

# 50

# 50 Ways to Missionally Engage The Mission Field Around Your Church

Compiled by Bob Crossman

## Introduction

Perhaps it may be true that twenty years ago, a church only needed to offer heart warming worship and music to spark a word of mouth process that would bring new people causing the church to grow and prosper.

However, today in an increasing number of mission fields, people are seeking more than inspiring worship with great music. In an increasing number of mission fields in the USA, even the “nones,” lost sheep, prodigals, and prospects somehow understand the heart of Matthew 25 and John Wesley’s “Works of Mercy.” Out of this intuition, they are only inclined to be a part of a church that is authentically “doing something,” getting blisters in Jesus’ name.

How can our churches continue to be faithful to Matthew 28 (*go make disciples, teaching and baptizing*) while experiencing an increasing faithfulness to Matthew 25 (*feed the hungry, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, and visit the prisoner*)?

In this context, we offer these “50 Ways to Missionally Engage the Mission Field Around Your Church.”

## Discovering Your Mission Field - Listen and Learn

- 1. You can not accurately discover your mission field if you only sit at a strategic planning table reading demographic reports. Demographic reports such as MissionInsite’s Quadrennial Report and Executive Report with Mosaic Types will give you hypothesis that must be checked out and tested in live conversations. Test these demographic hypotheses by walking around and spending time with the people who live in your mission field.
- 2. To begin this process - start with building relationships and trust. Do not start with big events with large numbers.
- 3. Ministries that fruitfully bless communities in Jesus’ name often arise out of unorganized, crazy and chaotic conversations where we listen for the hopes and dreams of people within a mission field.
- 4. Discover ways to spend time with individuals in your mission field. You might even sit in a park, diner or coffee shop. Hannah Estock sat at Venice Beach, California with a sign that read, “*Tell me your story and I will give you a dollar.*” Hannah was busy all afternoon, and a line of people formed to tell their story to Hannah. Engage with the people who accept your invitation, and slowly listen to their stories.
- 5. As you listen don’t let your pre-set ideas or pre-conceived notions shape the conversation. Rather, simply ask, “*What are the challenges, hopes, longings and dreams of your neighbors?*” Be willing to actively listen.
- 6. Introduce yourself to the Mayor, City Administrator, Chief of Police, Superintendent of Schools, Fire Department Chief, and School Principals. These people have tremendous influence in your mission field, and they need to know who you are, what you are doing, and that you want to help the mission field.
- 7. Following Nehemiah’s example (1:4), out of love and compassion for the mission field, spend significant time mourning over the brokenness, confessing the sins of the people, fasting, and prayer before the God of Heaven.

## Tools for Building Incarnational Relationships of Trust

- 8. Frederick Buechner, in *Wishful Thinking* writes, “*The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.*”
- 9. Engage a team to engage in these relationships, thereby multiplying the quantity and quality of this discovery process.
  - 10. As a covenant team, hold each other accountable in the faithful practice of Spiritual Disciplines.

- 11. Within the context of the programs already in place within your church, discover ways to create spaces for the possibility of incarnational relationships to happen.
  - 12. The participants in your English as a Second Language program;
  - 13. The neighborhood youth who play basketball in your parking lot;
  - 14. The parents who bring their children to your Annual Easter Egg Hunt;
  - 15. The households who utilize your food pantry and clothing bank;
  - 16. The household who lives next door to the church;
  - 17. The neighbors who participate in your Community Garden project;
  - 18. The families who receive your Annual Thanksgiving Baskets;
  - 19. The men who sleep under the Broadway Bridge each evening;
  - 20. The residents of your local Battered Women’s Shelter;
  - 21. The youth in the local Boys and Girls Club after-school program;
  - 22. The recipients of your Annual Angel Tree Program; and of course,
  - 23. The church custodian and lawn care workers.
- 24. As you observe and listen to an increasing number of private individuals and public officials - determine if there are clusters of the most pressing themes, dreams and challenges that face the people in your mission field / community.

## Boundaries and Conflict

- 25. Rather than approaching all of your local programs, start with the possibility of changing ONE of your missional gestures into a missional engagement.
- 26. Learning from that first attempt, expand the invitation for incarnational relationships to a second and third ministry.
- 27. Your coach can help you address the need for boundaries within these relationships so they do not merge with the personal lives of your team members, and become exhausting.
- 28. Your coach and spiritual director can help you address the conflict that will arise as multiple passions (priorities) develop within the church out of these incarnational relationships.

### Organizing Through One to One Relationships

- 29. As the number of significant relationship encounters grows, continue to be open to creativity, risk, and the dream of transforming brokenness.
- 30. The journey toward a dream of transforming brokenness, should include two core principles:
  - 31. Be clear on what you are attempting to change.
    - What Issues, suffering, injustices, challenges or inequalities are you attempting to change? What are the concrete improvements in people's lives that will happen as a result of your work on this potential issue?
    - From among this list, which of these might be winnable, easy to understand, have a clear time-frame, non-divisive within your church, and consistent with your values and vision?
  - 32. Be clear on what you are building.
    - How are you creating and sustaining teams of leaders who can take action together for that change?
    - How are you discerning who is passionate about justice, has a vision for change, or is interested in service?
    - Have you connected with civic groups, community leaders, local businesses, companies, organizations, and the shakers and movers in your mission field?
    - Create the team by face to face conversations, listening for their passion, vision, and stories - then inviting them to help you.
    - Rule of 1/3's: You will need to have face to face contact with 63 people to find 21 who are willing to engage, and find 7 out of the 21 who will be fully engaged in the team's project.
    - Begin a "domino effect" by empowering and inspiring these early team members to extend the invitation to additional team members.
    - Strive to "bring the church council and congregation along" so the team does not get too far ahead, and thereby loose support from the host church.
  - 33. Determine which of these clusters of the most pressing themes (*including dreams and challenges that face the people in your mission field / community*) are already being addressed by other programs and agencies.  
There is no need to "reinvent the wheel" if you can partner with another group or agency with whom you have common missional objectives.
  - 34. New churches will need to be sure they "act their age" and not take on missional ministries to the level that it distracts from the journey toward survival and sustainability. If the new church survives and thrives, then at that point it will have the people and financial resources to have even greater missional impact.
  - 35. Smaller membership churches, in order to more fully respond to the missional needs they discover, may need to find partners that can provide the additional people and financial resources.
  - 36. As you begin to respond to the brokenness revealed in the conversations and relationships, consider starting both direct mercy ministries and ministries that address the root causes of brokenness.

### Principles of Team Building and Effective Coalitions

- 37. A team is MORE THAN an email list or listserve; more than a committee that does little outside of meeting times; a group of people mandated by some other power to be on a committee; a group of people that are more interested in being "the representative" or some other role in a structure than in building relationships and doing real work with others; and more than a group that is disconnected from the people affected by the issue they are working on.

- 38. An effective team works together to come up with a common vision for this work and ministry. They are also clear about their shared passions, dreams, and hopes for change. An effective team can answer: "*One year from now, what is the concrete change in people's lives we want to see?*"
- 39. An effective team cares so deeply about this ministry, that they actively invite others to be part of this team. Two team members may have an idea, but two people can not sustain an ongoing ministry. Send the two to gather five people who are willing and able to engage, and then send the five to gather twelve - typically twelve people are needed to sustain most ongoing projects.
- 40. An effective team thinks of creative ways to engage the entire congregation and community in this ministry, not just themselves and those who would usually participate.
- 41. An effective team uses "we" language instead of "I" language when talking about this ministry.
- 42. An effective team quarterly reviews and re-engages with their common vision, passion, dream, and hope for change.

### Adding Discipleship to Community Relationships

- 43. Lack of positive relationships and unintended "us and them" attitudes have resulted in many churches frustration that hundreds of people each year visit their food bank or clothing bank or social justice ministry, but none of those same people ever attend their worship services on Sunday.
- 44. Some congregations have discovered that new people are uncomfortable entering a building that is three steps nicer than their apartment, or when cars in the parking lot or the dress code of the congregation are three steps nicer than those whom they are trying to begin reaching in their mission field. Asking members to drive their truck instead of their new car, and wearing casual clothes instead of their "Sunday Best" has helped some congregations more warmly welcome their neighbors to worship. Other congregations are adding discipleship systems at a second site where their intended audience is more comfortable.
- 45. A congregation in Wichita, Kansas offers a 30 minute worship after their English as a Second Language program each week. About 125 of the 150 ESL participants stay for worship each week.
- 46. In central Virginia, a new rural church, working with de-churched people, began as a movement to love and care for neighbors, GED classes and a Thrift Store. Only after the community relationships were built, did they begin to offer worship.
- 47. Mike Breen with 3DM has an amazing program of beginning with social justice program in a community, gathering 50 to 80 people in that program. Within 18 months, five to twelve of this group are ready to huddle around exploring spirituality and explore what it means to look at the world through the eyes of Jesus.
- 48. Several churches in the Dallas Metroplex have added bible studies and worship at 10am mid week or Saturday inside their clothing bank room, primarily directed toward households that have been using the clothing bank.
- 49. A congregation in Dayton, Ohio added a donut and coffee table to their weekly food & clothing bank. A church member with the gift of warm hospitality serves as the donut hostess, and she invites each person to stay for the thirty minute bible study that morning.
- 50. A congregation in Escondido, California discovered that inadvertently their food and clothing bank was communicating "*you are not worthy to come to worship, but you can come around to the back door and we will give you a handout.*" As a result, very few people were attending their Spanish Language worship service. They turned their program upside down, and now their cutting edge into the mission field is "come to worship." Today, their worship attendance, food bank and clothing bank have all grown exponentially.

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