



Mission Grant Report Form

Iowa District West

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.

The goal of the summer vicarage is to outreach to the Deloit community by means of children's ministry. The children's ministry consisted of two stages: a twice weekly hour long children's program, and a 5 day Vacation Bible School. The vicar would work in conjunction with the ladies of the congregation in implementing the program and the Vacation Bible School. The vicar would be in charge of outreach to Deloit, canvassing through the city and developing relationships with the children and their family in hopes of involving them with the church activities.

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

Faith Lutheran Church of Deloit consists almost exclusively of adults. The median age of the church increases on a yearly basis. The goal was to increase the participation of the children of the community in church activities in hopes of their further involvement with Sunday school. From increased interaction with the children, the church can build relationships with the families of the children. These relationships can form the springboard to sharing the Gospel with the families at large.

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

Time will tell whether the children who attended VBS and the Summer Program will end up attending Sunday school. The attendance of the summer program (12 events over the course of 6 weeks) was hit and miss, peaking at 10 children. The VBS was much more successful and averaged 20 children. The Summer Vicar also has gleaned much information about the families in Deloit and created a report about the families and interactions he's had with them. That will make a good jumping off point for future outreach efforts. One of the difficulties of Deloit is that with unchurched parents, it is hard to generate interest for them to take their children to the events. Also, many of the parents work evening shifts at factories, so they are not home to take their children to the events.

4. Is there anything you would do differently if you were to undertake this effort again?

The summer vicar had parish responsibilities such as preaching 5 sermons, teaching 3 Bible studies, visiting shut-ins for 16 hours (fulfilling a seminary institutional requirement). Also, there was no Internet at the Deloit church, so the vicar spent his office time almost exclusively at Kiron preparing sermons, Bible studies, and planning children's curriculum.

For increased outreach opportunities, it might be best to decrease the summer vicar's parish obligations to increase the vicar's ability to spend time around the community, hanging out at the park and interacting with the families on a more casual basis. Also, giving resources such as the Internet to Faith Lutheran Church would allow the vicar to prepare children's program curriculum at Deloit, decreasing commute time and increasing presence in Deloit. If this effort occurs in the future, I plan to be even more involved in the canvassing efforts, in an effort to help with continuity. Because of a number of funerals in June, I was unable to canvass Deloit nearly as much as I planned. My plan for my own summer work was thrown off by a unexpectedly busy month.

5. What lessons were learned through this effort?

The vicar experienced the same roadblocks as I experienced trying to outreach to the community. Due to the unstable family situations in town, outreach can be hampered by a young family going through a divorce, a family moving out, a child being in town intermittently as divorced parents share custody of a child, and so on. This teaches me that I'm not the only person having difficulty outreaching to this community, so I can continue on being aware of that in the back of my mind.

As always, consistency is key for children to keep coming to events. One week, vicar and I were gone for a youth conference, and we canceled the summer program for one night, our numbers suffered after that point as the rhythm was disrupted.

We were blessed that the summer vicar knew conversational Spanish so he could interact with the Hispanic families in Deloit. However, despite his interactions, translating fliers into Spanish, and talking to the families, they still remained fairly insular, and although the vicar established good relations with the Hispanic children, he was unable to gain the support of the Hispanic parents. When vicar canvassed with Reverend Vogel, a Lutheran Spanish missionary in the Crawford county area, there was positive feedback from the families- especially since Vogel had many connections through his chaplaincy job, so perhaps encouraging more cooperative efforts with Vogel will prove fruitful in the future.

The vicar hanging out at the park in Deloit served as a good place to interact with children. It helped introduce him to many of the children, so increasing the presence in the public places such as parks will be helpful in future outreach endeavors.

6. What suggestions would you give to a congregation considering a similar effort?

The congregation was very supportive of the vicar's efforts. Especially the ladies as they made snacks for the program, they helped with the children during the program, and they offered to walk around town with the vicar to point out houses where children were living. The ladies have been in charge of planning VBS in past years, so they again were the primary planners of VBS, with vicar being a contributor rather

than the primary planner. Thus, a congregation considering a similar effort needs the congregation to support such an outreach effort.

Also, bolster outreach in an area which you already have experience. For example, if you already are doing VBS, then having a children's program can help what you're already doing well.

Find out who your nearest ethnic ministry missionary is, and form a partnership with him in order to form relationships with non-Caucasian members of your community. If you don't connect these families to your church directly, you can allow the Word of God to reach these families, allowing the Holy Spirit to advance the Gospel in the Church at large. Besides, the members of this missionaries' church will have children who will speak English and may be prime candidates for your church 15 or 20 years from now.

Also, this may seem like a no-brainer, but encourage your congregation to establish a presence in their neighborhood, let them learn who their neighbors are, and encourage them to spend time in public places getting to know the community, this way, they can use their relationships with these folks to invite them to church, to Sunday School, or whatever the event may be. The Holy Spirit can use your parishioners living in the community to have a bigger impact relationally than a summer vicar who is there for 10 weeks and is already gone.

7. Contact person

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