



Outreach Ideas
English District
Evangelism Team
Newsletter

May/June 2024

Christmas and Easter Outreach

Part One

How often have you heard folks lament about “Christmas and Easter Christians,” those folks who only seem to show up twice each year? Consider, instead, the incredible opportunities this presents!

Sometimes these folks have come at the invitation of your faithful members who have worked hard throughout the year to make this happen. In many cases their presence may have followed months, or even years, of faithful witness and earnest prayer. You can be sure that spouses, friends and loved ones have been hoping that one day this would take place. Now that day has come and they’re here! What a terrific opportunity for them to hear what their gracious God has done for them.

In addition, here are neighbors and guests who may not think to enter our churches at any other time. What a great opportunity to let them hear why they want to be in God’s house throughout the year and in every season.

It’s been said that Christmas Eve, in particular, is one of the few times during the year when those who are unchurched feel comfortable coming into your building. They may even know some of the hymns!



While most people assume they know about Christmas this may be the first time that they actually understand what the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of our Savior is all about and what it means for them. They will be blessed to hear your message. A clear, Law and Gospel message – for

which our congregations are best equipped – will be the best gift they receive.

So, why have an issue of this newsletter on Christmas and Easter outreach during the spring and summer? Many ideas take time to prepare. The approaching summer season gives us this time to consider the possibilities, fire up our imagination and get things ready.

Here are some ideas you may wish to consider. They will be spread out over this issue and the one to follow. In many cases the resources described are either inexpensive or even free.

God bless you as you begin to pray for those folks who may not yet realize that they will be attending worship with you in the coming months.



Toolbox

Ideas, Suggestions and Handy Bits



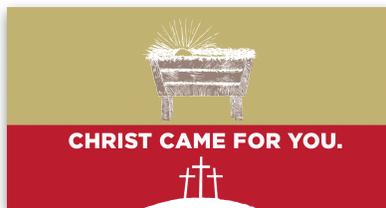
Lawn Displays

Here's a great opportunity to take advantage of your lawn and the traffic along the street in front of your church. Consider erecting three crosses for Lent and Easter. These can be made easily using lumber from your local hardware store. You can even drape a white cloth over the center cross for Easter.



Lawn Signs

Advertising all your special services to the community can be done in a variety of unique ways. This can include everything from display ads in your local paper to making full use of the lawn outside of your door.



Consider creating a simple closed/open tomb display using plywood. (See a similar table top version on next page for an example.) You can also purchase ready-made displays Easter scenes featuring Jesus, Mary, Cross, Tomb and Stone.



You may wish to consider having a full-color banner made for your church lawn. There are a number of companies which make them. If you have your service at the same time each year you could consider leaving the date off and simply include the times for Good Friday and Easter services so that they can be used again the following year.

Our LCMS produces Media Kits for Congregational Use. Each of these can be personalized with your parish's information. This tells your community that what's coming is an event that's too good to miss.

Nativity Scenes, for your church's front lawn during Advent and Christmas, can be purchased. Plans are available from a number of sources online for you to build your own using plywood. They can be simple or quite elaborate. A simple silhouette scene can also be made easily by enlarging public domain clipart with a projector and tracing it onto plywood.



A Viral Video

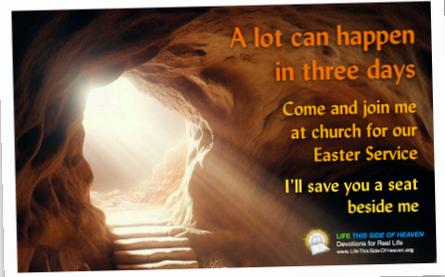
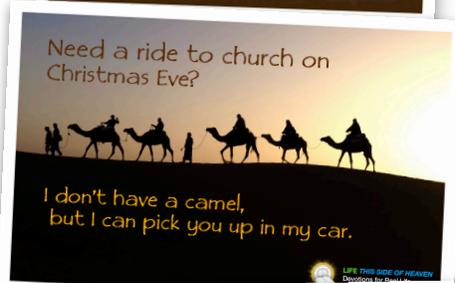
Try your hand at creating a “viral video” that you can put on your web site and social media, and which your members can share. They can be produced with little to no cost and can be prepared by any size congregation. Now before you pass this off as a gimmick, consider this example.



Here is one that was recorded by Rev. Robert Bugbee who, at the time it was made, was the president of Lutheran Church–Canada and served as Vice-Chairman of the International Lutheran Council. It's called “Good News from the Cemetery.” It was taped fourteen years ago. Since that time it has racked up over 8,000 views. It's remarkable! It makes me smile every time I see it and it's a wonderful and simple reminder of what the celebration of Good Friday and Easter is all about. For your video, be sure and include your church address, contact information and special service times.

Invitation Cards

Consider preparing Invitation Cards which members can share with their friends and family. These can be digital eCards that you make available on your website for your members to share with family and friends in their email, texts and social media. You could also design paper invitations which members themselves can print on their home computers. You could even have them produced professionally so that members could pick them up from your table at church.



These invitations can be much more than simply a vague invitation to worship. Have the text include an invitation, from the one sharing it, to pick up those who are being invited and bring them to church. If a ride offer is not feasible for some members then consider including text with the invitation, “Meet me at church and I'll save you a spot beside me.”

Table Displays for Homes

Do you have someone in your congregation who enjoys woodworking? You may wish to invite them to make Lent/Easter scenes. Using scrap wood and a jigsaw a simple tomb scene can be created with a moveable “rock” to seal the tomb until Easter morning. Your scene could even include a small cross. It can become a conversation piece for families and children can look forward to moving back the stone on Easter morning.



Simple pre-cut nativity decorations can be included with invitations that your members share with friends. They can be purchased in bulk for as little as four cents each.

Advent and Lent Craft Event and Invitation

You may wish to have a craft morning with the young parents and children in your congregation. This can be a Saturday morning evangelism event to which these same families can invite their friends. You can also extend an invitation to your neighbors.



Using cardboard rolls, along with free downloadable patterns, crayons, color pencils and paste, it's an inexpensive craft that also presents opportunities to share the Gospel. (If you're going to extend the invitation to your neighborhood you will want to encourage members to start collecting cardboard rolls early.) This even can also provide an opportunity to extend an invitation to Christmas services and Sunday School.

You can also find free downloadable patterns to make “He is Risen!” scene for easter using paper plates.



Pulpit Rotation

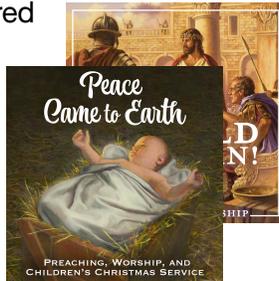
Pulpit rotations during Advent and Lent were once very popular in the past. On the surface, it seems that this would lighten the load during the holiday season. After all, each pastor prepares one message to take with them to each of the congregations. However it actually involves extra planning. This may be one of the reasons they have all but disappeared in recent years. However, the extra work may well be worth it.



While having one mass service together is also wonderful, there are some benefits that are unique with having a mid-week rotation. They provide a number of opportunities for outreach. You can advertise the services, theme, sermon titles and visiting preachers in your local newspaper, on your signage, on your website and in your social media. Having a guest speaker is something that gets attention.

A rotation also brings other salutary benefits. It builds a better appreciation of our fellowship in Christ. In the event that there is an emergency during the rest of the year, or funeral that takes place while the pastor is away, the neighboring pastor who will come to assist will be a welcome and familiar face.

Need a common theme with prepared artwork and services? Consider adapting one of the season packages prepared by Concordia Publishing House as a springboard to get the creative juices flowing. In many cases they include ready-made logos and media kit for promotional use.



Choir / Ensemble Rotation

Members who enjoy singing can form a traveling choir (small or large) which also participates in a rotation between the congregations. This also works well for an instrumental ensemble. (Create a different schedule so as not to follow the same pastor and hear the same sermon during the series.) Churches could include this in a news release to their local media.

Caroling



Members of Catalina Lutheran Church, Tucson, AZ, caroling

You could also consider caroling if your local community has a festival or in your local nursing home. Check out Concordia Publishing House's handy Hymns & Carols for Christmas. It's a great way to get out in the community. Be sure to remember to take photos and share them with your local paper.



From the Field

Our Pastors and Congregations

Marie Simone, who coordinates Evangelism for Martin Luther Chapel in Pennsauken, New Jersey, has explored placing the sturdy and attractive "He is Risen" crosses produced by the Easter Cross Witness.



Articles, Books and Research

Current Research and Writings



A while back, the Lutheran Witness had an article titled, "Cancelling Christmas?" In some areas, our congregations are among the few that hold services on Christmas Day. Some of those from closed

congregations may come to visit on this day.

Our Synod and District Programs

Materials and Workshops Available



Check out the re:Vitality bulletin, Connect to Disciple. Using the CTD process and tools, a congregation can determine which outreach ideas (whether their own or from other sources) have the potential for being effective in their context.

Please Contact

Pastor David Tannahill
of our Evangelism Team
with your ideas and input.

Our next issue, "Christmas and Easter Outreach: Part Two," will include ideas for organizing a "Holiday Movie Night," preparing your own "Advent and Lent Devotionals," creating Christmas and Easter "Photo Spots" and more.