



COMMUNITY IDEAS

'Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.'

Philippians 2:4

These are some ideas that emphasise building relationships in the local community, often by going outside the church to invite people to be part of something in the church buildings. To work well they need to be run with a sensitivity to those who are not used to the customs of church life.

COMMUNITY IDEAS

1 STREETREACH



PURPOSE: To bless the local community by undertaking to help clean up certain areas or help people with their gardens or tidying homes.

IDEA: To organise a team of people, from youth to adults, for a few days or a week each year to do various jobs to bless the local community. It could involve picking up litter, painting over graffiti, tidying gardens, small jobs for people and so on. It is a project that should be undertaken in partnership with other churches and community groups.

2 CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHT PARTY



PURPOSE: To provide a free Christmas party for local people to celebrate a Christmas tree light switch on.

IDEA: If you parish has a community Christmas tree light switch-on event then you could invite people attending back to the church halls afterwards for a party. If it doesn't then you could organise your own Christmas lights switch-on at the church and then in the halls afterwards for a party. The party invite could go to the local schools, shops and so on and it could involve:

- Hot snacks such as sausage rolls, mini pizza and also desserts.
- Tea, coffee, juice and hot fruit punch.
- Fun food such as chocolate fountains, candy floss machine and popcorn makers.
- A visit by Santa to give out free selection boxes
- Invites for carol services and so on could be placed on tables or given out as people leave.

3 LENT CHARITY LUNCHES



PURPOSE: To bless local people and promote fellowship with an open 'donation-only' lunch once a week during lent.

IDEA: To prepare a simple weekly lunch during lent of soup, sandwiches, apple tart etc and offer it out free to the local community. Request donations (and perhaps suggested donation amounts) for the lunch that can then go to a charity. The lunches could also involve a fair trade stall or similar.

4 RICH MAN POOR MAN MEAL



PURPOSE: To host a community fundraising meal to raise money for charities in the developing world.

IDEA: To help raise money for a charity this event highlights the disparity in wealth around the world while also helping people to mix together with others in the parish that they may not know. Numbered tickets should be sold in advance (with perhaps a few on the night) to give an idea of numbers for cooking. At the start of the event a draw takes place with the tickets where a certain percentage of the tickets (e.g. 10%) are given 'rich man' meals (3 courses) to represent the richest proportion of the world and the rest are given 'poor man' meals (soup, bread etc) to represent the poorest. A presentation about the charity over tea and coffee could follow.

5 LENT COMMUNITY SERVICES



PURPOSE: To encourage attendance at Lent services from the wider parish community.

IDEA: To advertise the Lent midweek service to the wider community as an opportunity to 'right wrongs' by emphasizing our need for forgiveness. You could compliment the reflection that takes place during the service with some fellowship over tea & coffee afterwards. This could take place at the back of the church and involve only around 15 minutes and as a talking point each person could be given a pretzel to take home – a Lenten bread that signifies a person crossing their arms over in prayer.

6 COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS SERVICES



PURPOSE: To engage the local community with outreach Christmas services.

IDEA: To give out printed invites to the local community for a series of Christmas services that can be distributed to neighbours, through doors, at events, e-mailed and so on. The invites could emphasise different options to suit different people in the community such as services for:

- Older people during the morning.
- Those that love traditional services such as 9 Lessons and carols.
- Family nativity services.
- 'Blue Christmas' services for those for whom Christmas is a difficult time.
- Family carol services that would be earlier, shorter and interactive.

7 SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS



PURPOSE: To use a particular interest that local people may have and run a group on that interest with a Christian emphasis.

IDEA: To organise and then advertise to the community a regular (or for a season) group that people could join based on a particular interest or hobby. For instance a walking group, knit and natter, book group, baking, seasonal crafts, card making, physical/spiritual fitness classes and so on.

8 CAROL SINGERS



PURPOSE: To bring Christmas carols out into the local community.

IDEA: Gather a group of people, preferably of mixed ages, for a night of carol singing locally. If only a few people are musical then usually everyone else can easily join in. The group could sing outside a local shopping centre or in the town square or go round various housing estates in the parish. The group could then finish up by walking to a parishioner's house for a late supper.

9 COOKING CLASSES



PURPOSE: To help support family life and build fellowship by organising basic cooking lessons.

IDEA: To run a short course in basic cooking skills for people in the local area. This course could be run for 4-8 weeks and teach people how to make single and family meals well and cheaply. This is especially important for families that need to eat on a budget or simply do not know how to cook meals for others. It would be aimed at local people and subsidised to an affordable price. Spaces would be limited to allow people there to also be involved in the cooking and baking.

10 MEET THE NEIGHBOURS



PURPOSE: To invite new people into the area for a meal to get to know others and also the local churches.

IDEA: To work in partnership with other churches in the community to invite everyone in the local area that has moved in recently (perhaps the last year) to come to a supper and 'meet their neighbours'. It could be held in a church hall or community service and involve name badges and a few small group discussions so that people get to know other people's names. There could be short presentations by community police, councillors, long-standing residents and clergy about the local area, facilities, churches, youth groups and so on. The evening could finish with a free supper and time to talk with others.



11 FLOWER FESTIVAL



PURPOSE: Celebrate the start of summer with an afternoon of floral displays and refreshments.

IDEA: The church hall hosts a flower festival where parishioners and others are encouraged to display their gardening skills! Stalls and displays are set up in the morning ready for visitors to enjoy afternoon tea and perhaps hear from a gardening panel. Seminars could be held on flower arranging, vegetable patch tending, flowerbed maintenance and so on. The whole community is invited to attend but this is a good opportunity to connect with those that have flower arranging and gardening as an interest.

12 PRAYERS FOR LOCAL COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS/ GROUPS



PURPOSE: To pray for the various organisations at work in the local community.

IDEA: Write to various groups that work for the benefit of the community such as the police, health professionals, local business groups, residential homes, social services, community groups etc and tell them that you would like to say prayers for them in church. Ask them if there are any particular needs that they would like prayer for –such as safety, resources, the 'client' group they are working with, the families of their staff and so on. In addition to this a Community Prayer Service could be held in church where representatives are asked to attend and where a focus is on blessing their work through prayer, fellowship and with some food afterwards. The service of prayer for the community could be followed up by forming (or adapting) a prayer group to have an emphasis on community prayers.

13 CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL



PURPOSE: To host a community event that will communicate the message of Christmas.

IDEA: To use your church building to set up 30-50 Christmas trees that all illustrate a particular aspect of the Christmas story and our response to it today. This is usually a major event for the church that can last around a week so it takes a major amount of organisation and help. However it can also involve 1000's of people coming through the church over the week.

14 CHRISTMAS CRAFTS FESTIVAL



PURPOSE: To run a crafts festival to promote charity and the Christmas message.

IDEA: Talk to local Fair Trade groups, parishioners and local arts groups about spending a day/evening at the church to sell Christmas items. It could involve crafts, cards, gifts, local produce, preserves, activities for children such as face painting, teas and buns, mulled punch and other ways of showing good hospitality! Proceeds could be given to a local charity. It may also be possible to organise a short kids' programme or DVD to let parents have some time for themselves to look around or have a cup of tea.



15 INTERNATIONAL FOOD TASTING EVENING



PURPOSE: An open evening for people to come and taste dishes from different parts of the world, meet foreign nationals and hear about international issues.

IDEA: To work with those within the parish and wider community from an international background to provide an evening to taste dishes from around the world. Some of these dishes could be provided by church membership but some could be provided in partnership with people and organisations in the local area that provide support for overseas nationals here. Mission and development agencies could also be asked to sell Fair Trade goods and perhaps make a presentation at the end. The event would be advertised across the community and a set admission price would allow each participant to try from all the foods. Money raised could help pay for the food provided but also go towards an international charity. Food, hygiene and allergy advice would need to be considered.

16 HEALTH AND WELL-BEING NIGHT



PURPOSE: To host an evening to promote good health and to make a presentation on good spiritual health.

IDEA: To work in partnership with local shops, health agencies and others to provide an evening of information on health, diet, beauty, exercise, mental health, elderly health and so on. Shops could sell some products and health professionals could be there to offer advice and information. The evening could finish with a presentation on the role of the church in supporting people with health issues but also point them to Jesus Christ as the ultimate healer.