

Developing a Lay Ministry Action Plan

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The first step in preparing a lay ministry action plan is the process of writing a purpose statement. Here is one that we suggest might work for your church: *We, the people of the [insert church name] endeavour to encourage all believers to reach the lost people in our community with a credible offer of the gospel and teach them the doctrine that every believer is a minister and then strengthen the family by helping raise up Godly men.*

Now we need the actual action plan—we've got to get the ball rolling. Here are some simple steps to consider.

Find the will of God. The best to begin is to get with a few people who want the laity to be trained and mobilized and begin to pray. You could have a prayer summit or just a few evenings together to really pray about the direction of ministry in your church. You will become kindred spirits with these people who want a vision, strategy, and plan for ministry. Ask God for a plan to create momentum among laity and how to sustain this momentum for the long haul.

Look at where you are now. Take a hard look at where your church is spiritually. What outreach ministries are taking place in the church? How many members? How many workers are in lay ministry? How are they gifted? Conduct a spiritual gifts survey. You will realize that there are different groups in the church. Some are uninvolved and plan to stay that way. Some are on the “fringe.” They know about God but are only “Sunday Christians.” They are either barely inside or just outside the door of the church. Lay ministry author Os Guinness calls these people “the un-discipled disciples.” What would it take to get these people involved? Don't be upset with people because they are not more spiritually mature. This is one of the main reasons for lay leadership in the local church; to help train equip others for ministry.

Determine where you want to go. Your vision statement says, “Our members are ministers and we are to reach the lost.” All right, but how do we do it? What will it take to make lay ministry a reality in our church? Set some realistic goals for ministry. What would you like to do? Think about “inside” and “outside.” Think about what you want to do inside the church. Maybe you could begin a greeters ministry, train altar workers or teach an evangelism class. You could begin a LifeBuilders men's ministry. Then consider what you would like to do outside the church. You will need a visitation program. Consider starting “Lighthouses”, where two or three are asked to map their neighbourhood and begin to pray for and minister to each home in their immediate area. (see *Becoming a Lighthouse of Prayer* at www.churchleadership.org. Write down some realistic goals and get started. Remember: If you do what you always do, you will get what you always got!

Create momentum for ministry. To get people in motion we need an event that creates “church-scale” momentum. We sometimes call these “catalytic events.” Consider hosting events such as:

- *Lay Witness Week.* Schedule a week of preaching and teaching on lay ministry opportunities.
- *Lay Ministry Appreciation Sunday.* Use this opportunity to share the testimonies of some of the great lay workers that are involved in your church.
- *Parade Of Ministries.* This would be during a main worship service. Use this opportunity to highlight the ministries that are currently working in the church. Let the different groups join you on the platform and let a few people share a testimony of someone who got saved or blessed by that ministry.
- *A Lay Ministry Seminar.* This would be a Friday night, Saturday teaching seminar and Sunday celebration on lay ministry issues and opportunities. Bring in a special speaker from outside the area.
- *An Evangelism Festival.* Call a one-day celebration to take a look at every kind of ministry and outreach program that is feasible for your church to adopt.

Momentum events are motivational. They create excitement, interest, converts and they get the message out. They will help you give people what they need in the context of what they want. They will give you a quantum leap forward. Plan to hold at least two each year.

Maintain the momentum. Remember it takes a long time to make a disciple. People will stay with your leadership if they really believe that you and the other leaders care about them personally. The question here is “How do you keep people involved after the novelty wears off?” Create a variety of opportunities for involvement. The most meaningful change takes place in the context of church-based relationships. One of the best ways to foster their relationship is to get people involved in small groups. They can be in Bible or book study groups, accountability groups, issue-oriented study (divorce, grief, depression etc.) and prayer groups. Your ultimate goal is to keep people in the *Word* and in the *work*.

As you build the lay ministry action plan remember that truth flows through our heads to our hearts and out through our hands. People have to first understand what God wants to do in their lives, and then they need a change of heart and make a fresh commitment for service for Christ and then put it into practice. Someone has well said: “*God moves mountains - people carry the stones.*” (Joshua 14:12). Begin your plan of involving laity today!