Mission Grant Report Form





Grant recipients are asked to complete and submit the report form within one month of the completion of the effort or, if a continuing ministry, by January 31 of the following year in which the grant is received. Please submit any pictures, as well,

that would help to share the story with other congregations to encourage them in their ministry.

1. Please provide a brief overview of the effort.

- Item A: a stronger habit of praying together about outreach
- Item B: meet the unchurched, build relationships, and share the Gospel
 - Item B1: raise community awareness of our presence, including advertising
 - o Item B2: begin posting sermons (or similar) on the web
 - o Item B3: start the outreach event of an information table at Risefest
 - o Item B4: distribute free water at Celebration days again
 - o Item B5: engage nearby communities
 - o Item B6: provide help to individuals in our community
 - o Item B7: host the Griefshare support group
 - Item B8: make a special outreach effort for Easter worship
 - o Item B9: make a special outreach effort for worship in the park / picnic
 - o Item B10: make a special outreach effort for Thanksgiving worship
 - o Item B11: make a special outreach effort for Christmas worship
 - Item B12: hold approximately once / month non-worship outreach events to which we can invite the unchurched
 - Item B12.1: hold our annual soup cookoff again
 - Item B12.2: start the outreach event of "Block Parties" at local coffee or ice cream shops, where we invite the unchurched and offer to buy them a treat
 - Item B12.3: take our existing Tuesday Night Bible Study out into the public
 - Item B12.4: start the outreach event of our "Tweeners" small group hosting a block party of some form
 - Item B12.5: hold our annual brat bash again
 - Item B12.6: hold our annual VBS again
 - Item B12.7: provide free childcare for our non-Sunday morning events
 - Item B13: critical event (verbal witness) to 50 of the unchurched households we meet
- Item C: as a church, orient more toward habitual outreach
 - o Item C1: increase Sunday worship attendance
 - o Item C2: get individuals involved in Bible study
 - o Item C3: equip the congregation for outreach
 - o Item C4: increase our knowledge about the people of Sheldon
- Item D: don't spend beyond what was budgeted

2. What goals were established for this effort; that is, what did you hope to accomplish?

- Item A: pray for outreach in our corporate prayers, sometimes allowing for the
 congregation to voice their own petitions. Provide the congregation with prayer guides.
 Pray with the outreach event planning teams before meetings. Pray with the members
 present right before the outreach event. Track and celebrate how God has been
 answering our prayers.
- Item B: make face-to-face, first contact with 100 unchurched households, establishing lasting relationships where possible via routine follow up, and providing each with the Gospel in some form. In the end, we hoped to receive at least three of the unchurched households we met into membership.
- Item B1: along with the other specific activities discussed in this report, we budgeted \$1,300 total for widespread advertising.
- Item B2: begin posting sermons (or similar) on the web on a near-weekly basis
- Item B3: raise awareness of our presence, and meet new people.
- Item B4: raise public awareness of our presence, meet new people, and hopefully meet the legitimate need of people who are thirsty on a hot day.
- Item B5: through advertising and our parade float, raise awareness of our presence in the nearby communities
- Item B6: to organically show the Gospel in deed according to the needs of the unchurched people we meet.
- Items B8 through B11: get the unchurched (including those we've already met) to attend worship on these special days when they might be more inclined to come.
- Item B12.1: raise awareness of our presence, and meet new people. Also raise funds.
- Item B12.2: make this available for a recurring, simple way to follow up with the unchurched we have already met.
- Item B12.3: move the non-worship events we do out on to "neutral territory", and cultivate the awareness of involving the unchurched in our Bible studies.
- Item B12.7: make engagement with unchurched young families (or single parents) most feasible, and increase the ability of our own members with children to fully engage with the weekly life of the church
- Item C1: by the end of 2013, we wanted average Sunday worship attendance to be 60.
- Item C2: by the end of 2013, we wanted 46 individuals involved in Bible study
- Item C3: equip the congregation for outreach via sermons, Bible studies, electronic media sharing, outreach planning meetings, and newsletters.
- Item C4: Do demographics research. Pastor Tim should stay involved in the local ministerial association meetings. Learn from the new households we meet.

3. Did you achieve your goals? If not, what do you think were some of the contributing factors?

- Generally speaking: the two greatest challenges to outreach this year were a significant financial shortfall and the normal upheaval that comes with the first year of a new pastor.
- Item A: <u>SOME PROGRESS</u>. I cannot say we corporately bathed our outreach efforts with prayer. Prayer was indeed present: petitions about outreach were frequently in our corporate prayers the whole year. In early 2013, when we had outreach planning meetings, we prayed before the meetings; a couple of times in an extended "prayer-vigil" style. In the last half of 2013, we had regularly scheduled prayer vigils at the church (not-topic specific), but attendance was very low (scheduling issue, or lack of interest?) However, we fell short of some of our goals: there was not intentional group prayer before outreach events. The congregation was not provided with prayer guides. We did not yet introduce the opportunity for the congregation to voice their own petitions in corporate worship. Nor did we follow up well regarding how God had answered our prayers. I think becoming better prayers in general is a matter of culture change, so it will take time. We are continuing to strive for improvement: in our December visioning meeting, the most popular vision of the church 5 years from now is that we turn to God in prayer at every opportunity, together and as individuals.
- Item B: <u>SOME PROGRESS</u>. We did meet 58 households (an estimated 150 people) face to face for the first time in the latter 10 months of 2013. This is almost 6 new households per month, or about 1.4 new households per week. At this time, 26 of these 58 households are confirmed unchurched; we're getting to know the rest of them better.

Here is a list, roughly by decreasing success, of the ways we met new households face to face:

- o We met them outside of church by organic (typically not planned) means (21).
- They came to Griefshare (14)
- They approached our church for help of some sort (7). We helped about four households with some material need that never contacted us again. More successful stories can be found below....
- We got to know them because they were friends of the new households we met
 (4)
- We met them first when they came to worship on their own (3)
- Met them via teaching the class for the Cub Scouts religious education badge (3). Follow up was difficult with this one, because their continuity was the Scouts, not a church event. However, we did share the Gospel and raise awareness of our presence.
- They came to the soup cookoff (2)
- They responded to the newcomers letter (1). When the Chamber of Commerce was sending us lists of newcomers to Sheldon (they have since ceased), we mailed them a letter offering the choice among a few things each of \$20 worth if they stopped by the church (e.g. gift card to local stores). We had up to 50 contacts. They remain on our mailing list.
- They came to our "Block Parties" (1)

- Worth mentioning: at Celebration days, we surely met many unchurched households, but this was a poor environment to converse with people in-depth and gather any information about them for identification or follow up.
- Worth mentioning: Pastor began leading a Bible study through Love INC in Sheldon. One unchurched household was met in the Bible study. Beyond that, our visibility increased in the Love INC sphere of influence.

In an effort to build lasting relationships, we followed up one or more times with 80% of the households we met. In some cases, follow up was not possible. Here is a list, roughly by decreasing success, of the follow up methods used in an effort to build lasting relationships:

- o Griefshare: this was a 13 session class, providing lots of follow up after the initial meeting. Yet, many of the students were from out of town, or were already members of another church. Griefshare was good publicity, it helped a lot of people, it shared the Gospel with a lot of people, and didn't require a ton of effort on our part. It did result in one person joining our church.
- Community service: we have a Regional Treatment Facility in Sheldon, which allows us, if we are willing, to meet many men who are trying to transition out of prison and into society. They often need opportunities for community service.
 - Alan Goetz needed a means to fulfill community service hours. We had him help with our service projects. This resulted in his baptism and joining the church.
 - Austin (and his girlfriend Kristina) was in need of community service. He since got out of the RTF, came to worship once, came to several BBQ's at pastor's house, and then went back to jail. In January 2014, he and Kristina moved to Sheldon and both used our help to find jobs and lodging. We are hoping this leads toward church membership.
 - Similarly, we provided Brandon, Shaun, and Jeremy with a way to fulfill their community service hours. But, they all moved away when they were done with RTF.
- Providing the person / household with personal continuing help of some form:
 - Russell and Marsha needed food, rides, and budgeting help. They joined the church in early 2013.
 - Eric, Kelly, and Wilhemena: lodging, transportation, vehicle repair, moving help.

 We greatly helped them, however part of that was helping them to settle in Sioux City.









- Rose and her husband needed meals prepared while she was on bedrest due to pregnancy. We are hoping this leads to membership.
- Danielle needed help with her rent payments. This has provided for continuing follow up, but she has not yet joined us for any activities.
- Don needed help purchasing medication. He joined us in worship about three times, but we haven't seen him since Noevember.
- Informal personal engagement outside of worship (personal visit, phone call, or text message)
- Inviting them to a BBQ: we hosted these at Pastor's house, in the parking lot of a local hotel where we knew several people, and in the community room of an apartment complex where one of our members lives (photo at right). When we held the BBQ on "their turf", more people who didn't already have a relationship with our members were



likely to come. So, for example, the BBQ's held at Pastor's house were only attended by those non-members who already knew Pastor pretty well. It was possible to hold these BBQ's whether or not many of our members came. Given their small scale, invitation was usually by personal invitation insofar as possible, but we also used fliers at the hotel / apartment complex. We made it a point to take down names and follow up with the people that came, via some appropriate method.

- They responded to our "block party" invitations for free ice cream at Dairy Dandy, or free coffee at Prairie Queen (5). We did not invite the public at large to these; only the unchurched we had already met. Invitation cards were made available to all of our members. They were simple to do one or more of our members just had to be present for an hour at the ice cream or coffee place... and we usually scheduled them once every week or two. Invited people only showed up about 1/3 of the time, and never at the coffee shop. They were more likely to show up if we already knew them well, and in addition called or texted them with a reminder on the day of the event. A good venue to hand out these invitations is at a large social event, like Celebration days.
- Inviting them to worship: It seemed that those who were most likely to come to worship when invited were those who just came to us first (obviously), and those who were marginalized in society and in need of friendship and community.
- o Invited to existing member small group fellowship events (2)
- Word on Wednesday, which is our confirmation program for 5th 8th grade.
 Wonderfully, the kids themselves invite their non-member friends.
- o Invited the unchurched to our home Bible studies (1).

These were the situations, roughly by decreasing success, that led to lasting relationships:

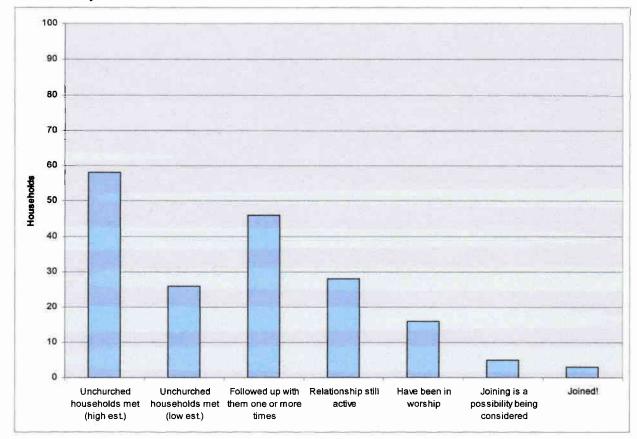
- o They were intentionally looking to join an LCMS church
- Built a friendship with them outside of worship
- o Provided them with continuing help of some form
- Their child came to Word on Wednesday

Here is a list of the "Gospel media" we shared with the households we met. Usually what and when to share was determined on a case by case basis:

- Road to Emmaus DVD's
- Follow up cards to those who joined us in worship
- In-house print production
- Tracts from CPH (\$81.61)
- o Books for families that just had babies (\$238)
- "Journeying Through Grief" books (\$25.85)
- o Bibles
- o Pillows made with embroidered cross for sick children at the hospital
- Easter eggvites (\$13.65 + copier)

In 2013, by God's grace, we did receive a total of 8 new members (5 households) as a direct result of these outreach efforts. Six of these were unchurched prior to our engagement with them. The reception of these members involved 1 adult baptism, and six adult confirmations. Further, as of the end of 2013, we still have active relationships with 28 of these 58 households we met (may not all be unchurched). That is nearly half of those we met that we are still engaging!

It is interesting to note, in summary, that for every 19 households we met face to face (and stayed in contact with), 5 of the households came to worship once or more, and one of the households joined.



- Item B1: <u>SOME PROGRESS</u>: Two local newspapers allow us to publish our schedule for free. The local cable channel also allows us to do static slides of community-involved events for free, so we have begun taking advantage of that. We also utilized bulletin boards in Sheldon and nearby communities. Widespread advertising was not undertaken because of money constraints.
- Item B2: **COMPLETED**. Related, in 2013 the number of people that "like" our church facebook page rose from 48 to 68.

 Item B3: NOT COMPLETED: We neglected to do this. Not sure if it was a valuable outreach venue anyway.

Item B4: COMPLETED.
 Though it's hard to measure, our presence at the celebration surely did raise awareness of our existence in the community.
 To our knowledge, no one else was giving out free water. We had a special label with our

church information on each bottle. We gave out all 1,000 bottles, and many "Road to Emmaus" DVD's. The cost for supplying water was \$330. We made Gospel media available off to the side, so people could look at it and take it without fear of being accosted. I believe around 20 tracts were taken. Also, this year we set up a "test your Bible knowledge" station, which allowed for interaction with Pastor. Everyone who approached was given an invitation to one of our ice cream or coffee block parties (this around two dozen), and the Gospel was verbally shared with them (probably three dozen people).

- Item B5: COMPLETED: We had our float in 3 of 4 of the parades of nearby communities, and we advertised our Bible study classes on bulletin boards all over four nearby communities. Float updating cost for this year was \$276.26. We also ran our float in the Sheldon parade. Supplying candy for the Sheldon parade was \$158.
- Item B6: COMPLETED, BUT NO CONCRETE GOAL WAS SET. See item B above for some details. We also helped the community by providing service through Love INC (e.g. people would call them for a ride, and they'd call us or another church to see if we could provide it...they coordinated a Thanksgiving basket event, and we donated household items to them throughout the year). We also helped the community by participating in the Adopt-a-family program for Christmas.
- Item B7: COMPLETED. We hosted the Griefshare program twice in 2013. Between the two, around 15-20 non-members were involved.
- Item B8: COMPLETED All of our members were asked if they knew any unchurched households we could engage. This resulted in very minimal contacts.
 - 184 non-member households were mailed invitation postcards; a large amount of which were apartment complexes. Easter outreach postage was \$66.00. We also made invitations that could be folded and put inside of plastic Easter eggs. They were made available to the congregation to hand out. Two unchurched visitors joined us; both were friends of members.
- Item B9: <u>SOME PROGRESS</u> No unchurched people joined us. I don't think the church was used to using this as an outreach event, so minimal effort was put in up front to promote it. We did invite two households that were camping in the park to join us, but they politely declined. It was a great fellowship event.
- Item B10: <u>SOME PROGRESS</u> The only outreach that was done was asking our existing unchurched contacts to come, and asked our members who were interested in outreach to ask someone new. We had one unchurched visitor.







- Item B11: COMPLETED: Our strategy was to invite the unchurched to our 7:00 pm Christmas Eve service. We made a booklet that was more of an "all occasions" outreach tract, this time including a specific invite to Christmas eve, and sent it out to 125 households, many of which we believe to be unchurched. We had also sent invitations to many of these before... but haven't yet met most of them face to face. Christmas outreach postage was \$92.00. No non members joined us for this service. If any ground was gained, it was that we made ourselves more visible to those who received our booklets.
- Item B12: **COMPLETED:** Here's how we did:
 - o March: soup cookoff
 - o April: Grief Share started, "Block Parties" started
 - May: (continued above)
 - June: (continued above)
 - o July: (continued above), VBS
 - August: small parties at pastor's house, BBQ at Sunset motel, started inviting people to our 2013-14 Bible studies, Ice cream social
 - o September: Celebration days hand out water, Power plant tour
 - October: Block Parties continued, began holding Tuesday Night Bible Study in public places, Ice cream social
 - November: Grief Share again, Wine and Canvas, Tuesday Night Bible Study continued
 - December: Grief Share continued
- Item B12.1: **COMPLETED:** mailed out 64 invite postcards to non-members for the soup supper. As a fundraiser, this was moderately successful.
- Item B12.2: **COMPLETED**: information under item B above.
- Item B12.3: **COMPLETED**: Our Tuesday night Bible study now meets in the local ice cream parlor.
- Item B12.4: <u>SOME PROGRESS</u>: Tweeners, just doing their regular fellowship meetings at local restaraunts, did attract a former LCMS couple that joined the church. However, a special outreach event effort was not made.
- Item B12.5: NOT COMPLETED. We neglected to do this, out of a lack of manpower.
- Item B12.6: <u>SOME PROGRESS</u>: We do about a half day VBS in the summer. It serves the kids of our congregation well. Historically, it seems that it hasn't been a vehicle for meeting the unchurched. Not much effort was made toward that end this year either. We did have non-member kids come, but they weren't likely candidates to join our church. They certainly heard the Gospel though!
- Item B12.7: NOT COMPLETED. Because of financial constraints, we did not attempt this effort.
- Item B13: <u>SOME PROGRESS</u>: I estimate we verbally witnessed the Gospel to 40 households.
- Item C: <u>SOME PROGRESS</u>: I believe we moved in the direction of considering outreach more with every thing else we do as a church.
- Item C1: <u>SOME PROGRESS</u>. By the end of 2013, our average Sunday worship attendance was up to 41. This was an increase of 2 from 2012. Our goal was 60, but this

- was misinformed, because when Pastor filled out the Ablaze grant application, he thought our average attendance was already 50, which is erroneously high.
- Item C2: COMPLETED: at one time or another, or continuously, we've had 63 individuals in Bible study.
- Item C3: <u>SOME PROGRESS</u>. Sermons regularly made application to the mission of the Church. We had Mark Gerken in as a guest preacher one Sunday. Eight outreach planning meetings were held prior to the submission of the Ablaze grant. The active members participated. To many members, it seemed hurried and hard to understand; Pastor didn't boil it down enough. We held 2 or 3 studies about the mission of the church vs. marketing / management principles; a handful of the active members came to these. Regular outreach tips sent via social media to the members who are active on such media were not received well, so they were discontinued. Since April, 2013, a small table has been placed at the back of the sanctuary (hard to miss in our little church) with "Gospel media" on it. It is there to be taken both by visitors, and our members to be handed out, but hardly any of it has been taken. We had 2 or 3 adult Sunday Bible studies directly related to outreach.
- Item C4: COMPLETED, BUT NO CONCRETE GOAL WAS SET. We got a lot of demographics research done in the course of preparing a support raising campaign for our church, including the use of reports from MissionInsite, ARDA, census data, and other information available on the web. Our best in-house estimate is that Sheldon is 20 25% unchurched. Implications for outreach are still being studied. Pastor Tim attended most of the local ministerial association meetings, and has a good relationship with the other Sheldon pastors he has met.
- Item D: COMPLETED
- 4. Is there anything you would do differently if you were to undertake this effort again? See above.
- 5. What lessons were learned through this effort?
 - Prayer is more easily talked about than done.
 - The fundamental strategy of meeting people, building relationships, and sharing the Gospel works. That is evangelism / outreach.
 - It's amazing how many unchurched people you can meet and begin a relationship with when you aren't even trying...you just have to get out of your "churched" social circle.
 - If mass advertising (i.e. with no personal contact) produces any return, it's only that it keeps our name in front of people and raises awareness. It's very rare that someone responds to an invitation through mass invitation, in our experience this year anyway. Giving out water at celebration days should be included here.
 - Personally helping people or making friends with them, though it may seem too "small scale", has solid returns as far as building Christian relationships.
 - It's easier to meet and engage the unchurched outside of worship.

- Meeting the unchurched in the context of a meal or coffee is easier than some other context that might be foreign to them.
- The people that are most eager to form lasting relationships and hear the Gospel are those that need help and have been marginalized by society. Everyone else tends to have the typical problem of being "too busy". On the other hand, these people require an incredible amount of effort to be in a relationship with.
- Outreach approaches that say "let us help you" aren't always appropriate; it can
 come across as demeaning and not applicable to people that are "making it" in the
 world.
- People without cars don't come to your outreach events on their own.
- Not everyone has a computer.
- 6. What suggestions would you give to a congregation considering a similar effort? See above.

| 7. | Contact person Name:Rev. Tim Oetting |
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| | Congregation:Our Savior, Sheldon |