Church in Gaithersburg, Md., is serving its community by helping break the language barrier with English as a Second Language (ESL) courses. More than 60 students enrolled in the church's courses are finding that neither English nor the Gospel needs to be foreign.

## LAUNCHING AN ESL PROGRAM

- **Evaluate** your community's needs. How many people can't speak English? Will ESL courses benefit your community?

- **Seek instructors.** Teaching degrees are not mandatory, although they are helpful. The classes require about an hour of prep time each week. You'll need one teacher per class or level, which will vary depending on the interest within your community.

- **Seek child care** volunteers for students during classes.

- **Advertise the course.** Covenant Life has found that word-of-mouth alone has attracted many students to the class, but a small ad in your local newspaper might help spark initial interest.

- **A few weeks** before the course

starts, schedule a training session for teachers explaining the curriculum and the course goals.

- **The first** half-hour of each class should be a social time complete with food, drinks, music and conversations. Then divide the group into their respective levels for the next 90 minutes. Let your volunteer teachers customize their lessons to fit participants' needs and styles.

Helpful curriculum resources: [altesl.com](http://altesl.com) and [daveseslcafe.com](http://daveseslcafe.com).

- **To supplement** your ESL courses, host monthly international events open to the community; encourage ESL students to invite their family and friends. The event can be seasonal. For example, host a Fourth of July picnic or a May Day party.

# ACCESS THE DISABLED

McLean Bible Church (MBC), outside of Washington, D.C., reaches more than 700 area families who have children with disabilities through its ACCESS ministry. The ministry began in 1996 as the result of a church newsletter ad to care for a child with special needs while the parents were in church. An MBC member who answered the ad realized that caring for special needs children provided a way to reach others. Through ACCESS, the church offers Sunday school classes, friendship clubs, summer day camps, VBS, parent support, seminars and respite care programs that allow parents to enjoy personal time while leaving their child with church volunteers. The church is touching people who would never contact a church otherwise.

## CULTIVATING A DISABLED MINISTRY

- **Ask** parents of disabled children in your church or community what their needs are and how your church can best serve them

- **Do your homework.** Consult with any experts in your church or community and recruit them to come into your church and present a training seminar on working with disabled children.

- **Sign up** volunteers to work with the ministry and require them to attend the training seminar. When they sign up, ask them to list areas of interest: recreation, food/

refreshments, parent support, etc. At the end of the seminar, gather volunteers and let them know what and when your first project will be.

- **Start small.** Don't attempt a simultaneous roll out of all of McLean's programs. You don't want to overwhelm volunteers. Host a VBS geared to special needs children. Gauge community interest and volunteer support.

- **Advertise.** Place fliers throughout the community in general locations (drycleaners, salons, local businesses, as well as places

geared to disabled children and their parents—schools, doctors’ offices, speech therapists’ offices).

- **On the first day** of the event, give each child a nametag and ask parents to complete a registration form, listing contact information

(including cell phone number), as well as any specific challenges, food allergies, etc.

- **Partner** with another church. If your church is small, ask another church to join you in serving disabled children and their parents.

Numerous resources for caring for special needs kids are available. ACCESS Ministries ([accesscenterinc.org](http://accesscenterinc.org)) is also mentoring churches nationwide that want to develop a similar ministry in their area.

# 3

# BORN-AGAIN TO BE WILD



Know anyone in your church who likes riding motorcycles? For Fellowship Church in Grapevine, Texas, a time of motorcycle riding has become an effective outreach to the unchurched in the greater Dallas area. A group of church members sharing an affinity for motorcycles began riding together on the weekends. Gradually, members began inviting their motorcycling-loving co-workers, neighbors and friends to ride with them. Now, Fellowship Riders has home teams and participates in various community service projects together, such as Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree Christmas program. The group is one way Fellowship is creatively reaching families in its community.

## REVVING UP FOR A BIKER OUTREACH

- **Gather members** in your church who ride motorcycles and gauge their interest in starting an outreach to their community. If possible, identify a leader or point person to head the ministry.
- **Ask the leader** to organize at least two afternoon rides for the group. Encourage him or her to pray for the group before and after each motorcycle ride.
- **As this group** continues to come together, ask the leader to encourage members to invite their co-workers and neighbors—anyone interested in joining others to ride.
- **Suggest to the leader** that he or she offer an optional 10- to 15-minute devotional either before or after the ride. Make sure everyone knows they're not required to come.
- **Encourage the leader** to begin recruiting people in the group to organize longer excursions and post-ride meals; organize and print contact information sheets for everyone who regularly rides; and produce and deliver fliers that can be placed in the community (motorcycle shops, mechanics' garages, auto stores, etc.).
- **Ask the leader** to suggest

a community service project that everyone can get involved in, such as visiting an orphanage. Fellowship's ministry gets together to deliver Christmas presents to children of imprisoned parents through Angel Tree.

- **As the ministry grows**, gauge interest in starting small groups that meet in homes during the week. Ask two to three couples to host small groups (no more than 10 to 12 people in each group).

*For more information on biker outreach, contact the national ministry Fellowship Riders at **fellowshipriders.org**.*

# 4

# FELLOWSHIP WITH A KICK

Whether it's at the start of a new year or the beginning of summer or fall, people want to get into shape, especially women. And often women want to come together in a group to lose the pounds and stay healthy. Radiant Life Church in Dublin, Ohio, continues to see its kickboxing classes that began as a ministry to women in the church become a real outreach to women in the community. As word got around about the classes and more women invited their friends and family to participate, Radiant Life's class soon saw more unchurched women than members.

## JUMPSTARTING A KICKBOXING OUTREACH

- **Secure a certified instructor** who's willing to teach a one-hour class each week, by networking with congregation members and their contacts. Or contact a local gym that offers kickboxing. Many class instructors work as individual contractors and are looking for extra jobs.

- **Make fliers** promoting the class. Include date, time, place and instructor's contact information, and make sure participants know to bring a towel, mat and water.

- **Advertise the class.** Place an announcement in your church bulletin, encouraging members to

invite their unchurched friends. Ask permission to hang fliers or posters in local salons and grocery stores. Also, put an announcement in your community's newspaper, but make sure it doesn't run in the "Church" section.

- **Check with** your church's insurance company or legal representatives about liability waivers for participants. At the beginning of the first class, discuss safety rules, teach people how to monitor their heart rate and ask participants to sign a waiver in case of health issues or injuries.

- **If your church** has a mobile

sound system, use it. You can also use a CD player with a good bass.

- **When participants arrive**, ask women to complete an information card, including their contact information and birth date. Offer a scale if women want to weigh in. Begin each class with a short prayer.

- **Create cards** to pass out to non-members at the end of the class.

The card can include church service times and information about various ministries (singles, small groups, divorce recovery) or upcoming life-skill seminars, such as financial management or parenting teens.

- **Each month**, send out information about upcoming events/activities in your church. Make sure every participant receives a mailed birthday card.

# 5

# SNIP AND SHARE

If you've got a couple of hairstylists in your midst—or know a few Christian stylists in your area who would volunteer their time—consider beginning a unique outreach by giving new “do’s” to those in your community who can’t afford a professional haircut. Open Door Ministries in Crowley, Texas, pampers women, men and children, while sharing Christ and building new relationships.

## STYLIZING YOUR OWN HAIRCUT MINISTRY

*Before launching a haircut ministry, consult your state cosmetology regulations regarding facility and operator licensing.*

- **Pick** a date and time for the event. You can plan it as a sole gathering or pair the free haircuts with another outreach event for your church. Everyone, no matter who they are, likes to look nice and having a professional haircut often makes them feel special.

- **Put together** a team of volunteer hairstylists, who can bring their own equipment including chairs, mirrors, blow dryers, curlers, etc. (Don't forget to think about electrical outlets and extension cords.)

- **Offer evangelism training** to teach your volunteer stylists to share the Gospel in casual conversation, while developing friendships with those they encounter.

- **Promote** the outreach through fliers (check your local government

assistance offices for guidelines) or run public service announcements on local television and radio, and in newspapers. Be sure you mention the service is free, with no strings attached.

- **Gather information** about other resources and ministries that help the less fortunate (clothing, toy and food distribution agencies). Then, create a resource sheet you can give to each haircut recipient, along with information about your church and its ministries.

- **Ask** other congregation members to greet participants at the door and host the event by setting up refreshment stations among the styling stations. Prepare them to offer counsel and prayer throughout the day.

# MARRIAGE

# ENRICHMENT

Most growing communities have young couples and families. One of the best ways to build relationships with unchurched couples in your community is to become a valuable resource. Consider having couples take a personality test ahead of time, and having a certified facilitator score the tests. Then, host an event where couples go through the test results to learn more about each other, as well as meet other couples in the area and find out more about your church. Point of Grace Church in Jacksonville, Fla., ranks this event as the most successful outreach the church has hosted for couples.

## PLANNING FOR MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT NIGHTS

- **Decide** how you want to host the event. Options include asking your couples small groups to host the event in a home or planning a larger event at the church and breaking into small groups.

- **Select the type** of personality test (Myers-Briggs, DISC, Marriage Insights) that you want to use and order the copies.

- **Find a facilitator** and/or marriage counselor who can help explain the test results and answer questions.

- **Pick two dates** and begin promoting the series. Most facilitators will say that you need

two nights to adequately discuss the results.

- **Ask small-group leaders** to pass out invitations or to blanket a neighborhood or apartment complex close to your church. Ask participants to register in advance and give them at least three weeks to take the test and return it. Point of Grace keeps the groups small, between five to eight couples.

- **Encourage** all ages to come. While you may think an event like this would appeal to young couples only, understanding personality preferences is key to marriage, and

couples of all ages can use this information to strengthen, and in some cases preserve their marriage.

- **Use** the nights as a springboard to tell the couple about an upcoming sermon series on marriage or an ongoing marriage series on a weeknight. Make brochures available,

providing information on the series and couples ministries. Be careful to offer any church information in a low-key manner.

- **Plan** a special event, like a dinner or a vow-renewal ceremony to celebrate the completion of the series.

# 7

# PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORY

Is anyone in your church a professional photographer? Offer free Christmas or Valentine's Day photos (or tailor the event to your community) either at your church or at a community location. One church in Texas makes the most of the high school's homecoming weekend. The team mascot is a bulldog, so the church brings in a family's bulldog and hay, then parks a trailer at the football stadium. A photographer takes photos of families and students with Otis the bulldog—adorned with a red (team's colors) bandana neckerchief.

The photos can be made available on disc or for pick-up at the church, or e-mailed as a gift along with an invitation to your holiday service or an upcoming service. Some churches we've profiled offer this outreach before kicking off a sermon series targeted to seekers.

## DEVELOPING A PHOTO OUTREACH

- **Select a holiday** or community event and begin building your outreach around it.

- **Network** with your congregation to learn if there's a member who's a professional photographer. If there's no one in your church, consider asking a photographer in the community. Most photographers look for ways to connect with the community and "advertise" their name. Plus, asking someone who's unchurched to serve with you is one of the best ways to introduce him or

her to your church and to Christ.

- **Work** with the photographer to pick a date. Make sure your photographer is available for at least three to four hours, depending on the number of photos that you estimate taking.

- **Advertise** in places applicable to your event. If it will involve students, ask permission to leave or post fliers at schools, as well as at the local youth hangouts in your area. If the event targets couples for Valentine's Day, leave fliers at

bridal and tuxedo shops, florists and restaurants offering Valentine's Day packages. Encourage your small groups to let their friends and neighbors know where they can get free photos commemorating their special day. And don't forget the power of e-mail promotion.

- **Recruit volunteers** to make a backdrop and provide refreshments or a small gift bag to each participant. Include in each gift bag a connection card, as well as event-related goodies, like chocolate kisses or candy hearts for Valentine's Day.

- **As each couple** or family waits for their turn in front of the

camera, ask them to fill out a card, including their contact information (how they'll receive the photo) and any special dates. For example, if it's a Valentine's Day photo, ask them to provide their anniversary date.

- **Shortly after** the outreach, e-mail or mail photos, along with a connection card and information on upcoming events or relevant message series at your church. Make sure you follow up quickly.

- **Keep a record** of any special dates they noted and send a card. Most people don't expect a church to remember their special days. Be a church that shows you care.



## SECTION TWO

# WHAT DO YOU ALREADY HAVE?



Often your next great outreach idea is as close as your church's own physical resources. What does your church have? A building? Gym? Field? Kitchen? Chairs? Churches across the country have used their existing resources to move beyond their own needs to launch a creative outreach into their community. Let these ideas spark your creativity, too.

# LEND A CHAIR

Got chairs? What church doesn't? Even if you don't have a building, you have folding chairs. Here's your chance to create a connection point—offer chairs people can borrow for free so that the next time someone's having a party or event, they turn to your church. Your church can serve your community, whether it's a celebration like a wedding reception or baby shower, or difficult times, such as a memorial service.

## ORGANIZING AN OUTREACH—OF CHAIRS

- **Start** with what you have.

Count your chairs so that when people call, you can let them know immediately if you can accommodate their need. Make sure each chair is in working condition.

- **Make magnets** that say, "Need Chairs for Your Next Event or Party? We've Got Them." Make sure the word "FREE" is front and center. Include your church's name and contact information (the number or e-mail they should contact for the chairs). The magnets can also mention your other services: weddings, funerals, prayer chapel, counseling services, support groups, etc.

- **Blanket your community** with the magnets. Pass them out at

large community events and at parks, and include them in any gift bags you give to first-time guests. Ask members to give them to their friends and neighbors, as well as take them to the office. Many office lunchrooms offer a place where items like these can be left.

- **Ask a volunteer** or church secretary to coordinate the calendar. Making this a one-person job will help avoid confusion and any scheduling conflicts.

- **When someone calls**, let them know where and when to pick up the chairs and when (date and time) they should be returned. The inevitable question, "There is no rental fee?" offers a good opportunity to say, "We

just want to be a church that serves our community.”

- **If you have enough** people with trucks, volunteer to deliver the chairs. If not, make sure a church member is there to greet whoever picks them up. Ask him or her to fill out a contact card, including the date of the event and purpose. Make the picking-up

and returning process quick and convenient.

- **In your follow-up** correspondence, personalize the letter or card: “We hope your bridal shower on X date was a hit!” Include any information about upcoming church activities as well as a “Free Chairs” magnet or flier.



# BIG GIFTS FOR FIRST-TIME GUESTS

When it comes to church guests, more may just be more. The visitor gift is a tool that many churches use to say welcome and to help guests remember their visit. But visitors won't remember if the gift is little or insignificant. So go BIG. Make sure the gift, and consequently your church, can be seen and remembered.

## MAKING IMPRESSIONS WITH GOOD GIFTS

- **Estimate the costs** for your church and budget. If your church has five visitors a week, monthly costs for a visitor gift program can be as low as \$20.

- **Decide** if the gift will be given to the guest at church or sent later in the mail. Some items will mail easier than others.

- **All gifts** should be labeled with your church's name, logo and perhaps even contact information.

- **Consider** the gift's durability. Will your gift hit the trash before visitors even get in their car to head home? You want something that lasts, not for a day, but perhaps weeks, months or even years.

- **Consider** the gift's message. A sports bottle may suggest that your

church is active, and a first-aid kit may say that your church is helpful.

- **Consider** the season. Summer is a great time for can coolers. Winter is ideal for a bag of Pura Vida coffee and/or a latte mug.

- **Other ideas:** include a mail opener, flashlight, glue stick, bouncy ball, note pad with pencils, jar of honey.

- **Places to look:**

Goldman promotions:

**goldmanpromotions.com/  
vannasharp**

Heavenly Honey Farms:

**honeyangels.com**

J&S Specifics: **jsspecifics.com**

Oriental Trading Company:

**orientaltrading.com**

Pura Vida: **puravidacoffee.com**

# LUNCH CLUB FOR STUDENTS

Does your church have a kitchen? Consider providing a “lunch club” for high school students at your church. This idea works great for churches located near an area high school.

Pick a day of the week, and provide a lunch for students for free. Youth leaders, existing youth group members and non-churched youth are given a chance to interact and build relationships. Encourage your youth group to invite unchurched friends. Students relish the opportunity to eat somewhere other than their school cafeteria.

## CREATING THE RIGHT MENU

- **Advertise** with fliers and posters at the high school or local ice cream shops, malls and movie theaters where youth hang out regularly.

- **Contact** the high school to find out at what time and for how long lunch is served.

- **Enlist volunteers** available during the day to grocery shop, cook, serve the meals and clean up. The number of volunteers will depend on the interest shown in the first few weeks.

- **Make the menu** healthy, but fun. Consider ordering in pizza once

a month.

- **Ask** existing youth group members to commit to coming and bringing a friend to help get the club up and running.

- **Invite** youth group leaders and/ or ministers from your church and surrounding areas to come each week and mingle with the youth.

- **Before students** head back to school, offer up a prayer for guidance and protection throughout the next school week. Invite all the youth back the next week for lunch, as well as weekly youth night, Bible study, church services, etc.

# MAKEOVER FOR VBS

Sixty-seven percent of all parents need some form of summer care for their children, according to a recent United Way/University of Georgia study examining the childcare needs of two-parent and single-parent families with school-aged children.

Can you help? If you have a VBS each year, you can. Crosswinds Church in San Marcos, Calif., renamed their VBS a free, off-track Christian day camp and promoted it to the local public schools. In a week, the camps filled up with more than 200 kids, mostly unchurched, and a dozen families joined the church as a result of the camp.

## TRANSFORMING YOUR EXISTING VBS

- **Send fliers** to kids via local schools which read, “Day Camp: Your kids will be on summer break for X number of weeks. Let us entertain them a week for FREE.” The key is to advertise a day camp rather than a traditional vacation Bible school.

- **Choose** a themed curriculum, as you would for a regular VBS program.

- **Enlist** the appropriate number of volunteers based on the number of children and class size.

- **Host a pre-party** for the volunteers. Use this time to pray, train and even have the volunteers try some of the crafts the children

will be making or the snacks they will be eating.

- **Each day of camp**, send children home with information on a family-focused ministry at your church (Sunday school, upcoming sermon series, etc.).

- **On the last day** of camp, host a carnival-like party children can invite their parents to. Kids can practice a skit or song throughout the week and present it to their parents.

- **Invite families back** for future church events and for services with family-oriented sermon series. Pass out connection cards as they leave.

# CHAPLAINS IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

We hear about the chaplains in the military or chaplains for sports teams, but do you have other places in your community where pastors or retired pastors can serve as chaplains to a group of people or a place? Think about your area. Do you have an airport, a business, a hospital, a fire department, a coffee shop or even a laundromat? All offer opportunities to meet unchurched people in your community and learn their needs.

## ORGANIZING A CHAPLAINCY MINISTRY

- **Identify** retired pastors or qualified lay leadership in your church or area. Approach this person or people to introduce the idea. They'll likely already have areas of interest—places they frequent or people groups they have a passion for reaching. If not, be ready with options.

- **Equip** the would-be chaplain with counseling training and any other resources they may need for their ministry.

- **Encourage** pastors to visit a place of interest, such as an airport or local business. Preferably, they'll have already built a few relationships there before they approach someone.

- **A chaplain** program should be based on the needs of the people it serves. Some chaplains attend weekly staff meetings and offer a prayer at the end. The group knows it can call on its chaplain when they need to talk or want prayer. Some simply “hang out,” offering prayer support and services during operating hours. They may regularly eat lunch or dinner with the staff and even host a Bible study.

- **Get** the congregation involved. Invite your chaplain(s) to offer a five- to 10-minute testimony during a worship service of how God is using them in their role to serve and reach the unchurched in their community.

# ORGAN CONCERTS ORCHESTRATE

Does your church have an organ that rarely gets used? Lake Avenue Church in Pasadena, Calif., has a beautiful pipe organ. But rather than simply letting the costly instrument collect dust all week, the church has engaged local and even internationally recognized organists to perform free lunchtime concerts in the summer. The events typically target senior adults, and run as outreach events. Here are some tips to help you put your organ (or perhaps another musical instrument) to use, as well.

## MAKING MEANINGFUL MUSIC

- **Invite** a well-trained organist to prepare a selection of music. Classic hymns may be the core of the performance, but even classical or popular music can be a good choice. The concert can run 30 to 60 minutes.

- **Invite** your senior adult group to host the event and provide a luncheon following the concert. Potluck is fine, but consider catering or a prepared meal to add a touch of class.

- **Make sure** your host provides a warm welcome and encourages “table talk.”

- **Promote the event** throughout your community using announcements in the local paper, and on radio and bulletin boards. Post fliers at the local senior center, library,

retirement communities and other local gathering places. Many senior adults have discretionary time and desire a social connection.

- **Offer a raffle prize** and use the entries as a way to gather contact information for follow-up to your guests.

- **Not all senior adults** have a church foundation or faith in Christ, as is often assumed. In this day of praise choruses and contemporary worship, beautiful hymns richly played on an organ can provide a powerful and moving connection to childhood faith, and perhaps open the door to a renewed spiritual connection for many senior adults in your community.

# SPACE THAT SERVES

Open your church doors, and you'll find the unchurched in your community more *open* to coming in. Offer your church auditorium, or other available space, to be used for community events such as plays, art shows or chamber of commerce events.

Christ Community Church in Ottawa, Ill., has a two-story conference center complete with state-of-the-art video and audio equipment. During the week, the church allows the space to be used by a local radio affiliate, the chamber of commerce and Ottawa's Visitor's Bureau. Although this initiative was merely a display of hospitality on the church's part, opening the door to the community has encouraged many seekers to connect in more spiritual ways.

## OPENING THE DOORS

- **Evaluate your** church's facility. What space/rooms are open and when?
  - **Enlist a volunteer** who will be the point of contact for those interested in using the space. This person will be in charge of managing the schedule.
  - **Contact** key community leaders or offices such as the chamber of commerce, visitor's bureau or community center. Let them know you have space available if they may need it. Provide them contact information if they are interested.
- **Announce** that you have available space in your weekly bulletin and announcements, as well as on your church Web site. Simple word-of-mouth started by your members helps.
- **Each time** the space is used, enlist volunteers to be at the church during the allotted time. These volunteers can open doors, show people the space, help them with anything they may need, and also lock up at the end. Be sure to set

time limits (two to three hours) on using the space.

- **Before the group** leaves, have volunteers pass out cards thanking those who attended the event for

allowing the church to serve its community, they should also invite them back. Also, provide church information, including service times and ministries.

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# CARING FOR THE INCARCERATED

Is your church located near a prison? This proximity can be a great opportunity for outreach, as many churches in Pennsylvania have discovered. Mother's Voice, a ministry located in Leesport, Pa., works with area churches to help incarcerated mothers stay connected to their children. Church volunteers record incarcerated mothers reading their children's favorite bedtime stories; the recordings are then given to the children in hopes that the sound of their mothers' voices will "rock" them to sleep.. This is only one way to show those behind bars that your church cares. Providing worship services in prisons and one-on-one mentoring are also appreciated.

## RAISING THE PRISON BARS

- **Contact** the prison, and let them know that your church is interested in befriending prisoners. Ask about visiting times or when a group of volunteers may be welcome. Inquire about the needs and desires of the prisoners. The prisoners in a women's facility will have different needs than those in a men's facility.

- **Choose** a particular ministry. Perhaps it's providing a worship service for prisoners once each month. Maybe you can start your own recording ministry, similar to Mother's Voice. Or you may just enlist volunteers willing to visit and correspond with prisoners on a

monthly or weekly basis.

- **Enlist** volunteers based on your ministry focus.

- **Open your ministry** to the rest of the community. Other churches' members may be interested in participating as well as the unchurched in your community. Let your community know about it via fliers left at grocery stores, laundromats, gyms, etc. A prison ministry can also serve as a connecting point among neighbors.

- **Be consistent.** Make your ministry weekly or monthly and stick to it. Provide an example of God's reliability and care.

## SECTION THREE

# FRESH IDEAS FOR OUTREACH



In each issue of *OUTREACH* magazine, we share the stories of churches across the country that have applied innovation to outreach and are connecting with people in fresh, authentic ways. How can your church become the spiritual center of your community—a place that everyone knows they can turn to at their point of need? Here are some ideas to get your wheels turning.

# MOVIES UNDER THE STARS

If you have families in your community, then you have people looking for fun, low-cost ways to spend time together. A family of four who goes to a Friday night movie together spends a minimum of \$35—even without movie snacks or dinner before. Here's your chance to be a source of entertainment. Host an outdoor movie night either in the summer or fall. There's something about movie-watching under a canopy of stars that makes even the most ordinary flick something special. The 55-member Emmanuel Baptist Church in Tyrone, Pa., hosted a movie night that drew 200 people from the community.

## LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION

- **Contact** Christian Video Licensing International ([cvli.org](http://cvli.org)) to purchase a licensing agreement. Take time to read the terms and buy a license that fits your needs.
- **Find a location.** You'll need a large, light-colored wall or large screen; room for seating and picnics; and access to electricity. If you select a public location, check with the city to get the proper permits. Emmanuel hosts its events in Tyrone's downtown area. The church found a white, stucco building with a large parking lot and arranged with the owners to use the area.
- **Pick** a family-friendly movie (you'll need a DVD). Emmanuel saw greater crowd response to a cartoon ("Monsters, Inc.") than an action-oriented drama.
- **Ask local businesses** to donate door prizes. On the night of the event, ask attendees to complete an entry form for several prize drawings. The forms provide visitor follow-up information.
- **Purchase refreshments** (popcorn, drinks, hot dogs) for the night.
- **Promote** your free event, but refrain from any paid advertising identifying the movie title because

the CVLI license does not allow it. Print fliers and place them in local businesses and cards that members can give out in the community. On the day of the event, Emmanuel puts up extra banners around the building.

- **Plan** a brief introduction. Before “Monsters, Inc.” started,

Emmanuel’s pastor introduced himself and the church, and spoke briefly about fear.

- **Have members** wear shirts with the church logo, signaling to visitors who they can come to with questions about the church or its ministries. Make sure you have church brochures available to hand out.

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# HOPE IN CANCER'S PATH

How many people in your church are directly or indirectly affected by cancer? Now, think about how many people in your community are dealing with cancer—many who have no spiritual anchor. Your church could be a place of healing for hundreds of people.

Christ the King Catholic Church in Mesa, Ariz., partnered with the American Cancer Society to launch a ministry, Healing Through the Body of Christ, to cancer patients and their families. Through it, they offer informational resources, prayer support and a one-on-one outreach program that pairs cancer survivors with people recently diagnosed with cancer, or with family members.

## CONSTRUCTING A HEALING PLACE

- **Contact** your local American Cancer Society (ACS) chapter and ask them for resources (pamphlets, books, Web sites) to use during volunteer training, and to give out to patients and families.

- **Recruit** 20 to 30 volunteers. Promote the ministry in your church bulletin and any e-mail newsletters. If possible, make an announcement during a weekend worship service. You may also want to contact surrounding churches and post fliers. Include a contact number and/or meeting specifics for potential volunteers.

- **Host** an initial meeting to describe the ministry—who it will serve and how it will function. Have ACS reps on hand to train volunteers on how to answer questions and offer general information.

- **Post or leave fliers** describing the ministry (you may want to call it a support group) in stores, drycleaners, the local doughnut shop, as well as doctors' offices and oncology centers. Make sure people know they aren't required to attend church or even believe in God to participate. Keep

the contact number or Web site front and center.

- **When people call** for information, tell them about your support groups and when they meet. Ask them if they'd like to be paired with a cancer survivor.

- **Each month**, host a lunch or get-together for your volunteers. Ask a few people to talk about their recent experiences with the ministry and encourage everyone to ask questions and to learn from each others' experiences.

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# MONDAY NIGHT MISSION TRIP

While mission trips abroad often elicit excitement, worshippers don't always approach community evangelism with the same enthusiasm. Liven up your regular outreach activities with monthly, one-night "mission trips" to a nearby low-income neighborhood. Abundant Life Baptist Church in Lee's Summit, Mo., promotes its Monday mission trips like an overseas block party that worshippers can participate in. The secret is to hype the events as though they are regular mission trips abroad.

## PLANNING FOR MONDAY ADVENTURES

- **Choose** a neighborhood with many families. (Before using an apartment complex, secure the management's permission.)

- **To promote** the event, distribute fliers. Talk about the trip during services and organize a "mission team" the same way you'd approach an overseas mission trip.

- **Designate volunteer leaders** for each area (invitations, refreshments, games, follow-up) and a speaker/team to present the Gospel.

- **Create** door hangers or invitation fliers the team can distribute a week before and the night of the event in the neighborhood.

- **Purchase food.** Cooking out

is always a good option. The smell of burgers and hot dogs on the grill is a crowd magnet.

- **Plan games** and entertainment as simple as basketball and face-painting, or as elaborate as carnival rentals, based on the location and your budget.

- **Offer information** about your church and its services to parents. Arrange for rides to weekend worship services for interested attendees, and be prepared to offer aid to those who may ask for it later.

- **Ask** team members to share about the "trip" during a service and post photos from the night on church bulletin boards and Web site.

# COMMUNITY JOB CARE CENTER

Ever thought of employment assistance as a ministry? How many people in your community are jobless or unable to find a good-paying job? Your church has a prime opportunity to reach out to the jobless and unskilled in an area that physically, mentally and spiritually affects people's lives, how they view the world and how they look at your church. Consider organizing a job care and computer training center in your church.

## STARTING AN EMPLOYMENT MINISTRY

- **Identify the needs** in your community. Do people need ESL classes, help with writing a resume, clothing for job interviews? Your center may focus on teaching basic computer skills (keyboarding, word processing, spread sheets, basic accounting), as well as "soft skills," including how to dress for an interview, interviewing techniques, phone skills and interview follow-up tips.

- **Recruit** a team of volunteers (40 people) every six months who will work with participants and staff the computer center. Ask participants to call the center to schedule an appointment with a volunteer. If your church is small, consider partnering with a few other local

churches.

- **Ask church members** for donations of professional clothing, used, working computers and printers that can easily be updated with new software. Use any monetary donations to cover overhead costs, including computer paper, printing cartridges and Internet lines.

- **Promote the center** in your community with fliers, newspaper ads and bulletin board notices in grocery stores and unemployment agencies.

- **When people** start coming, welcome everyone, and don't turn anyone away. Volunteers should greet them, assess their needs and work

with them. Encourage volunteers to be patient and conversational.

- **Make sure** you have plenty of coffee, water or other refreshments available.

- **As they leave**, ask everyone to complete a contact card. This may also be a good time to set their next appointment if they prefer to work with a specific volunteer.

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# SERVICE MADE EASY

Most typical Americans spend Saturdays running personal errands and catching up on their housework. But the first day of the weekend looks significantly different for volunteers with United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan. Between 100 and 300 volunteers spend their first and third Saturdays involved in community service projects, including helping out in soup kitchens or health fairs, painting inner-city churches, assembling teacher appreciation gifts and teaching youth soccer clinics. All of these are part of FaithWork—mission projects pre-arranged by UMC of the Resurrection. The flexible, yet scheduled, opportunities attract the churched and the unchurched who simply want to make a difference.

## STREAMLINING COMMUNITY SERVICE

- **Contact local organizations,** schools and urban congregations asking for projects. Eight to 10 community projects should be available to volunteers each Saturday. Two of these can be held on your church grounds, for parents with young children wanting to participate.

- **Advertise.** Let your neighborhood know that service projects will be available on certain days each month. They're pre-arranged, so those interested need only show up. Provide members

with fliers to pass out in their neighborhoods.

- **Enlist volunteer leaders.** For each project, you'll need a leader willing to oversee the transportation, necessary equipment and other details. Many of the projects can run continuously.

- **When people arrive,** ask them to sign up for the project they wish to participate in.

- **Before** the groups leave for their assigned projects, provide a 15-minute devotion and prayer asking God to bless the service done on that day.

# CARS AND BARBECUES

A classic car show might be “classic” for your community—particularly for the men. And even if they’re not the most avid “motorhead” or “rodder,” chances are you’ll attract them anyway if you turn the show into a barbecue, as well.

Salem Avenue Baptist in Rolla, Mo., sees more than 1,200 men, many of who bring their families, at its annual car show. About half of the attendees and participants are unchurched and have returned to the church for other events or ministries.

## PREPARING FOR A CAR-B-CUE

- **Budget** between \$1,200 and \$1,500 for the day to make the event free to the community.
- **Advertise the event**, which can be held on a Saturday afternoon, in your local papers. Web sites such as [autoswalk.com](http://autoswalk.com) and [carshownews.com](http://carshownews.com) allow you to list your show. Incorporate a wide spectrum of categories: cars, trucks, motorcycles and even plastic model cars. Those groups can be broken down into years, automakers, unfinished, etc.
- **Enlist volunteers.** You’ll need about 60 to 80 volunteers, depending on the size of your show.

The main job of volunteers should be to mingle.

- **For the barbecue,** enlist volunteers to buy, prepare and serve food. Be sure to provide picnic tables and chairs for people to relax, socialize and eat.
- **Use your church** grounds or parking lot to display the cars. If you have a gymnasium, you can maximize the space to display the motorcycles or plastic models. Consider alerting neighbors to the event and the potential increase in street parking.
- **A sound system** can play Christian music throughout the

event. The system also allows you to announce the contests and winners of various categories as selected by participants and spectators.

- **All categories** should have first-, second- and third-place winners. Trophies and wall clocks

are good prizes. All entrants can be given a magnetic card with the church's logo, phone number and service times.

- **Keep** the children entertained by providing easy games, such as a bean bag toss, with prizes.

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# SOCCER STATIONS SHOW CARE

As the end of summer approaches, most family-oriented communities get “Soccer Fever,” with soccer moms (and dads) making the weekly mini-van pilgrimage to their local fields to spend endless hours in the sun watching their kids play. Capitalize on this. Say “We care about what’s important to our community,” by hosting a weekly soccer “care station.”

## STATION KICK OFF

- **Get permission** from your local youth sports association to host the station. Make sure they understand that the booth is designed to serve, not proselytize.
- **Create** a small booth with a table, a canopy and a large sign that says “Care Station” and “hosted by (church name).”
- **Recruit** a rotating team of booth hosts to set up and man the booth each Saturday throughout the season (don’t forget the play-offs).
- **You can decide** what to offer at your station but some suggestions are large containers of drinking water so players can refill their bottles, loaners of spare cleats, shin guards and socks in varying sizes and colors.
- **Simple first aid** supplies including Band-Aids, antiseptic, ice packs, and towels—even a cot will be used and appreciated.
- **The station** could also offer free cell phone use and “lost parent/child” services.
- **One host** should be trained to offer prayer support or lay counseling; advertise the availability of a “soccer chaplain.”
- **If it’s really hot**, run a mister hose around the sun shade, and you’re sure to attract a crowd.
- **Make sure** your church also sponsors at least one team or, if possible, a team in each division.
- **Have** church connection cards available in the station to hand out to station visitors.

# WALK/RUN A 5K

More than 7.7 million people participate in 5Ks or similar events each year. And a small group of runners at First Baptist Church in Oviedo, Fla. (FBCO), knew their community included many of these people. They decided to host their own 5K. The church's first race drummed up so much attention that they've made it an annual event, drawing 600 runners and walkers—only 20 of whom are church members. Instead, nearly 100 church members volunteer, giving FBCO a chance to interact with its community, as well as community visibility.

## TRAINING FOR THE RACE

- **Budget** around \$2,500. FBCO charges participants between \$20 and \$30 depending on when they register. Children under 10 are allowed to register for free.

- **Advertise** your 5K as any other secular-sponsored 5K. Market it where other 5Ks are marketed. Often runners receive packets or fliers after local community runs, alerting them to upcoming runs and events in the area—be sure yours is included.

- **Consider contacting** a local athletics store for help in creating a registration form and advising volunteers on how to clock and time participants. Recognize the store you

partner with in the same way you recognize your sponsors. Also, enlist active runners and walkers in your church to lend their experience and expertise.

- **Ask members'** businesses to sponsor the event in exchange for printing the companies' names and logos on banners and pre-event fliers, as well as the backs of T-shirts that participants receive the day of the event.

- **Enlist members** to volunteer in different areas: publicity, marketing, set-up, signage, registration tables, food and water bottles, traffic directing, mingling and clean up.

- **Map out** and secure a course in

the area surrounding your church; be sure to contact city officials to approve the course. Also, contact the local police station to help block off portions of roads, if necessary.

- **Select** a local organization—such as a food bank, crisis nursery or cancer association—to benefit from the proceeds.

- **For children,** provide fun runs

ranging from 100 to 800 yards depending on the age group.

- **Offer bagels,** granola bars and juices after the race to encourage people to stay and mingle.

- **In addition to** T-shirts, consider giving away water bottles labeled with your church and sponsors' information.

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# SCRAPBOOKING MOMENTS

Now a \$3 billion industry, scrapbooking is in! Nearly 25 million people scrapbook in the United States, and there are more than 3,000 scrapbooking stores nationwide. Bring women into your church to help them turn their memories and photos into lasting impressions. The relationships built at a scrapbooking event may also make lasting impressions for the unchurched women who attend.

Host a two- to three-hour event on a Saturday morning or afternoon (when husbands are generally home to watch the kids) or on a week night, but consider offering childcare.

## CROPPING A SCRAPBOOKING EVENT

- **Pass fliers out** to the women in your congregation to share with family and friends. Also leave stacks of them in grocery stores, libraries, drycleaners, etc. The flier should include: your event's theme, any supplies participants should bring, contact information of the leader for those with questions and childcare information. Depending on how you customize the event, charge participants \$10 to \$15 for the necessary supplies.

- **Select a theme.** For example, at summer's end, your church can host a summer vacation scrapbooking event. Holidays like

Christmas, Easter and Halloween are also good themes.

- **If your church** is large, chances are you have members involved in scrapbooking. Check to see if they're willing to lead or help lead the event.

- **Gather supplies** in advance. Supply cutters and scissors. Purchase the necessary paper stock, stickers and pens (color and style depending on theme selected) ahead of time.

- **Consider contacting** a local craft store, such as Michaels or Archiver's. Often, stores will host the event at a discounted price. This eliminates the need for gathering supplies and also brings the event

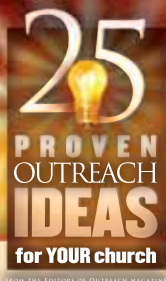
out into the community rather than inside the church.

- **This event can** turn into a monthly ministry and fellowship complete with coffee and breakfast on Saturday mornings. Moms will love the hands-on craft and

time to come together with other women.

- **For more resources**, visit **[remindersoffaith.com](http://remindersoffaith.com)** and **[scrapbookyourlife.com](http://scrapbookyourlife.com)**.

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# MAKING CONNECTIONS THAT COUNT

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The best outreach ideas aren't necessarily the most expensive, high profile, or elaborate. Real outreach happens when Christians demonstrate the love of Christ in ways that are meaningful and tangible to unbelievers, magnetically drawing them to the Lord—often through the channel of a local church.

## **We Asked Churches Across America ...**

In each issue of *OUTREACH* magazine, we tell the stories of hundreds of churches and the diverse ways they are shining the light of Christ in their communities. Included in this booklet are step-by-step instructions and resources for 25 creative outreach ideas, already working in churches across America (plus some new ones!), including:

**Photographic Connecton.** Generate a return visit from your Christmas/Easter-only crowd with this “memorable” idea.

**Visitor Gift?** Make It Big. Guarantee that your visitors don't slip out unnoticed.

**Unconventional Chaplaincy.** Where could you become a chaplain in your town? Fire department? Senior center? How about a local Starbucks?

**Magnetic Church.** Could you get everyone in your community to put your church information on their fridge? Give away magnets at local events.

**VBS Makeover.** Make your regular VBS an outreach tour-de-force. Here's the way one church did it.

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*PLUS 20 MORE FRESH AND PROVEN IDEAS!*

FROM THE EDITORS OF *OUTREACH* MAGAZINE