

Outreach Ideas for Small and Rural Churches

Not much money? Not enough people to help? Tired of doing the same thing? There are ways small and rural churches are serving their communities without a lot of resources. Only a lot of love is necessary!

Here are some ways small churches are serving their neighbors:

- ♥ **Hot Dog Fridays** – For minimal expense and effort, a slow cooker full of hot dogs and a range of condiments can be a simple drop-in or take-out meal. Add some chips and iced tea, if desired. This idea offered by Deacon Sue Ann Raymond (formerly of CO, now in IA).
- ♥ **Help Yourself Food Pantry** – Local Boy Scouts constructed all-weather cabinets outside St. Alban, Windsor. The church stocks the shelves with food items locals can gather as needed. Kids on their way to or from school can grab a snack. Think “little library” with food items.
- ♥ **Provide a Scholarship for a Local Student** – Grace Church, Buena Vista provides a \$1,500 scholarship to a local high school graduate. Students have many needs so even a lesser amount could make a big difference!
- ♥ **Host a Human Service Nonprofit** – Prince of Peace, Sterling, learned that a local nonprofit, Under the Umbrella, was seeking space for its food pantry and clothing bank. Not only did the organization provide needed services, it helped make improvements to the building’s kitchen and air conditioning system. Members of the church also volunteer with the nonprofit.
- ♥ **Turn Scraps into Hand-crafted Items** – Grace Church, Buena Vista’s sewing group, Loose Threads, creates 15 quilts a year to send to VA hospitals for veterans and active-duty personnel. The group’s annual craft show gives its proceeds to church outreach.
- ♥ **Laundry Love** – A laundromat near St. Elizabeth, Brighton is used by many in nearby low-income housing. Church members provide quarters for these neighbors to use.
- ♥ **Extend your Reach** – Many members of small churches are active in local organizations that provide important services. Pray for, donate and find other ways to support these individuals.
- ♥ **Take a walk** – Finding a need to serve in your church neighborhood may be as simple as taking a walk around the block surrounding your building. How do the needs and aspirations of your neighbors align with the resources (human and material) in your congregation?

Finding new ways to extend Christ’s compassion to your community should be energizing, not overwhelming. Keep it simple! “Doing small things with great love” was Mother Teresa’s advice. *Whatsoever you do to the least of these, you do to me.* Matt. 25:40