

The local church is the hope of the world.

How many of us have trouble believing this? We know the faults, we experience how the church struggles and we know it is made up of sinners who, unfortunately, sin. Yet despite this the church is central to God's plan for this world. It is the body of Christ, the bride of Christ and a building of which Christ is the foundation. He will build his church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The church, your local church with all its difficulties, is the hope of the world.

And there is much to be hopeful about. Christ reigns supreme. He was given to the church, his body, so that we might make Christ visible to the world and to all creation '**...so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.**' (Ephesians 3:10)

The faithful gathering for prayer, the word proclaimed and the light of our good deeds in loving our neighbour are all part of our reason to be hopeful. The harvest is, and will remain, plentiful but a willing church is needed to gather it in.

This short resource is a collection of ideas to help churches think about different ways to engage with the community. However ideas are not solutions, they are only tools and are only good in the hands of the right people. Ideas are the 'what' we do to engage but it is much more important for us to consider 'how' we engage as ambassadors of Christ. So it is worth asking some of the following questions:

- How can we be mission-minded individuals in our approach to reaching others? What can we learn and do in our own lives and approach to help reach others for Christ?
- How can we make our church ministry and activities missional? Is there a love for God and then for our neighbour evident throughout the life of the church?
- How can we meet needs in the local community? How we welcome people, reach

out to them and provide for them will reveal much about our love for Christ.

- How can we change our culture? If we are not doing what we could and should be doing then what needs to change about our attitudes, habits and traditions in church to change this?
- What are the best ways to reach out to others in our local area?

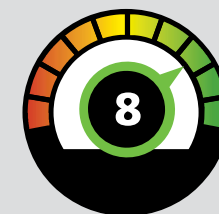
A local church that sets out to do something – anything, with faithful good intentions to reach people, will inevitably have some degree of success. So the simple lesson is that we should just do something. These ideas are a basic sample of what can be done and they should be adapted to your own context. You should probably not attempt them all! Their main purpose is to get us in our churches thinking about new ways to go from the inside out and to encourage the world outside in.

The Ideas are split into the following categories:

OUTREACH	Ideas aimed primarily for those outside of, or on the margins of, church life.
COMMUNITY	Ideas with an emphasis on building relationships in the local community.
WELCOME	Ideas to help people feel welcomed into and belong to the local church.
FELLOWSHIP	Ideas to promote fellowship and relationship both within and beyond parish life.
CHILDREN & YOUTH	Ideas for reaching out to children and young people in the local community.
FAMILIES	Ideas for promoting family involvement in church and for supporting local families.
SENIOR CITIZENS	Ideas specifically aimed at ministry to elderly in the local community.
SCHOOLS	Ideas to help bless local schools and to encourage a stronger church-school partnership.
POVERTY	Ideas to help support those in situations of poverty.
COMMUNICATION	Ideas to help church communicate better with themselves and the local community.

The scoring system:

Alongside each idea is a scoring system that gives it marks out of 10 for:



Preparation	If an idea needs little preparation to achieve it then it will score highly. However if an idea needs a lot of preparation time and work then it will get a low score.
Cost	An idea that costs very little to implement will also score highly whereas an idea that is expensive to implement will have a lower score.
Volunteers	How many people, over how long, are needed to make this idea work? If the idea needs few volunteers for less time then it will score well.
Reach	The more people, across various backgrounds, that an idea could potentially reach then the better the score.
Overall	Taking the other scores into account what would this idea's overall score be?

Note: The scores are just there to act as a rough guide to help you work out what idea might best suit your resources and are not for working out which ideas are the best! The best ideas are the ones we do in obedience to God.

Finally, each idea is only an outline of what could be possible and there are many more ideas than this! So please use this resource as a prompt for what could be achieved, under God's grace, in your local community. For your church, faithfully just trying to make a difference, will achieve much more than you might expect.

"How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

Romans 10:14-15