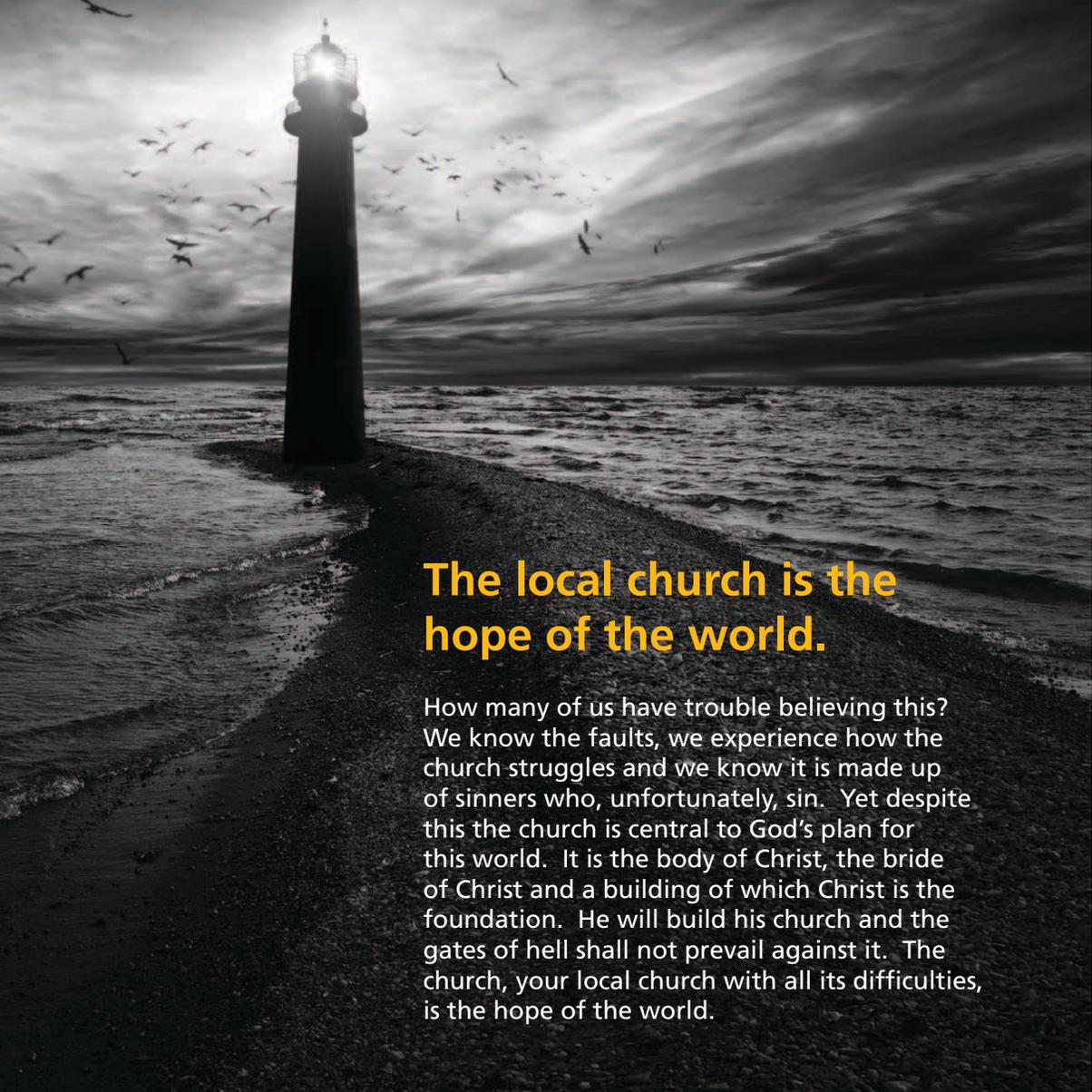




INSIDE OUT OUTSIDE IN

101+ IDEAS FOR CHURCHES TO ENGAGE WITH COMMUNITY



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



OUTREACH IDEAS

'And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation'
Mark 16:15

These are some ideas aimed primarily for those outside of, or on the margins, of church life. Often this will mean taking church outside the doors or adapting church based activities to orientate towards those normally on the margins of church life.

OUTREACH IDEAS

1 NEW CHRISTIAN PACKS



PURPOSE: To provide a ready-made gift pack for those that have just made a decision to follow or recommit to Christ.

IDEA: To put together an encouraging gift for new Christians that will support their faith and help to immediately celebrate their decision. This pack could include a number of things such as:

- A Bible or New Testament
- A devotional for new Christians.
- A specialist book or DVD for new Christians.
- A contact card for the minister.
- A small gift that could remind them of their faith such as a cross or printed verse.

2 CONSIDERING FAITH PACKS



PURPOSE: To provide a ready made pack for any people who are thinking about their faith.

IDEA: That packs are made available that can be used by parishioners and others to give to people who are thinking about faith. The packs could include a tract, Gideon Bible, specialist book on becoming a Christian, Alpha booklet and so on.

3 OUTREACH COURSES



PURPOSE: To run a discovering faith course with an invite to the local community.

IDEA: To organise an Alpha or similar type of course that can be held in the church hall or even local coffee shop or restaurant. The course would be advertised extensively to the local community and involve a free meal each evening followed by talks, group work, discussion and so on. Each course may also involve people in attendance from your parish.

4 COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS GIVEAWAY



PURPOSE: To bless the local community with a free gift at Christmas.

IDEA: Many parishes will have a local public gathering place such as a shopping area or place for community events. Use these places at Christmas time to give people a small blessing such as a cup of hot chocolate and a mince pie to shoppers or some hot punch at a Christmas event. The blessing could be done with no other information except to answer questions from people, or it could be done with a verse or something advertising your church.

5 COMMUTER GIVEAWAYS



PURPOSE: To bless local commuters with a small gift as they wait to go to work/home.

IDEA: If your parish has a busy commuter bus stop or train station then it may be possible to occasionally bless those about to travel with a cup of tea and a small snack for the journey. It will only be a small blessing and may be viewed suspiciously at first but it may help to change perceptions on what the role of the church is. A similar idea could be done at a local village/town centre or at local community events – giving out free drinks and snacks from the church.

6 NIGHT LIGHT



PURPOSE: To provide a point of blessing and support for those leaving pubs and clubs at weekends.

IDEA: To work in partnership with other churches, police and the wider community to bless and support those leaving pubs late at night. It could involve handing out cups of tea/coffee, bottles of water and some biscuits. This type of ministry needs a lot of work and partnership to set up but is very valuable in witnessing to those in the pub/club culture.

7 LEAVE THE LIGHTS ON WEEKEND



PURPOSE: To raise awareness in the local community around issues of loneliness, depression, worry and mental health.

IDEA: To leave the lights on in the church and halls over the course of a winter weekend to serve as a visible reminder about each person being a light to the others around them. The church could be lit up by extra lighting and local press informed. The weekend could include a special service, free coffee morning, all night prayer, drop-in, an extra focus on visiting people on the margins of church life and so on.

8 MUSIC AND ARTS



PURPOSE: To make connections with local artists, musicians, drama groups and the wider community.

IDEA: To talk with local art groups about providing the church halls for an art exhibition – either by itself or as part of a bigger event such as a fair or sale day. The exhibition could be advertised through local churches and involve an opening event with a light supper and so on. There could be an accompanying art competition that includes schools. Local crafts and fair trade crafts could also be invited. In addition you could also talk with local choirs, musicians, drama groups and so on to see if the church could work with them to use the halls for community events to help people from outside church make small connections with the ministry of your church.

9 GOOD NEWS GIVEAWAY FAMILY SERVICE



PURPOSE: To attract local children and families to a monthly service.

IDEA: To base each family service around a simple theme that also involves giving a gift at the end of each service to remind the congregation of the theme –either to everyone or just the children. Each service would be strongly advertised to the local community with an emphasis on welcoming new people. Themes for the services could include: “The light of the World” – with key ring torches given to kids and tea lights to adults. “The Lost Coin” – with chocolate coins given to everyone. “God’s Community” – With Lego packs given to kids & plastic Lego piece fridge magnets to adults. “Jesus the missing piece” – Kids get a small jigsaw and adults a jigsaw fridge magnet. “Golden ticket” – About heaven –Everyone gets a choc bar – some have golden tickets in them.

10 PARISH BIRTHDAY CARDS



PURPOSE: To encourage families and remind children and parents that they are a part of the church family.

IDEA: Collect the birthdays and addresses of children and babies that are members of the church or attend church based activities and events. Use these records to set diary reminders at the start of every fortnight for the birthdays that will be coming up in the next few weeks. Store up a supply of cards and stamps and then post out birthday cards every fortnight so that children get a card from the church each year. This will not only be appreciated by local families but will strengthen their contact with your church.

11 HOT CROSS BUN GIVEAWAY



PURPOSE: To bless the local community and remind them of the message of Good Friday.

IDEA: To organise with a local baker or supermarket to buy a large batch of hot cross buns for Good Friday morning and then pack each bun in a paper bag with a small verse and distribute the buns throughout you local area to shops, businesses, workers, commuters and so on. Perhaps to include with the bun a church invite.

12 SPORTS GROUPS



PURPOSE: To work with local young people through involvement in sports.

IDEA: To run weekly sports activities or weeklong summer programmes for young people and young adults. This could involve the weekly hire of a football pitch for an open-invite football game or a weekly training class in your halls with a recognised coach in sports. In the summer holidays it’s possible to get coaches to teach various different sports and games over the course of a week as part of an outreach to local young people.

13 COMMUNITY GARDENING



PURPOSE: To reach out to those in the community less able to tend their gardens.

IDEA: Once a fortnight over the spring and summer a team of volunteers help to tend the gardens of less able parishioners and others. They could plant flowers or set up window boxes. This is also a good pastoral opportunity and helps to keep the church updated on the more housebound and elderly people it is connected with.

14 PUB QUIZ & MEAL



PURPOSE: To run a pub quiz and subsidised meal at a local pub/golf club to engage with those in that community.

IDEA: To work alongside a local pub or golf club to run a table quiz evening and meal or hot buffet. This event would be used as a simple way of getting initial engagement with the local community and so concentrate on the social element of the evening with perhaps a small amount of time at the start or finish for a presentation about faith. It could be advertised both in the pub, community and church and would also serve as a good opportunity for some church members there to be out of their normal environment. Some promotional material about the church could be left on tables but the aim would be mostly to promote relationships between church and wider community.



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

Preparation	Cost	Volunteers	Reach	Overall

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

Preparation	Cost	Volunteers	Reach	Overall

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 carol services that would be earlier, shorter and interactive.
- Family nativity services.
- 'Blue Christmas' services for those for whom Christmas is a difficult time.

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.

WELCOME IDEAS

'Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.'

Romans 15:7

These are some ideas to help people feel welcomed into the church family and to hopefully feel a belonging there. They are to encourage the attendance of not just new people but also long standing members of the church.

WELCOME IDEAS

1 WELCOME PACKS



PURPOSE: To provide a good quality pack to help welcome new people coming to church and answers some of their questions about getting involved.

IDEA: To put together a small pack of information that can be given as part of a welcome to new members and visitors. It could be as simple as a small zip lock pouch containing:

- A parish leaflet or welcome letter from the rector.
- An outline of church activities and services with times, contacts etc.
- An outline of how the worship happens in church –and how to use the books!
- A Church of Ireland origins, history and practice book.
- 2 small chocolates or similar as a gift (2 in case a couple only takes one pack).

2 FAMILY PACKS



PURPOSE: To help make families more at ease in the service if they have small children.

IDEA: To place in a small folder/pouch some items that will help young families settle into church and not feel that they are distracting others too much. It could include:

- A church leaflet or other information regarding family activities such as crèche and Sunday school, where the toilets are, when services usually finish and so on.
- A colouring-in book, crayons, comic, stickers etc.
- A small soft toy.
- A 'Family Time' book.
- A mini packet of biscuits suitable for young children

3 WELCOME SWEETS AND STICKERS



PURPOSE: To make children and young parents feel more at ease when entering church.

IDEA: Many new people arriving to church will be intimidated by the buildings and even the churchwardens! Offering a small sweet to all and even a sticker for children will help them to feel welcome and make a point of contact with children. It also communicates the message that you are a family friendly church but more importantly gives you an opportunity for a quick chat.

4 WELCOME COFFEE & TEA BEFORE CHURCH



PURPOSE: To make people feel welcome and encourage relationship before the church service starts.

IDEA: Many people do not stay for fellowship at tea and coffee after church so it may be an idea to offer it at the back of church before the service starts. This allows the opportunity to welcome people in with the offer of a cup of tea and gives the opportunity to talk before people take their seats. It should finish 5-10 minutes before the service start to allow people time for reflection and prayer.



5 CHURCH WELCOME TEAMS



PURPOSE: To provide a warm and friendly welcome for everyone attending church services and activities.

IDEA: To assign people each year to work in support of the church wardens to make the church as hospitable as possible –especially for new people. Their role would be to ensure that there are always volunteers at the doors of the church and halls to welcome people and say goodbye to people for all activities –not just services. Different ways to welcome people could include giving out books and service sheets, giving sweets/chocolates out and providing cups of tea before the service. It can also be useful to have young people and various others on a mixed team rather than people from the same background and age group. Welcome team members could also be based within the church or hall to have conversations with people that are new or sitting on their own.

6 WELCOME PACKS FOR CHILDREN



PURPOSE: To provide a pack for new children coming to Sunday school.

IDEA: Put together a pack welcoming children to the church and introducing them to the church family

- A welcome card or postcard from the church family.
- Some stationery, notebook and pencil/pen.
- A 'who's who' of people in the church e.g. minister, curate, children's worker and the Sunday school teachers. A photo of the leaders would be even more useful.
- A chocolate bar or packet of sweets.



FELLOWSHIP IDEAS

'And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.'

Acts 2:42

These are ideas to promote fellowship and relationship within the church family but also in such a way as to help people on the margins feel like they belong too. Modern society has a loneliness epidemic and churches should be places that counteract isolation.

FELLOWSHIP IDEAS

1 5TH SUNDAY BREAKFAST



PURPOSE: To use the 5th Sunday months, or other dates to have a parish breakfast.

IDEA: To host the parish for a breakfast together in the hall before church. The food could be a mixture of continental style food through to bacon butties! The point is to promote fellowship together and to use the breakfast as an excuse to ask new people along to church that day.

2 CHURCH FELLOWSHIP CALENDAR



PURPOSE: To put a series of fellowship events into a calendar for the year ahead to encourage relationships.

IDEA: A calendar of fellowship events 6-12 months ahead will help people to plan better for both organising and attending events. It also helps to ensure that more areas of fellowship ministry get covered. A typical calendar could have anything from 10-20 events per year and cover all the age and interest groups in the church. It also means that events can be advertised well in advance and allow parishioners to think about asking new people along to events that may well promote relationship and act as a gateway to further involvement in church. The calendar could be laminated or put on card and attached to a small magnet to be displayed on fridges or made into a bookmark.

3 LEADERS' ENCOURAGEMENT NIGHT



PURPOSE: To encourage and thank the hard working volunteers in your church.

IDEA: To thank all your church volunteers for their hard work and dedication over the past year. The evening could take the form of a dinner in the hall followed by a reminder of the importance of their work and how valued they are in the church. It could allow an opportunity to share the church's vision for the upcoming year as well as make practical announcements to leaders for the year ahead, usage of halls and so on. This may also be a good time to give out a card or small gift to thank leaders and even do a fun 'awards' night!

4 ALL CHURCH BIRTHDAY PARTY



PURPOSE: To help different generations in the parish get to know each other.

IDEA: Split the groups by which month their birthday is, depending on numbers you could pair months together so there are enough people in each group. Each person with a birthday in that month could be invited to a fellowship event such as a light supper/lunch. People there will tend not to know each other as well and will need encouraged to talk round tables at the supper. During the event you could interview different people there (with different ages/backgrounds) about their life and likes.

5 PARISH BIRTHDAY PRESENTS AT FAMILY SERVICES



PURPOSE: To celebrate each person's birthday during the Family Service.

IDEA: To use the Family Service as a time to ask every person there that had a birthday in the previous month to come up and receive a free gift. The gifts could be a bookmark or chocolate or be a mystery gift that they pick from a bag or tub. They could all be sung happy birthday.

6 POT LUCK/BRING AND SHARE SUPPERS



PURPOSE: To have fun and build up fellowship and relationship with the wider church and community.

IDEA: To organize an all ages evening meal for everyone around tables to encourage chat and relationship. This could be run by asking people to sign up to bring a staple (rice, potatoes, etc), main (Bolognese, stew, salad, etc) or dessert. Then it's 'pot luck' to see what people get! People should be encouraged to bring enough for themselves and a little bit more to be able to feed those that might show up that haven't signed up. Alternatively you could ask people to show up with a full dinner and then put it on the serving table to share with others. Meals like this are a great way to get to meet others without having to organize a group of people to cook for everyone else. Those invited as guests from the local community should not be expected to bring anything. The supper could be finished with a fun table quiz, interviews or a talk. Another way to do this could be as a 'Pudding Party' where people are encouraged to just bring desserts and traybakes.

7 LENT SUPPERS



PURPOSE: To encourage fellowship and a focus on the meaning of Lent.

IDEA: This could combine your Lent midweek service with a supper and fellowship afterwards. After each service is over the parish could gather in the hall afterwards for a 'bring and share' type dinner together around tables. Afterwards the tables could be cleared away and some time could be spent in worship and fellowship and perhaps some interviews with different people involved in parish life. A crèche or movie for kids could be shown in another room to encourage families. It might also be an idea to encourage people to fast for the day before the midweek service.

8 ON THE SOFA WITH...



PURPOSE: To promote fellowship and hear about people's testimonies within church life.

IDEA: This event could be combined with another but the basic focus would be to have an informal time together as a church with worship, word and food together and then spend around 30-45 minutes interviewing 2-3 people (or couples) involved in church about their background, interests and story of how they came to faith and why they are still living their faith. This can be a great opportunity for witness to others and a time for those being interviewed to also reflect on their faith.

9 TEDDY BEAR PICNIC



PURPOSE: To promote fellowship and an invite to the local community.

IDEA: To ask children to come to a special family service with their favourite teddy bear or soft toy but also to ask adults and older young people to bring theirs as well. Then to run a service along the theme of 'comfort' and for everyone to have a 'picnic' together in the church grounds or hall straight after the service.

10 MEN'S EVENTS



PURPOSE: To gather men in the parish and local area together for fellowship events and to build relationships.

IDEA: To organise various events through the year that provide the opportunity for men (and teenage boys) to get to know each other and also to invite new people along to. Events could include: Dinner out and a table quiz, go-karting, laser quest, fishing, clay pigeon shooting, cinema, a football/rugby match, indoor bowls, pub quizzes, an event to watch a big football/rugby game and so on.



11 LADS AND DADS OR MUMS AND SONS NIGHT



PURPOSE: To encourage dads/mums and sons to spend some time together with others and promote the churches support for them.

IDEA: To run a yearly or bi-annual event just for dads and son's that would be a mixture of fun and fellowship. The group could go out for a day or evening trip to paintball, laser quest, a rugby match, indoor climbing, activity centres and so on and finish with a meal out or by ordering food in. An element of team challenges can also take place with groups of dads and sons together and also with dads' verses sons. The same format could be used for mums and sons but you could add in different activities like a 'Great British Bake off' competition between the sons and mums.

12 GIRLS AND MUMS OR DADS AND DAUGHTERS NIGHT



PURPOSE: To encourage mums/dads and daughters to spend some time together with others and promote the churches support for them.

IDEA: To run a yearly or bi-annual event just for mum and girls that would be a mixture of fun and fellowship. The group could go out or stay in for an evening and do various crafts such as scrap booking, cake making, sugar craft and Christmas crafts or else go out to the cinema, ice-skating, bowling or a show/pantomime. The dad's and daughters could also do some of the more outdoors activities mentioned above. In fact any of the activities could be used depending on the group that you have.

13 MEN'S BREAKFAST



PURPOSE: To encourage fellowship and Bible teaching among men involved in the parish.

IDEA: To invite men in the parish and local community to attend a breakfast once a month, usually a fry up! The breakfast could be paid by donations from those attending and a good time to start is around 8am –to leave time for people to be able to leave for other Saturday activities. The breakfast could be followed by a short Bible study or reflection but alternatively a longer breakfast with invited speaker could take place.

14 WOMEN'S EVENTS



PURPOSE: To gather together women in the parish for fellowship events to build relationships – either to visit other places or to host within the church.

IDEA: *Scrap–booking:* Suitable for all ages this event helps you to build your own book and then fill it with photos and mementos. It allows people to talk about their life and background with others sitting around them. *Dress a girl around the world:* This is a sewing event that aims to take a number of pillow cases and turn them into simple dresses to give to young girls in developing countries. *Christmas crafts:* An event to put together some Christmas crafts such as decoration, presents and so on. They could be Christmas wreaths, candles, decorations etc and the event could include a light supper. *Cooking demonstrations:* Organise 1 or 2 people to demonstrate various meals, baking and so on and eat the results as part of the supper.



15 EASTER DAWN SERVICE



PURPOSE: Celebrate the resurrection with a sunrise service for the whole community.

IDEA: The church hosts a service in a local park or beauty spot at sunrise on Easter day –especially somewhere where the sun can be seen to rise! Parishioners are encouraged to invite friends to the service where some tea and coffee in flasks could be served –and even some ‘bacon butties’ if you have a good camp stove!

16 READ THE BIBLE IN 72 HOURS



PURPOSE: To speak out the word of God as the entire Bible is read out over three days.

IDEA: Challenge your church to read the entire Bible in just 3 days. Host a public reading of the Bible and invite every organization in church to supply readers. Refreshments could be served to visitors during the readings and the event should be well publicized with local people from outside the church asked to come and do guest readings. Finish with a service of celebration on Sunday where Revelations 22 is read.

17 FOOD PREPARATION AND HYGIENE



PURPOSE: To train volunteers in basic standards for handling food and running kitchens.

IDEA: Some churches can be reluctant to serve food at community events, as they are wary of the possibility of not meeting food preparation and hygiene standards. The standards for serving & preparing food in a church context are at a basic level and advice on this can usually be sourced from your local Council (some will produce it online). There are also accredited food safety and hygiene courses available –including online qualifications that parishioners can complete in their own time.



CHILDREN & YOUTH IDEAS

'These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.'

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

These ideas are just a selection of the many that can be used to engage with children and young people in the community around your church.

CHILDREN & YOUTH IDEAS

1 COMMUNITY YOUTH SERVICE



PURPOSE: To gather local young people together for worship, teaching and an evangelistic message.

IDEA: To work in partnership with other churches to ask young people from church youth groups and others to come to a special service 3-4 times per year. Each service could involve a band, teaching, fun activities, free gifts and a good supper afterwards.

2 CHURCH CHILDREN'S TREASURE TRAIL



PURPOSE: To give children a greater understanding of the church building and how each different part of church helps to point to Jesus Christ.

IDEA: To put together a small booklet on the church and different parts to it from the grounds to the baptismal font to the communion rails. At each part of the church you want children to know about ask them to find something of interest such as a date, verses, item of furniture or book. Perhaps have some small chocolate bars or coins hidden as treasure for the children as well. Have someone say a few words about each area as their 'tour guide'. Invite the local school to come along in class groups.

3 EXAM PACKS FOR LOCAL CHILDREN



PURPOSE: To support and pray for local Primary 7 children doing transfer tests.

IDEA: To supply each child in your local Primary school undertaking the transfer tests with a small gift to encourage them and their parents. Perhaps to be given at a school assembly or class. The pack could contain:

- Stationery such as a pencil, pen, rubber, sharpener etc.
- A chocolate bar for completing one of the tests.
- A small bottle of water for one of the tests.
- A gift verse on guidance – perhaps a different one for each pack.

4 CHRISTMAS KIDS' BIG BREAKFAST



PURPOSE: A one-off event to teach children about Christmas while allowing parents some time for Christmas preparation such as shopping.

IDEA: This event combines a good opportunity to teach local children on the meaning of Christmas while also providing some much needed support for parents in the busy month of December. It covers a whole morning from 9:00am until 12:30pm and includes a breakfast followed by a variety of kids' Christmas activities such as songs, stories, memory verses, games, crafts and DVD's. To help with planning and registration it is wise to encourage most parents to pre-book. It is reasonable to expect a small donation from parents to cover the breakfast, craft material and so on.



5 PANCAKE PARTIES



PURPOSE: To build a connection between the church clergy and youth and children's organisations based in the church.

IDEA: For clergy to take the week before Lent to visit various groups that meet in the hall and help them make pancakes and get to meet various young people. To perhaps take 5 minutes during it to explain a little bit about the meaning of Lent and challenge them about it.

6 HOLIDAY BIBLE CLUBS



PURPOSE: To outreach to the local community children over several days of holiday Bible club.

IDEA: To run an open Bible club available to local children during the summer or Easter holidays. These clubs are very popular and material is available from different sources to help programme one – such as for the teaching, songs, crafts, games and so on. They can be run for a few hours or even all day. Summer clubs usually take place over the course of a week and alongside other local churches that may be running holiday Bible clubs on different weeks.

7 COMMUNITY YOUTH CLUB



PURPOSE: To reach out to young people in the local community through a weekly drop-in youth club for over 11's.

IDEA: To run a weekly club open to all young people in the local area and involving games, activities, free time, food, crafts, Bible teaching and so on. To programme the youth club so that every 4-5 weeks the group are taken out for a trip such as to bowling, ice-skating, laser quest, mini-golf, cinema and so on. Youth clubs can also be split into two age groups that meet one after the other on the same night.

8 OPEN YOUTH FELLOWSHIPS



PURPOSE: To run a faith based youth group that both disciples and also attracts new people to attend.

IDEA: To programme a Sunday night Youth fellowship for a full year ahead –with topics, nights out, events and so on that can be put into a simple programme brochure (also including contact numbers, welcome and the purpose of the group). This leaflet can then be used to give to schools, parents, uniformed organizations and so on to invite others to come along. It will also serve as a reminder to leaders in helping them to prepare various topics and nights out.

9 LITTLE CHEF GROUP



PURPOSE: To run a mini cooking course for children to encourage their connection to church.

IDEA: To organise a short-term (6-8 weeks) cooking course for children/young people aged from around 10-13 years aimed at children in the local community. It would involve only around 12 young people as a maximum and could be advertised through local schools, posters and so on. Each session could happen after school for around an hour and have children learning how to bake and cook particular dishes such as apple pies, cup cakes, Bolognese and so on. There would be a cost to the course and each child could be given a certificate from the church for completing it.



10 JUNIOR CHOIRS/ ORCHESTRA



PURPOSE: To encourage children and young people to grow in musical talent and use this to bless others.

IDEA: That a group of older children and teenagers is gathered for seasonal times of the year for several weeks to practice singing and/or playing instruments for a performance. Consider a performance that they might give not just for a special service but also to go out to a residential home or somewhere else. It could also involve a free night out as a treat for all their practice and hard work. The invite to be part of this group could also be extended beyond church members.

11 CRECHE FOR CHURCH



PURPOSE: To provide a place for little ones to come during church to have fun and learn a little about God.

IDEA: To have a room available that is set up with different areas for the children to explore and have fun. Not just to mind children during church but to start sharing the gospel message through songs, stories and play. Crèche rooms can require.

- Table top toys.
- A story corner where you share a bible story with the children or show a short video with a biblical message.
- A messy craft table with one craft.
- A small table for a snack time with the children.



12 WEEKLY KIDS CLUB



PURPOSE: To run an evening club for children across the community to come to for fun and fellowship and to hear the Gospel.

IDEA: It is run like a junior youth club providing space for children to choose what activities they want to do. Run a variety of different activities that will engage the specific children in your community, e.g. football, uni-hock, parachute games, relay games, games consoles, art, music, dance, cookery, crafts. At the end of the night set aside a devotional time. It can also include trips out about three or four times a year e.g. ice skating, cinema, Candy Store etc.

13 UNIFORMED SERVICES



PURPOSE: To support the uniformed organisations that use the church halls.

IDEA: To host an enrolment and/or church service for your uniformed organisations and to be able to pray for them and their leaders. They could take part in the service by:

- Teaching a song.
- Leading the prayers.
- Acting out a drama with the young people.
- Being interviewed to tell the congregation what they do.
- Taking up the collection and being part of the welcome team.

14 AFTER SCHOOL HOMEWORK CLUBS



PURPOSE: Providing a space for children to come together, make crafts, play games and also get help and encouragement with their homework.

IDEA: To set up an after schools homework club. This may take the form of two clubs, one for Key stage one children and one for Key stage two who leave school at different times. Each can be an hour long. This is a great opportunity to build relationships and help the children to love learning by going through homework with them and spending time listening to them read. Good to use older folk or retired people to give of an hour to listen to children read.

15 PUDDING PARTIES



PURPOSE: To celebrate a key event for children/young people with pudding!

IDEA: To celebrate a key event for children/young people with pudding! Idea: To celebrate a particular time for young people such as back to school, half term or end of exams by running a pudding party. The idea would be to have as many different types of pudding as possible and let the young people there try as many as they can! It will be a celebration so there should be some level of extravagance. It could also be used to celebrate children and young people at the end of a youth/uniformed service.



FAMILY IDEAS

'...But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.'
Joshua 24:15

These ideas emphasise strongly the need for churches to help support families, not just as individuals but together as a unit. Consequently many of these ideas involve working with the family as a unit.

FAMILY IDEAS

1 MUMS' BREAKFAST



PURPOSE: A weekly event to provide a support network among mums with young families in the area.

IDEA: To provide a breakfast from 8:45 -10:15am each week for mums that have just left off their kids at school. It could be advertised through the parish and local schools and involve a free late breakfast for an hour. It would focus mainly on the fellowship and food but could begin to build a supportive community of parents.

2 EASTER EGG FUN DAY



PURPOSE: An all-ages family day to help explain the meaning of Easter.

IDEA: To host a short open fun event for everyone that would also highlight the meaning of Easter. It could be held in the church grounds perhaps directly after church on Easter Sunday or at another suitable time. Food and fun fair type activities could be organised as well as Easter egg hunts in the grounds, egg games, crafts, chocolate giveaways and so on.

3 CHOCOLATE PARTY



PURPOSE: To hold an all-ages party to encourage relationship and make connections to the community.

IDEA: This is a family fun day either just before lent or just after Easter (to use up chocolate!). It will be chocolate themed and could include chocolate crafts, baking demonstrations, chocolate fountains, a café with crêche and even a short gospel message based around chocolate bars!

4 CHURCH FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT/ PYJAMA PARTY



PURPOSE: To bring families together for a big screen movie night and strengthen connections to church.

IDEA: To have an open invite to show a family rated movie in the church halls. Families could come to this together to watch the movie or alternatively you could have some tea and coffee for parents while children watch the movie. They could be asked to arrive in their pyjamas and bring a pillow and the movie could be shown on a big screen or projected onto the wall. Popcorn and drinks could be made available. The night should finish with a prayer.



5 PARISH PICNIC



PURPOSE: To invite the parish and wider community to a picnic together just before the summer holidays.

IDEA: To book a local park or other suitable venue for the parish to gather for a picnic straight after church on a June Sunday. It could be the same Sunday as prize giving to encourage more families to be there. People could be encouraged to bring along their own picnic and all gather together or alternatively you could book a BBQ area in a park and ask people to bring their own burgers that a team could cook for them. There should be extra food brought to be able to invite people at the last moment or simply to provide something free for a new person. Alternatively the whole picnic could provide free burgers. A small team of people could organise some games for the children to play and leave time for conversation with parents.

6 FAMILY FUN DAYS



PURPOSE: To invite the whole community along to a family event to promote fellowship and fun and open up the church life to those that don't belong.

IDEA: Instead of, or alongside, traditional church fetes you could host an open fun day for the local community. Invites and posters could be made as widely available as possible and an emphasis placed on there being something for as many ages as possible. Ideas could include: Morning fry-ups, morning tea & scones, afternoon cream teas, bouncy castles, chocolate fountain, popcorn machine, candy floss machine, various sales of crafts, plants etc, bric a brac, cookery demonstrations, puppet shows, funfair games such as hoopla, visits from local fire brigade and police and so on.

7 PARENT AND TODDLER



PURPOSE: To facilitate and run a safe place for parents/carers to come and spend time together with their children.

IDEA: To provide an open invite to the community for a few hours each week when parents/carers can bring their children to a group and also meet with each other. It will need a room/hall set up to allow some space for:

- Play equipment and toys.
- A mat/carpet area to teach songs and rhymes.
- A craft table that could be themed differently for each week, e.g. seasonally – autumn leaf, and for special occasions such as Christmas and Easter.
- Provision of a juice and biscuits/toast break and coffee & tea for parents.

8 CHOCOLATE BAR VISITS



PURPOSE: To develop a relationship between church and home for the children and parents.

IDEA: Get together a visitation team, perhaps including children's leaders as children (and some parents!) will recognize them when they come to the door. The team in pairs visit each child's home with a small present of a chocolate bar and some contact information and information about the church with times of services, Sunday School and any special events coming up. The chocolate bar is simply your excuse to drop a small present in with a family.

9 COMMUNITY PARENTING COURSE



PURPOSE: To support parents in the community as they care for their children.

IDEA: To run a parenting course from the church for 6-8 weeks that would be targeted throughout the parish area and perhaps run in partnership with other churches and organisations. Various courses can be used or adapted from specialist organisations such as Care for the Family www.careforthefamily.org.uk

10 SUNDAY SCHOOL OPEN DAY



PURPOSE: To give parents, expectant parents, grandparents, friends etc an insight into what takes place in Sunday School.

IDEA: Open up Sunday school at the beginning of the year in September to let people see what is done there. Advertise this to all parents and the local community to allow them to sit in the hall/room to experience what goes on and to show how things are run and how much fun and learning takes place. Put on a typical day in your Sunday school with fun activities and teaching that the children and adults can participate in. Finish with juice and biscuits, tea and coffee.

11 FAMILY FAITH SUNDAY



PURPOSE: To highlight the importance of family and that sharing of faith should not just be learnt in church but also at home.

IDEA: Run a service in church devoted to the family – God's big family. Special invites could be sent out across the parish and an emphasis placed on asking parents and grandparents to attend that might not normally be there. Children and young people should also play a key part in the service such as readings, welcome, interviews and so on. Sample service material, children's talk, sermon, PowerPoint slides etc can be downloaded from www.familyfaith.co.uk

12 END OF YEAR SERVICE - PRIZE-GIVING SUNDAY



PURPOSE: To bless and encourage the children that come to church and Sunday School.

IDEA: This is an end of year service, generally held in June to celebrate the children and their achievements over the past year. It can involve:

- The children taking part in the service e.g. teaching a song, a key memory verse from the year, reciting a poem.
- Children receiving a prize of a book, CD or token.
- Showing a slide show of pictures of what the children have been doing throughout the year.
- A children's talk.
- Parents/carers receiving a devotional book for doing with children.

ELDERLY IDEAS

'But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.'

1 Timothy 5:8

While many of the ideas in this resource can be made applicable across the whole age range of those in the community these ideas concentrate on ways to reach out to and bless elderly people.

ELDERLY IDEAS

1 SINGING AT RESIDENTIAL HOMES



PURPOSE: To visit and encourage the residents and staff at local residential homes for the elderly.

IDEA: To take a team of 10-20 people to sing songs for residents in some of your local residential homes. This could happen at Christmas time with carols but it would also be a great witness for this to happen at other points in the year such as Easter, harvest and Ascension. Groups could sing 3-4 songs and then meet and greet residents there with a small gift such as a display verse for a bedside table. A box of chocolates could be left for nursing staff.

2 RESIDENTIAL HOME CHURCH SERVICES



PURPOSE: To bring a church service to those that are unable to attend their local church.

IDEA: To work in partnership with local churches to run a short mid-week service in a local residential home. This could be a short ecumenical service to enable it to be run by differing denominations on a rota basis and would also serve as a contact point with staff in the residential home.

3 SENIOR CITIZENS EVENTS



PURPOSE: To gather seniors together for fellowship and promote their relationship with other church members.

IDEA: To organise a weekly gathering of senior citizens for a short midweek service followed by tea and coffee or a light lunch.

- Organise special meals at certain times of the year to celebrate Christmas, harvest, Easter and so on.
- Organise trips away for seniors to parks, historical homes, festivals, mystery tours and so on.
- Book readings that can be read out to seniors from classic books.

4 TRANSPORT ROTAS FOR THE HOUSEBOUND



PURPOSE: To ensure that the elderly and housebound have the opportunity to attend church.

IDEA: To do a once-a-year review of the access that housebound people have to church and organise a transport rota accordingly. Many elderly people may already have transport arranged for them each week through friends and family but many may simply drop out of attendance (because they can no longer walk for instance) without telling anyone. Placing a person or team of people in charge of a rota for collecting and leaving back the house bound will help to keep pastoral contact with church members.



5 COMPUTER SKILLS WORKSHOP



PURPOSE: To help local elderly people with basic computer literacy.

IDEA: To run a workshop for elderly people in the community to explain some of the benefits and drawbacks of communications technology. This would be a practical workshop and so should include lots of volunteers who can give time to individuals or two's and threes to guide them through helpful technology. It is also a great way to connect young people and elderly people in the community. Laptops, tablets, cameras and so on could be made available to show people how to use new technology to do things such as e-mail, video calls, surf the internet, download movies, upload photos and book appointments or travel. Participants could also be encouraged to bring any portable computers with them, tablets or phones to be able to ask questions about how best to use them. It will also be useful to set up a Wi-Fi hotspot in the church hall for this.

6 HARVEST LUNCH



PURPOSE: To host a dinner at harvest time for local elderly people.

IDEA: Many churches distribute food and flowers just after the harvest service to local senior citizens. However it may also be worthwhile using this time to invite local elderly people to a harvest lunch on the Monday or Tuesday after Harvest Sunday. Alternatively it could take place at dinnertime and involve young people to help serve and then sit alongside the seniors. Volunteers would be needed not only for food preparation but also for transport to and from homes. The meal could also involve a short harvest service.

7 COMMUNITY GARDENING



PURPOSE: To reach out to those in the community less able to tend their gardens.

IDEA: Once a fortnight over the spring and summer a team of volunteers could help to tend the gardens of senior citizens and other less able parishioners. They could plant flowers or set up window boxes. This is also a good pastoral opportunity and helps to keep the church updated on the more housebound and elderly people it is connected with.



SCHOOLS IDEAS

'Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.'
Proverbs 4:13

Our local schools do a great deal of good work in instructing our children and these ideas are ways to help support them and work more closely with them in their work.

SCHOOLS IDEAS

1 SCHOOLS WORK



PURPOSE: To build relationships with the schools, pupils and parents and find ways of serving our local schools.

IDEA: Write to or phone your local schools to see how you might be able to help them. Such as:

- Volunteering to lead assemblies in the school.
- Accepting invitations to speak at Scripture Union groups.
- Providing volunteers to do detached work in school playgrounds at lunchtime.
- Taking a lesson on R.E.
- Volunteers for P.T.A groups and to assist at school events and fundraisers.
- Providing small gifts for children at certain times of the year – such as an apple at harvest.

2 BACK TO SCHOOL WITH GOD



PURPOSE: An all age service to pray for local schools and the teachers and pupils.

IDEA: To organise a service for the start of the school year to pray for local schools but also to increase awareness of prayer in schools and the churches links with them. To invite staff and local children to come along to the service, help with readings etc and meet people. Also to pray for school staff, children and their families as they start back to school (See also www.prayforschools.org and www.suni.co.uk/schools/withGod).

3 BACK TO SCHOOL GIFTS



PURPOSE: To bless children and teachers at local Primary schools with a small gift to encourage them at the start of the school year.

IDEA: To organise small gifts for each pupil in your local school (or only certain years) for the start of the school term. The gifts could have a theme such as a Christian bookmark attached to a ruler, pen and chocolate bar. You could get pens with a verse attached or a small Gospel book. Each gift should also be related to their work so some stationery should be included. A present of a box of chocolates or tin of biscuits for the staff would also be appreciated!

4 CHRISTMAS CAROL CELEBRATION PARTY



PURPOSE: To ask local schools to host their carol service in your church.

IDEA: To work with a local school to host a morning carol service in your church at which the children and staff are blessed. To allow each class to pick a carol and lesson each and for the service to end with free Christmas snacks and a small gift from the church.

5 BACK TO SCHOOL PARTY



PURPOSE: To bless families with children at the start of the term and advertise the mission of the church for the coming year.

IDEA: To run an early evening free party just before the start of the new school term and invite children to attend and teenagers to be helpers. The party could include games, food, crafts, a short talk on guidance, a prayer for the school and a party bag with some free gifts including useful stationery for the new term. Parents could also be given useful information on the church services and activities in the coming year.



6 TRANSITION TIMES



PURPOSE: To support children and parents as children make the huge transitional changes into primary school and out.

IDEA: Supporting children and parents through times of transition can be an important and valuable role that church members can offer help with. Scripture Union offer two resources; 'Get Ready, Go!' is a resource for children starting primary school. A version for parents is also available; and 'It's Your Move' is for those moving from primary to secondary school. www.scriptureunion.org.uk These booklets can be given as a present to the children in a little gift bag.

7 PRAYER FOR SCHOOLS



PURPOSE: To provide prayer support for local schools.

IDEA: Contact local schools in your area to build a connection with them and ask if there is anything that the church can pray for and if there are particular needs that the church may be able to cater for such as assemblies, lessons, pastoral advice for parents and so on. This can also involve setting up prayer support groups for local schools (See www.prayforschools.org).

POVERTY IDEAS

'And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.'

Micah 6:8

These ideas are just some of the many ways in which your church could make an immediate difference to help those in your community and beyond who struggle to make ends meet.

POVERTY IDEAS

1 FOOD BANKS



PURPOSE: To collect donations of food and encourage a more visible link between church giving and local poverty.

IDEA: Set up a collection station at the back of church (where it can be seen) with a basket or shopping trolley. Ask church members to donate non-perishable foodstuffs that can be donated on to the needy in partnership with Food Bank organisations. This could be an on-going idea or one for a season –such as Christmas time.

2 SHOE BOX APPEALS



PURPOSE: To collect presents that can be given to families in need for Christmas.

IDEA: Partner with a shoe box appeal organisation to get instructions as to how best to organise this but the basic idea is to encourage church members to put together various small presents in shoe boxes for a particular 'deadline' Sunday before Christmas. The presents and their eventual recipients could then be prayed over before they are collected by a charity the following week.

3 SCHOOL UNIFORM BANKS



PURPOSE: To support families struggling with the cost of buying new uniforms for their children.

IDEA: To work in partnership with other churches and local schools to start a uniform bank in a local school, church hall, shop or at a parents and toddlers meeting. Parents who have had children grow out of uniforms can be encouraged to donate them to the uniform bank and the uniforms made available for free (or a small donation) to families that may be struggling to afford uniforms.

4 BLESSING PACKS FOR THE HOMELESS



PURPOSE: To provide a blessing of practical gifts for people that have to sleep rough.

IDEA: To work in partnership with a charity that works with homeless to see if there could be packs that could be provide for them to give to homeless people. Packs could contain blankets, hat, scarf, socks, gloves, food etc.



5 FREEZER MINISTRY



PURPOSE: To provide local people and parishioners with ready meals in times of need.

IDEA: This is an on-going ministry whereby meals are prepared by a church team and then frozen in fast food cartons (or bags) and stored. It can involve a number of different 'ready meals' as well as desserts, scones and tray bakes. The food can then used to bless people at times of their life when they might be tired, sick or under pressure. For instance families that have recently had a baby or when there has been a bereavement.

6 CHRISTMAS HAMPERS



PURPOSE: To bless families in the local area at Christmas time.

IDEA: To gather from parishioners sample small hampers of food that could be used to bless some local families and the elderly. This could be done in partnership with other churches and charities to help identify families in need and used as part of pastoral visits.

7 CHRISTIANS AGAINST POVERTY



PURPOSE: To help people manage their money better and help lift people out of debt.

IDEA: To work in partnership with Christians Against Poverty to run a Money Course for the local community to help people understand how better to manage their finances to prevent debt but also to give and save as well. For churches with more resources there is also the option to run a Debt Centre to give people support and debt counselling in order to help lift them from debt and the problems that go with it. www.capuk.org

COMMUNICATION IDEAS

'Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect'

1 Peter 3:15

These are a number of ideas to help churches communicate well its activities and message -both internally to members and to the community at large.

COMMUNICATION IDEAS

1 CHURCH OUTREACH LEAFLETS



PURPOSE: To promote the ministry and activities of your parish to the local community.

IDEA: To develop a leaflet that outlines the activities and services that your church offers and to communicate a strong welcome to all. The leaflet could be given to people at local community and parish events, displayed in the church and its halls, included in welcome packs and placed in local hubs such as doctors' surgeries, shops, community centres and so on. The leaflet may contain: A welcome message, a short outline of what the church believes and does, information on the times, contact numbers and the purpose of church activities and services, pictures of various aspects of church life.

2 CHURCH INFORMATION WEBSITE



PURPOSE: To communicate the mission and activities of your parish online and without the information becoming dated easily.

IDEA: To redesign a parish website to focus more on relevant information regarding the church and less on events, blogs, news and so on that need constant updating. Many parishes struggle to keep websites updated with news articles, galleries and so on and it can begin to give the impression that nothing much has happened for some time. However, why not change the primary purpose of what a church website is for? A simpler website with clear information complimented by vibrant and alternating photos can look fresh and only need to be updated 3-4 times per year. Sample pages for an information orientated website could include:

- A home page with mission statement and welcome to new people
- Church services
- Who we are – staff and key volunteers
- Church activities with key information
- What we believe
- Map and directions

3 WEEKLY UPDATE E-MAIL



PURPOSE: To communicate church activities, announcements and teaching outcomes on a weekly basis to parishioners and others.

IDEA: Much of our local community now has e-mail access and this enables regular communication beyond the church announcements on Sunday. If e-mail address are collected at church services and church based activities then they can be made into a 'group' that can then all be e-mailed all at once. It means that announcements and promotion for activities can be done directly to people even if they are not at church that week. In addition, a weekly e-mail could also highlight to people what they are going to learn the following Sunday and this may help more people to go that are irregular or monthly attendees.

4 CHURCH SIGNS



PURPOSE: To communicate the life and activity of the church and encourage new people to get involved.

IDEA: Many people have preconceived ideas about church that deter them from getting involved. Perhaps they feel that they need to be Church of Ireland members to attend or simply don't know how to attend. Clear and simple signage that communicates a warm welcome will go some way to alleviate the questions and fears that any potential new person may have. Consider how your signs convey what goes on inside of the church (worship, teaching, activities, relationship, families and so on) to those outside the church. It is important to think about who you want to see each sign and how. If you want the local community to see them where should they be and how many should you have? If they are to convey a welcome to everyone then how should they look? Are they large enough to be seen by a passing car? Remember that, for many, the church sign(s) will be a major influence on how they see the church.

- A main sign that conveys mostly just a message of welcome, with perhaps 1 or 2 service times. It could have one simple message but be complimented with pictures of parish life.
- An activities sign that includes a welcome to all the organisations and their start times.
- A thematic sign that has a welcome but also a topical message for the time of year or for a church event such as a mission.
- A sign with a 'QR Code' printed on it. This means that a passer by can take a picture of the code on their smart phone and it will link them to the church website.

5 FACEBOOK PAGE



PURPOSE: To communicate parish events, activities and news items online.

IDEA: For parishes that would struggle to regularly update a website but still want others to be able to keep in touch with parish activity then a church Facebook page is an option. This has the advantage of already being user-friendly for some within the parish and there may be more options for people with the skills to organise the page. A Facebook page allows interaction such as comments and questions from those that use it and it also means that any announcements, new news items, photos etc are automatically notified to other people in the parish who 'like' your page.

6 LEAFLET DROPS



PURPOSE: To inform everyone in the parish area of your church's ministry or to invite them to a particular event.

IDEA: To send to every home a leaflet on what the church does or else an invite to a mission or new church activities. A team of people could distribute this over a few days or alternatively the Post Office could be paid to deliver it. Or you could make friends with your postman!

7 PROJECT THE INVITE



PURPOSE: To advertise a service/event by projecting it onto the side of your church or hall.

IDEA: Many churches and halls are in prominent places for passing foot and car traffic. For church community events (particularly in the darker months) it may be possible to project an invite (during rush hour) onto the side of the church or hall using a projector set up in a car. Depending on the projector it can be possible to get an image quite large and noticed by a lot of people for the few hours it is up.

8 CHURCH SCREENS



PURPOSE: To communicate a contemporary engagement with the congregation and visitors to church.

IDEA: Screens can be fitted (at a cost) in many churches without jarring too much with the architecture of the building. They can be used to display the words for songs, liturgy, sermon points, presentations and also to highlight, before the service, activities completed in the previous week and announcements for the upcoming weeks. Screens can also help alleviate the fears of those who find it difficult to follow the Hymnal and Prayer Book as well as convey a visual message that your church is engaging with contemporary culture. In addition a screen can be set-up in a church hall welcome area with scrolling pictures of church activities/life and announcements as a way of encouraging other people attending the halls (such as parents of young people) to get more involved in church life.

9 VISUAL DISPLAYS



PURPOSE: To communicate a Christian message to passers by.

IDEA: To use something visual to display a message to passers by. This could be done by simply printing a banner but could also involve lighting up a tree at Christmas or at Easter time a cross could be set up in the church grounds and lit up with different lights at night. The wall of the church or hall could also be used to project a giant shadow on –for instance a shepherds crook around St. Patrick’s Day or a candle at advent. If the church buildings have a window easily seen from a road then a T.V. screen could be set-up in the window with scrolling images of church activities and announcements.



10 LOCAL PRESS ENGAGEMENT



PURPOSE: To work with local newspapers/ magazines to promote church engagement with the community.

IDEA: Many churches undertake good community initiatives that many people do not know about and a local newspaper can help with this. A partnership with your local paper will not only help you to promote what you do but it can also help promote sales in the local paper. Consider meeting with your local newspaper editor to ask about how you could best work together. What are some of the stories/events that they might be interested in? Would they be willing to attend events to take pictures and what are the contact details you’ll need? Would the church be willing to pay for an advertisement at the start of each year/term to promote the various activities it runs?

11 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS



PURPOSE: To use the annual business gathering of your church as an opportunity to give thanks and share vision.

IDEA: While it is important for churches every year to have a business meeting to review accounts and so on why not extend the purpose of this meeting to include thankfulness, fellowship and vision setting? It is a great opportunity for a church meal together where you could perhaps run a slide show in the background of all the events and programmes of the previous year. A short time of praise and prayer could also be offered in thankfulness to God for his provision and the minister and others could set out a vision and goals for the year ahead. This could then be followed by the ‘business’ part of the annual meeting. It would hopefully mean that more people from church are in attendance for the meeting and that more are therefore included in both the vision and the day to day business of church life.

INSIDE OUT OUTSIDE IN

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