



## OUTREACH IDEAS

*“At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.”*

— Colossians 4:3-4

**C**hurch consultants typically list the following times of the year as the high-water marks for church attendance: Easter, Christmas (and especially Christmas eve), Mother’s Day, and special days planned by the church (e.g. Fall Kickoff with football theme). Studies by Outreach Magazine routinely affirm that 6 in 10 Americans are more likely to go to church during the Christmas season. These sources highlight the need for the local church to make Christmas one of its top 2 outreach moments.

How might this be accomplished? Using the materials offered here increases the focus of your local congregation on particular goals especially designed to take advantage of people’s heightened spiritual interest. These resources are best-practice suggestions but need to be carefully contextualized for your locale.

### LETTING PEOPLE KNOW

In the business world, this is called advertising or marketing. In the party world, it’s called an invitation. The main goal is to let people know you have something fun and meaningful happening, and you would be honored if they would join you at it. Here are a few outreach ideas to help create opportunity for invitation.

#### **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social media is the medium of much of the conversation in our country—both good and not so good. See the resource called “Social Media for Your Church” for more help in this area.

#### **LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE**

Loving people requires getting to know them. One of the most effective ways to get to know people is to host an open house right where you live; hence the name: Love Where You Live. Here’s one way to do this. Have a few church families form an open house team (maybe even a small group or a Sunday School class). They choose a location, create a party theme, make and distribute invitations, and then love people when they arrive. Have the team be sensitive to

anyone who shares a need the group could later help fulfill. The party can be a come-and-go but have a gift drawing at a particular hour as a focus of the evening.

#### **SUPPORTING SINGLE MOMS**

Christmas is often a difficult time for single moms. Perhaps your church can plan a Saturday to offer much needed and appreciated services to single moms. For example, the men’s ministry could perform oil changes, car cleaning, or other basic automotive services. Childcare could be offered so moms can do some Christmas shopping or have a couple of hours of silence at a local coffee shop (you might even give them a gift certificate). If you really want to go the extra mile, you could host a pamper me night in which

local vendors bring in food, do massages, give away gifts, and other comforting things to show your love and support for these women. You might even considering giving away Christmas trees to families who need one.

### **HOST AN ART MARKET**

For those who are artistic, you could gather a group of local artists to show off their work. Host the event in a suitable venue, like the church or a local community center. Serve themed refreshments and perhaps let people judge the entries and/or buy the art. Don't limit the event to paintings, but also include photography, kid's art, sculpture, poetry, etc. Remember, you need to advertise (invite) so people will know and be motivated to participate.

### **THE CAROLING COMPANY**

If you have a musical church, you might revamp the older tradition of caroling. Organize your singers into small groups who can sing in parts. Dress them up in some kind of Christmas themed apparel (Old English Dickens theme, Charlie Brown characters, shepherds, etc.) and send them to various community venues. Take some folks who don't sing to distribute invite cards or to direct them towards some other event your church is hosting.

### **PARADE GIVEAWAYS (OR COMMUNITY EVENT)**

Rather than create your own event, find a fun and strategic way to connect to an event your community is already doing. If it's a parade, maybe you can have a float. If it's a Christmas festival, perhaps you can have a booth to give away food, beverages, toys, or whatever fits the event.

### **SIGNS**

Getting attention is one aspect of the advertising/inviting process. Many churches have become "invisible" to the community simply due to their long-term presence. When we have a worthwhile promotion, like the Good News Campaign, it is helpful to get people to notice the church again. Road signs are a great—and inexpensive—way for people to see (re-see) your church. Use the design included or make your own using the copyright free art.

### **INVITE CARDS**

People need tools to spur their ability to invite people to the seasonal activities. Inside this kit of resources are several print-it-yourself invite card designs. Alternatively, you can order full color, customized invite cards from the following partner: Jenifer Lee, Cr8tvi Design, 480.326.2931 or e-mail [designer@cr8tvi.com](mailto:designer@cr8tvi.com).

## **CONCLUSION**

The art of the invite often depends upon three factors:

- Is the event something interesting to the people you're inviting? Asking teens to go to a children's party might lack connection (or maybe not!). Make sure what you offer has appeal to those you sought to invite.
- Is the method of inviting (advertising) compelling? In other words, when people see your marketing materials and invitation method, do they say, "This looks interesting; I want to go." If it doesn't excite their interest, the event may fall flat no matter how well you've planned it.
- Are you inviter credible? Does your church have a presence in the community people trust? If not, don't worry; keep working to rebuild this credibility. Good events well publicized often serve as vehicles of trust building.

Many are praying for your congregation's Christmas success.

Godspeed!