

Church Outreach and Ministry Opportunities

Reach your community needs: set up a prayer station at your outreach events.

Making a prayer station service available allows people who want prayer to sit and visit with local church prayer volunteers. Any congregation can develop a prayer station through this simple step-by-step layout of how to setup a prayer station.

Why pray? Praying with a person at your prayer station gives God an open door to touch a person's life. The prayer booth is an expression of a church's love for the community. As people visit the station, they will often share some kind of spiritual need. They will stay as long as they want or feel comfortable doing. Prayer volunteers might be able to hear their spiritual thirst (the underlying motive that people have to seek after God).

Evangelistic opportunity. Prayer booths like this are an opportunity for evangelism that is not aggressive. The guests and visitors expect to talk a little about their spiritual needs while visiting the prayer station. What is a prayer station or prayer booth? A prayer station is a simple place designated for free prayer to those who want it. It is an area clearly designated and staffed with trained volunteers from your church.

- It could be a table with a sign. Sometimes it is under a tent if it's outdoors. Or maybe just a collection of chairs.
- Many churches and mission teams have found a table helpful, as they can have a place for writing notes or displaying literature.
- Nothing elaborate, just a designated place in the same area where ministry outreach is occurring.
 - For example, if the prayer tent or station is on the property of the local church, the prayer station should be outside in the same area (NOT inside the church because it is outside the traffic pattern).

Prayer tent location. Where can you use a prayer booth or prayer station?

- **Prayer Station on the church grounds.** The amazing versatility of this prayer station is that it can be used wherever you are doing outreach on your church property.
For example:
 - Church block parties
 - Church yard sales / rummage sales
 - Any kind of festival or outreach that may happen have on church property.
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- **Prayer Station in the community.** Some other churches may choose to setup a prayer station at a more public setting, such as renting a tent at a public food festival, or just out on the street in an area of high foot traffic. As people pass by, some will stop in to pray and others will be curious.

Staffing the prayer station or booth. Form an *Outreach Prayer Team* and recruit volunteers who are skilled at praying with other people—people who are comfortable listening to the stories of other people and who have gifts of compassion and mercy.

- When a visitor comes to the prayer station, a simple welcome greeting is appropriate.
- Then, a question like, *“How can we pray for you?”* will often be sufficient to get the conversation going.
- Listen for the need and then take the time to pray with the person right there at that prayer station.

Prayer follow-up. After praying, there are a variety of other things that can be done. Here are some examples:

- Give literature about other community services that might help like food banks, shelters, medical clinics, etc.
- Talk more about the person’s spiritual journey and what they might want to do to grow.
- Give some literature about the local church and the worship services (schedule, time etc.).
- Gather contact information for follow up (if appropriate).
- Give out tracts, bibles, etc.

Other Areas of Potential Ministry

Guest Services / Hospitality

- **This is the first impression of your church.** You must excel here no doubt. People judge your church in a large part based on the first impression you give them.
 - For example, you could **have an outstanding sermon**, but if your **people weren’t friendly**, then a visitor likely won’t be back.
- Do you give an over-the-top welcome? Do you welcome people as soon as they pull on the property?
- Start by evaluating places where the guest may not receive an over-the-top experience and begin working to improve those areas.

Children’s Ministry

- Many people **looking for a church home will base their decision simply on the children’s ministry.**
- With access to all the latest gadgets and videos, children now look to **those things for their source of entertainment.**
 - Which means **churches must look for ways to use the latest technology** to reach and connect with kids at church.

Church Website

- Your church website is the very first impression many people have of your church before they even come to your facility. In fact, **many people will base their decision as to whether or not they’ll come to your church simply by looking at your website.**
- The key is someone needs to be looking at it. Your website is not something that, **once created, sits on the shelf and is never updated.**
 - It’s your **digital location and must receive care and attention just like the “hands-on” ministries receive.**

Assimilation / Connections / Guest Follow-Up

- People want to feel like they can belong. They want to connect.
- So many people **walk right out the back door of churches** because someone (somewhere along the process) **dropped the ball.**

- **Careful attention** to your processes and systems to for follow-up, ministry participation, and volunteerism **has to happen all the time.**

Visitors Center / Welcoming Visitors

Make the First-time Guests Feel Welcome and Informed

- **The first step is signage.** The first-time visitor check in area needs to have a sign so big that blind people feel its presence. **“FIRST TIME GUEST CHILDREN REGISTRATION,”** it should shout. Why be subtle here? The first time visitor desk should be stationed directly below that sign.
- **Reward first-time guests with a gift.** Soon after the church service, the **visitation team should make a follow-up personal home visit to all those who sign a visitor’s card.** A good idea may be to give them a church-branded coffee mug and a hand-written note. That kind of effort will make a good impression, and people will likely visit the church again. Coffee mugs are great, but so is a Dunkin Donuts gift card, a book that the church is reading, a Bible, a book that the pastor wrote, etc. There are so many options for thoughtful, small gifts for first-time visitors. Be creative. The amount of care you show for visitors will go a long way.
- **Be welcoming & open-handed.** Communicate to visitors that although you’d love them to come back to your church, **you care more that they get connected to a local church.** “If this isn’t the right church for you - though we hope that it is - we hope that you find another church that you can plug into.” Many pastors do this, and the effect of this is that people will love your church more.
- **Have in writing a clear pathway for connection.** Whether your church has small groups or Sunday school or some other model, **have a written pathway for people to get plugged in with your church.** Equip the greeters and ushers with these flyers. Place them in the pews. Make it clear that you have a place to connect for people in every stage of life. Most people, especially guests, need to see the way forward before charging forward.