



Ideas for Outreach/Serving the City

Many of these ideas recommend leaving a connection card. To see examples of different types of connection cards and to find other great serving ideas check out:

<http://www.servantevangelism.com/>

<http://www.servantevangelism.com/outreach-connect-cards/#.Vo1VcJMrKV6>

Soft Drink Giveaways

Fill coolers with ice and drinks. We always offer at least two options. We set up at grocery store entrances, parking lots, community events, etc. and say, "Hi, would you like regular or diet?" (It's easier to say yes when there are only two options!) Small home-use coolers usually are too small for this. We have purchased the mega Igloos that hold over 100 cans with ice. We buy Coke brand drinks instead of the cheaper stuff. (Over the years we've received hundreds of comments of appreciation that we thought enough of those in our community to invest in decent beverages.) Our connection cards on this one are coated to be water and wilt resistant. The card goes under the opener – we now affectionately call these "card holders."

Windshield Washing

Some years ago when we started serving, this was one of our first projects. We still do it just about every weekend. The materials list is short and inexpensive: a good squeegee, a wiping rag, a connection card, and windshield cleaner (We recommend you not use Windex style cleaner – ask your car parts store what they recommend). If it's too hot (above 85°F) or too cold (below freezing) you might end up making a dirty windshield even worse. If you are doing this at random (which we do not always recommend) in a parking lot, don't wash high-end cars. Their owners are unlikely to see your service as helpful. Car alarms? If you accidentally set one off, finish cleaning, and move on. We've set off plenty. They will reset themselves shortly.

Newspapers

Some convenience stores allow the entire stack of newspapers to be purchased. We place a sign on the top of the stack that reads, "Free Newspapers – Courtesy of Vineyard Community Church." Each paper has a card attached with removable adhesive.

Grocery Bag Loading Assistance

Moms with lots of kids hanging on them like koalas often need assistance getting their bags loaded into the car from the cart. The elderly need the same sort of help. On this one almost everyone will try to give a tip. As with all kindness projects, to receive money would taint what we are trying to communicate – "God's love in a practical package with no strings attached."

This project may require permission from the store manager on the day of the event.

The servers on this one need to be particularly safe-appearing folks. Smiling can help ease people's fears.

Name tags or T-shirts identifying connection to your organization is a plus for this outreach because it makes the loading assistants look more official.

Grocery Cart Returns

Approach shoppers as they finish unloading their carts with the offer, "Hi, can I take that back for you? We're Christians showing God's love in a practical way to shoppers." The shoppers will appreciate it, and the grocer will love you for it.

Cookies

Everyone likes a cookie. We purchase these in small packets of four. Although manufactured cookies aren't as good as homemade, folks are reluctant to receive unpackaged food from strangers. We have had our greatest success with this in downtown business areas. Go for quality of product - not low cost - people will receive a name brand like "Oreo" more than a generic brand.

LifeSavers

If you are looking for an affordable entry point for touching many in a flurry of outreach, consider this one. Everyone will take a roll of these candies. We attach a connection card, and give out hundreds of these candies to passersby. We purchase the candy at Sam's for about five cents per roll.

An option for this is to print the message of the connection card onto mailing labels and stick them on Lifesavers

Dollar Drop

At local malls where any sort of programmatic evangelism is not allowed, this is a way to get the attention of many quickly. We attach a connection card explaining our project to a dollar bill. We use Post-It note removable glue (available at local business supply stores). Then we go around the mall and nonchalantly drop dollar bills on the ground. For some free entertainment, stand a distance away and watch who picks up the dollar and how they respond to the message.

Chewing Gum

Similar to the LifeSaver outreach. When purchased in large quantities at a discount store like Sam's, packs of gum come down to around 11¢ a pack.

Lollipops / Blowpops

These are great giveaway items for parks, festivals, and college campuses. Purchase at Sam's for around 6¢ a piece — it is an inexpensive but effective way to show God's love.

Bottled Water Giveaway

Many people prefer water to soft drinks. Ice down bottles of water in Igloo coolers for an alternative to Coke giveaways. Use the same drink connection cards. We don't recommend combining this with a soda giveaway because it offers too many options and gets complicated.

Doggie Treats

People often love their pets like family members. Either make from scratch a great doggie treat or buy them from a gourmet pet shop. Wrap several with a ribbon and a connection card and give them out at parks or dog runs.

Helium Balloons for Kids

Balloons are festive. Kids are attracted to them from hundreds of yards away. We give them to the children while we talk to the parents and offer them an explanation with a connection card.

Ice Cream Coupons

Approach a local ice cream store and explain your desire to give away thousands of ice cream coupons. Chances are the owner/manager will be willing to give you a good deal on ice cream coupons. Attach a connection card to the coupon and you'll have a project that just about everyone in town will respond to.

Gatorade at Biking Trails

Some health conscious folks like runners, bikers and generally healthy people, don't drink soda. Offer them Gatorade or bottled water instead.

Car Wash

This is an effective, practical service. We offer a car wash every week in the summer. Have a professionally made banner or sign that says "Totally Free Car Wash!" or "Free - No Kidding - Car Wash!" Have a few people who are not shy, cheerfully yell at cars driving by - "Free Car Wash!" Former cheerleaders are great for this role! This outreach needs a good project manager to organize volunteers, car flow and ensure a quality job.

Washer Fluid Fill

Most tend to use their windshield washers more in the winter, but a refill project will work about any time of the year. This works well at self-serve stations. The liquid is affordable – as little as 79 cents a gallon.

A caution here: Make sure you are refilling the washer fluid tank (blue liquid) and not the radiator overflow tank (green fluid). We've made that mistake — \$200 to repair.

Windshield Ice Scraping at Apartment Complexes

Scrape first, ask questions later. Place a connection card on their clean windshield when done.

Windshield Ice Scrapers

Have scrapers with your name imprinted on them, or a sticker with your name on it. Scrapers last a year or less, so early in the season most drivers need another one.

Car Drying at Self-Serve Car Washes

Three people drying a car takes just a few minutes. On a warm, sunny day water spots will appear if a car is not dried quickly after a wash.

Hand Cleaning Towels at Gas Pumps

Pumping your own gas can get messy. Therefore, we distribute towels with our name and phone number printed on them. When purchased in quantity, these are as little as 1.5 cents per packet, including two color printing.

Pen and Pencil Giveaways

A small investment. Place your church name on the pencils and pens with phone numbers.

Purchasing Meals at the Food Court

One small group meets regularly at the mall for their group. Occasionally, they take a spontaneous offering among themselves. They then approach one of the managers of a fast food restaurant and offer, "We'd like to pay the bill for as many customers as this amount of money will pay for." On one recent outreach, this group paid for \$125 worth of food — that was about one hour's worth of sales. The manager became so excited he was explaining the gospel himself to the customers even though he was a burned out church attendee. Go figure!

Coffee/Hot Chocolate Coupons

Purchase coffee coupons from a merchant in the mall and give them away to customers. The merchant is grateful for the sale and the steady stream of traffic.

Be Creative!

These ideas are just the beginning of the many ways you can serve people in your community. Find a practical way to serve people and just do it!

Holidays

Valentine's Day

Candy Giveaway

Give out chocolate hearts for Valentine's day in busy downtown areas or in front of stores. This is an excellent way to do a "giveaway." Rather than ask "Would you like...?" say: "Happy Valentine's Day" and give them a heart and a connection card. You'll get very few rejections. Purchase high quality chocolate for a greater effect.

Roses

Hand out roses or carnations in busy downtown areas or in front of busy stores. Even men find this appealing because they can give them away! Hand a flower and a connection card.

St. Patrick's Day

Candy

Many cities have parades or at least specific areas that celebrate St. Patrick's Day. Bar districts really celebrate it. It's difficult to find specific St. Pat's candy, but green foiled chocolate coins are a bit hit. These are available through candy distributors and will need to be ordered in advance. Say "Happy St. Patrick's Day" and give them a connection card.

Easter

Easter Baskets

These are great for both "business blasts" and "house to house." Purchase inexpensive Easter baskets (around sixty cents) and fill with candy such as wrapped small eggs and other inexpensive Easter candy. You can make a nice basket for around \$2.00 including the basket.

Candy Giveaway

Since this is the season of candy... what a perfect giveaway. Give out candy in busy downtown areas or in front of busy stores. This is a great way to do a "giveaway." Instead of asking, "Would you like...?", say, "Happy Easter" and give them candy and a connection card. You will get very few rejections. Purchase high quality candy for greater effect. Make sure candy is prepackaged.

Butterfly Cocoons

From the beginning of church history, the butterfly has been a symbol of the resurrection of Christ. Death, change, life are all found in the cocoon. We found a source for butterfly cocoons. It is possible to purchase cocoons that can be timed to hatch on a given day — within a day or so anyway. One Easter we distributed several thousand of these with a special connection card. We gave them out on Good Friday, and they hatched on Easter Sunday. This project is best designed for churches in mild climates.

Flower Seeds for Spring

Give out flower seeds to celebrate Spring. Some seed companies offer the option of having your church name printed on the outside of the packet. This giveaway works great downtown, in front of stores, placed on parked cars, or at Spring festivals. Staple connection card to seeds and give them away!

Independence Day (Fourth of July)

Most communities have festivals to celebrate this holiday. Get a group of people together and plan a Kindness Outreach!

Giveaways

Blow-pops and gum balls are a big hit. Small American flags are also popular. After it is dark, glow-in-the-dark necklaces are really effective. These necklaces run about \$1.00 each.

Tattoos or Face Painting

Set up a little station and offer free temporary tattoos or face painting. Make sure face paints are designed for skin. Don't use tempera or poster paints! This is popular with kids and teens alike. An advantage to this project is the time you can spend with the person as you paint their face or apply their tattoo. As you are paint or tattoo them, pray that God will touch them with His Spirit.

House to House Free Picnic

Go door to door with a free picnic. Give away hot dogs, chips, buns, beans, and cookies, maybe even a watermelon.

Parks

Parks are a popular place on the 4th of July. Bring a team of clowns and give away helium balloons and small candy items.

Labor Day (September)

School Supplies

Take school supplies house to house especially in needy neighborhoods whose residents include many children.

Halloween

Reverse Trick-or-Treat

Although many churches do not endorse this holiday, it's the second largest holiday in the United States in terms of money spent. It's a part of the culture of America and by using this event we can connect with non-Christians in ways they can understand.

The Saturday before Halloween, during the day, throw a costume party. (*Positive* costumes, nothing scary.) Team everyone in teams of 4-6. Go house to house and give away candy. Say: "No tricks, just a treat to show God's love." Don't let them accept any candy from residents... only give away bags of candy. Leave a connection card or have a special one designed for this. Give out high quality candy. We tried this, and it was very effective. People were caught off guard at being given something!

Halloween Connect Cards

We provide free candy for our congregation for them to give out to trick-or-treaters. Included with this candy were special Halloween connection cards

Fall and Thanksgiving

House-to-House

Mum plants: A wonderful house-to-house gift.

Turkey dinner: Great for needy areas!

Holiday potpourri: Great alternative to food product or plant

Fall Candy Giveaway

Purchase specific Thanksgiving candies and give them out for Thanksgiving in busy downtown areas or in front of busy stores. This is an excellent way to do a "giveaway.". Instead of asking, "Would you like...?",

say "Happy Thanksgiving" and give them candy and connection card. You will get a few rejections. Purchase high quality candy for greater effect. We purchased chocolate coins that had turkeys on them.

Leaf Raking

"We came, we saw, we raked!"

Several people in small group can rake an entire neighborhood on a single Saturday morning. Maybe you don't like raking your own yard; but when you're with a group of friends serving in the name of Christ, a chore becomes a joy. Many yards take only fifteen to twenty minutes to polish off.

Note: If possible go to neighborhoods where the city vacuums leaves left on the curb (some do). If you bag them, leave the bags by the curb for later pick up.

Christmas

Gift Wrap at the Mall

Wrap Christmas presents for free for mall shoppers. Depending on your mall, you may have to rent the space, purchase the materials, and do it at the hours they ask. On the other hand, some malls give free space, provide the materials and are very accommodating regarding wrapping hours. We've experienced both situations.

A common question is, "Isn't this sort of outreach expensive?" Answer: It can be, but not necessarily. There are one-time equipment investments that must be made. Beyond those, the cost is about a quarter per package.

A second common question is, "Isn't something like this going to conflict with the other groups who are wrapping in the mall for their particular fund raiser?" Answer: We aren't in competition with the fancy department stores. They do a classy job. Ours isn't bad, but it doesn't compare with the nice wrapping places. We can help someone who is in a hurry or has a small gift or just can't afford to spend the money to get it wrapped at the fancy place.

Caroling and Candy Canes

Organize a caroling group and go "house to house" in neighborhoods. Take candy canes or a small gift to give as well. For another spin — go with low income areas, especially inner city urban, take hot chocolate and cookies and serve the residents.

Scotch Tape Giveaway

Can one get anymore practical than giving away Scotch tape at Christmas? Everyone needs it. This giveaway is rarely rejected and much appreciated.

Candy Giveaway

Give out Christmas candy in front of stores or on busy downtown walkways. Say "Happy Holidays!" and give them a connection card.

Winter

Snow Shoveling

Men's groups take on their neighborhood with snow shovels and snow blowers. We go door to door explaining our project. The snow blowers aren't necessary but very helpful. Most drives and sidewalks can be finished in a matter of minutes. Be sure to bring coffee and hot chocolate for the workers.