

MAKING CONTACT

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PURPOSE

To provide a way for the local church to make contact with a substantial number of people with the expectation that:

1. Some will come to the church. It produces results!
2. The church people will have a sense of participation.
3. It is a great ministry project for some who cannot serve in other ways.

The use of the internet, email, websites, text messaging, etc., are all good things that we should use. Keep using them!

Personal Connection

There is a technique, proven to develop numerous, excellent, regular contact with a great number of people. *It works.* Yes, it does require more effort, attention to detail and the enlistment of a small group of volunteers. It is not as easy as the above mentioned communication techniques, but it is more personal and targets a very select group. I am the first to admit that the same basic technique *can* be used via email, but I strongly recommend the use of this particular approach once each month for twelve months, and then perhaps switch to an email data base. Email is very good, but since it can be done en-mass it does not necessary say *“This is personal. I am just an email address in the midst of a crowd.”* The approach I am suggesting makes a personal connection with the recipient. Allow me to explain how and why this works.

The Land Letter

Someone knows Someone

The technique is a *personal land mail letter* sent once each month. What makes this unique is that *everyone* who receives the letter has some kind of *connection with you and/or the people of your church.* In other words, they are not simply a “zip code” list of addresses.

The reason it is more personal is that the names and addresses are *collected from the people of your church and from contacts you have made in the community* and other places in the country. Ask your people to provide names and address of relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers, anyone they can think of. You will add to the list regularly. In this way there is a connection. Everyone knows someone. This helps make it personal.

Set a Goal

You need to set a numerical goal for the list.

As an example, when I took the pastorate of a church of twelve people in Colorado Springs, I set a goal of developing a mailing list of 2000 people. I knew the Postal Service required a minimum of 200 people to qualify for a non-profit mailing permit, which greatly reduces the cost of postage. That was my initial goal, but then I set a stream of other goals all the way to 2000 names. It took some time and energy and many reminders for the people but it continued to grow. As new people were added to the church they too were challenged to help by providing names. It took just over one year to gather over 2000 names. All this without the help of computers! (This was the old days!)

Using this method we added over 100 people to the church in the first year. *Our list contained not only people in Colorado Springs, but friends, relatives, and other pastors all over America. It was truly amazing how many of them referred people to our church! It is still used by many businesses and churches around the country.*

The Letter

Basically this method is a simple *one page letter* with three short paragraphs. *Paragraph one* should be a brief note on what has been happening as related to the church. *Paragraph two* should be what is going on at the present time. *Paragraph three* should take note of something interesting that is on the horizon. Money is never mentioned.

The letter should be on *church letterhead* with the usual information, such as church address, a.m. service time, phone number, email and website. *Do not* try to include a host of other information. This letter must be simple and to the point. They can always access your website or phone for more information.

The letter should have the *date* (the month, not the day) followed by *Dear Friend of (name of church):* Pastor should sign the letter in real ink...not computer generated. An actual signature makes a statement that the person is important enough to receive a letter the pastor has taken time to sign. By-the-way, use blue ink.

I recommend the use of envelope but a folded letter with a seal will work. The envelop presents a much more professional appearance. The church return address with logo and format matching that of the stationery should be on the envelope of the folded letter.

Though it takes much more time and energy, a *hand addressed letter* is far more likely to be opened and read than that which has an address label. Think about it. When you receive a letter with your address written by hand, do you not open it, while at the same time toss those with just a label? *The less generic the better.* Your volunteers could divide up the addresses and address the envelopes.

We have found that when the letter is received, it is read by most of the family members in that mail is often left on a table or counter for a number of days. Since it is a more “personal” touch, they tend to re-read it. Mail it on *Tuesday*, or at the latest, *Wednesday*.

Oh yes, one other thing. A simple note at the bottom should be added: *Your name was provided by a friend. Should you wish to have your name removed from our friends list, simple call or email our office and we will see that you wishes are honored. Thank you, Pastor _____.*

Cost and Volunteers

Yes, this is a much higher energy outreach and there are costs involved, but the results are *demonstrably better than the generic email letters!*

It will be necessary to recruit an individual to oversee this ministry. I recommend a retiree. He or she will need to visit the post office to receive special training in how to use bulk mailing. The cost of bulk mail is substantially less than that of regular mail. There will be a minimum bulk mail requirement of about 200 addresses. The church will need to demonstrate that it is indeed a not-for-profit organization. There will be a bulk mail number assigned that will be included in the ink stamp that must be used in the place of a regular postage stamp. The training will provide this information and more.

There will be a need to *recruit a team of volunteers* to come to the church once each month, on a Monday, to run off the letter, fold, stuff envelopes, address them and then organize them according to the bulk mail requirements. There are organizations that will do all this for a price, however, *a team of retirees* will save the church money plus they enjoy getting together to talk, eat, and joke as they put the bulk mail outreach together.

Again, this is labor intensive. It does cost for the bulk mail and the paper supplies, but the results are really quite good. In this age of super-speed, few want to go this route, but those that do have been very pleased with the exciting results.

Let me know if you wish to give this a try!