

PRAYER, CARE, SHARE

Care-based Evangelism Strategy at Gosnells CRC, WA



CRCA MINISTRY FORMATION

"A Church Reforming To Reach the Lost for Christ"

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The Ministers and Wives Conference of the Christian Reformed Churches held in August 2008 spawned an evangelism strategy at Gosnells CRC, a church in the south eastern suburbs of Perth, WA. Following this conference, which concentrated on church-planting, Gosnells' ministers Hans Vaatstra and John De Jonge began to talk with some others about care-based evangelism in the community. They then presented this model to the other leaders in their church. The general approach would be: prayer, care, share.

Prayer

The first aspect of this care-based evangelism strategy is prayer. A team of like-minded people would begin to pray for the community and door knock a designated relatively low socio-economic area. They would survey people in regard to the needs in the community. They decided that the first area they would target would be the nearby suburb of Maddington.

Care

As individual and/or community needs come to light that they would be able to help meet as a church, they would also begin to involve others who can help care for those in need. Various ministries of the church could get involved such as their deacons, ladies' fellowship group, or others keen to offer friendship and/or companionship. Some obvious needs that could already begin to be met are staples such as bread (bread already freely donated), other grocery goods

through the Foodbank, and friendship for the lonely.

Share

Once the teams have begun to build trusting relationships with those that they have regular contact with, they would look for opportunities to share the gospel. They would begin to ask people if they have any spiritual beliefs. The goal is not

to try to convert people immediately, but rather to enter into a spiritual discussion with them, to meet them where they are at. As trust and friendships build, it is at this point that the team will look for opportunities to share the gospel with them.

The next step would be to gather groups of people in a local community. As caring relationships develop with a range of people

interested in the gospel, they would be invited to begin to meet as a prayer - Bible based fellowship group that continues to pray/care/share even more widely in the community.

Building a Team

This care-based evangelism strategy depends on selecting the right kind of person to lead the team. Besides providing coaching support, the team leader needs to be committed to taking a hard/soft approach to the gospel. This means that they would be committed to the gospel and Biblical prescriptions, but flexible in how these prescriptions are applied. The focus would be on



monitoring the spiritual health of the group rather than following any one particular model.

The right kind of team leader would be one who has already proven himself, someone qualified for Christian leadership, who has started new ventures in the past, raised teams, has a sense of call, has faith for the task, and is resilient/persevering in the face of adversity. A number of people with those qualities were identified in Gosnells church.

This evangelism strategy has been used by other groups as an approach for church planting for a number of years and have seen good results. Wayne Pickford spoke at the Ministers and Wives conference about the work he and his team were doing in Berkeley, NSW, with the Church Army. Also, the Seventh Day Adventists (SDA) in WA are using this approach as well. They have started some 20 church plants in the past few years. Their Church Planting coordinator, Phillip Brown, has his office at the SDA headquarters down the road from Gosnells, and expressed his keenness to support and assist the Gosnell's church in any way they can, including welcoming them at their training conferences.



Testimonies

John De Jonge shares:

We started off toward the end of last year with reasonable interest - 8 people keen to be involved in meeting our extended neighbours face to face at their doors, and another 8 people keen to come behind with help as we became aware of needs

that we could help with as a church. A couple of months followed with teams of 2 weekly door-knocking and some good results. Other ideas were included by some teams like street BBQs around Christmas to which a few neighbours attended (1 also following up with a visit to church), delivering Christmas gifts (home made biscuits), inviting people to a low cost food outlet that the church runs fortnightly, and invitations to our Christmas service.

Involvement has dropped this year with some unable to maintain the level of involvement from last year for different reasons, and yet in spite of that the comment has been made that this is possibly the best contact the church has ever had in our community. We still have around 4 people on the streets regularly, having good discussions with a few people most weeks, giving support to one person with failing health, helping out another who has lost his job due to the financial crisis. Invitations have gone out again to some for our Good Friday and Easter services. And we are seeing new faces at our fortnightly food outlet, who have

found us through others we don't know - the word is getting around.

The challenge now is to maintain the momentum into the future, especially trying to increase repeat visits, generating more interest in the congregation so that we have more people on the streets again, thinking up new ideas of building relationship and helping where we can, and also increasingly talking to people about their spiritual needs as well as their physical.

And then increasingly underpinning this whole project with time spent in prayer, understanding that if God doesn't build the house the builders labour in vain. We can achieve nothing of lasting worth here on our own.

Karne De Boer shares:

After an initial burst of enthusiasm late last year and some encouraging results we have narrowed our focus to close neighbours and those who really appreciate our visits and welcome us in (usually for a beer or food!). Some friends across the road have started coming to both cadets and gems, however, we feel a real need to reach out to youth in some of the houses directly across the road. It has been a bit of a struggle to balance work, study, service in the church, looking after a family and reaching out to the community, however, I have been constantly convicted to make more time for the people around me.

One approach we want to adopt more regularly is to invite people for dinner to our house (we have a humongous patio and my girlfriend is an epic cook so why

not use these blessings for the glory of Jesus and the advance of his kingdom). My aim is to further strengthen relationships so that it is possible to develop a small group and ultimately a church plant. Far out, the more I think about it, the more I realise how much I better get on my knees and trust completely in the power of the Holy Spirit. May God bless our humble efforts.

How To Begin Yourself

This relational evangelism strategy that can be done in a six week time span or longer.¹

Prayer - 2 weeks

Make a list of 5-10 names of non-Christians that you know or would like to get to know and write them on an index card or sheet of paper. These people could be friends, classmates, or acquaintances who don't know Christ.

For two weeks, pray every day for the people you listed on your card.

- pray for them during your devotional time with the Lord
- partner with a friend and pray for each other's lists
- pray for your lists during small group time

Encourage others in your small group to do the same. This develops encouragement and accountability, and allows more students to be involved in praying for the friends.

Pray that God:

- will give you opportunities to

¹The following material was adapted from information found at:

www.godsquad.com/evangelism/pray.htm

- share the gospel
- that hearts will be receptive
- the gospel will penetrate hard hearts

Care - 2 Weeks

Over the next two weeks, look for opportunities to care for the needs of the people on your list. Simply asking questions and listening goes a long way. Maybe you could invite your non-Christian friend to do something with you. The event is not important, but the fact that you are investing your life in someone else is what matters.

Ideas:

- have lunch with them
- go shopping together
- watch a ball game or go to a game
- get coffee or dinner out
- play video games
- watch a movie together
- invite them to your small group

The goal is to deepen your relationship with your friend so that there is mutual trust and respect. It will allow you to communicate your love for them as a person before you share the gospel.

Share - 2 Weeks

The final two week period is designed to give you opportunities to share the gospel with your friends. Hopefully, a deeper relationship has been built, making discussion of spiritual issues less threatening to both parties.

Think through how you want to share the gospel with your friend and what tools you want to use (personal testimony, gospel tract, or other).

Sharing Your Testimony

Your primary objective in writing and memorizing your testimony is to better relate to the average non-Christian. As you begin to work on it, consider what your life was like before you trusted Christ or you really began to see change.

Before I Accepted Christ (or gave Him complete control)

What was my life like that will relate most to the non-Christian?

What did my life revolve around? From what did I get my happiness or security? (Remember, the non-Christian is relying on something external to give him happiness and meaning.)

How did those things let me down?

How I Received Christ (or gave Him complete control):

When was the first time I heard the gospel? (Or when was I first exposed to dynamic Christianity?)

What were my initial reactions?

When did my attitude begin to change? Why?

What were the doubts or struggles that went through my mind just before I accepted Christ?

Why did I accept Christ?

After I Accepted Christ (or gave Him complete control):

What are the specific changes Christ has made in my life?

Are there any illustrations that would be helpful?

Why am I motivated differently?

Helpful Hints:

Write the way you speak-make the testimony yours. Choose a theme and carry it throughout the testimony. Don't be overly negative or positive. Be truthful. Don't criticize or name any church, denomination, organization, etc. Time limit should be 3 minutes. Practice it over and over until it becomes natural.