
First United Methodist Church of Dexter, Missouri

I recently came across an article from Josh Hunt who has insight to help small groups grow. This is just as applicable to help churches grow as well. I hope you will pray about how you can be part of reaching out to others to help build the Kingdom of God, and it just might be a lot of fun! (Article is abbreviated some.)

I'm excited for the plans God has for our church!

Pastor Larry

Giving Friday Nights to Jesus

(from JoshHunt.com)

- How to get 90% of your visitors to join.

Fasten your seat belt, friend, because this is the most high powered approach we have. I do not know anything that works better than giving Friday nights to Jesus. Giving Friday nights to Jesus will reach more people in less time than any method I know. In fact, if you give Friday nights to Jesus and your class does not double in two years or less, it probably can't be done.

The really unbelievable thing is that giving Friday nights to Jesus is more fun than Six Flags. You wouldn't think a ministry could be so effective and be so much fun. But isn't it just like God to make something so enjoyable and so effective at the same time. Sometimes, he makes it easy for us to "*Rejoice in the Lord always.*" (Philippians 4:4)

We didn't dream this ministry up, God lead us into it through his sovereign working out of the circumstances of our lives. And if I had not seen it in action, I may have never been convinced of its effectiveness. Here is how it works.

We used to have our friends over on Friday nights to play cards. We would have dessert, tell jokes, and play games together. One day I suggested to my wife that we invite a couple who had visited the church to join us on Friday night. We did, and we had a good time in the process. During the entire evening, we never said anything about church or Sunday school or the Bible or anything remotely religious. But, do you know what? They joined the church in a few weeks. Now, he is teaching a class himself. And they would both tell you that they were not living the disciple's life before they played cards and ate dessert with us that night.

A few weeks later, we invited another couple over. We played cards, we laughed, we ate dessert, we had a good time. Guess what? After a few weeks, they joined the church and became very active in the group now.



They too would tell you they were not living the disciple's life before we played cards with them.

After six months of this, I did a little research. I discovered that forty-five couples who would have been prospects for our class had visited the church during that time. We were able to have ten couples to our house to play cards. Nine out of these ten joined the church and became involved in the class. Out of the remaining thirty-five, only three had joined. I don't know of any method more effective in assimilating visitors than this hospitality ministry.

That is why I say, if you want to double your class every two years or less, give Friday nights to Jesus. Have your friends over. Play cards. Eat dessert. Tell jokes. Laugh. Have a good time. But most of all, include an outsider couple. Ministry has never been so much fun.

George Barna's research indicates that 7% of the unchurched plan to attend church this year.(1) If churches were consistently giving Friday nights to Jesus, we could see 90% of them stay. At least 5% of the unchurched would come into the church each year. Another 33% of the unchurched are open to attending church. The most likely thing to attract them is the invitation of a friend.(2) When they do come, we need to have a strategy to get them to stick. We need to become a Velcro church rather than a Teflon church. Rick Warren says, "For your church to grow you must be nice to people when they show up."(3) The best way to do that is to give Friday nights to Jesus.

This ministry is based on sound church growth thinking: people are not interested in a friendly church; they are looking for friends.(4) That is what we were to the couples we had over to our house. We were friends to them, and they were friends to us. When we had our babies, they were at the hospital. They became our friends. William Hendricks discovered that people who leave the church often do so because they hunger for community. "They dream of being a part of an intimate group of believers," he writes. "They want to share life together with a handful of others where they can know and be known."(5) Giving Friday nights to Jesus creates the kind of community that people long for.

Let me answer a couple of obvious questions. No, it does not have to be on Friday night. You do not have to play cards. You might take people out to lunch. You might go bowling or play golf. You might go out after church with them. But, do something fun with them. Do whatever you do with your friends. But include some outsiders in your life. These outsiders may be newcomers to the faith, or believers who are moving to town.

You might wonder about the difference between this ministry and the ministry of inviting every member and every prospect to every fellowship every month. There is some overlap, at least as to function. Nevertheless, there are also some differences. The monthly fellowships are events that the whole class and all prospects are invited to attend. Friday nights for Jesus is a more informal get-together with a handful of friends. It is this informality


and friendliness that give it its power. As soon as it becomes a big formal affair it is dead. This is the life of the body lived out in small groups, that outsiders are invited to join.

I used to teach a fourth grade boys Sunday school class. Giving Friday nights to Jesus was effective for them--only I did it Tuesday afternoons. The most effective outreach I had with those guys had nothing to do with the class time. Every Tuesday afternoon I would take them out for a Coke. (This was before I discovered Diet Coke.) I would listen to them and try to get into their world. This too is an example of giving Friday nights to Jesus. Not surprisingly, some of these boys came to faith in Christ.

Some churches have a budget line item for the Pastor to take people to lunch. This is another example of "giving Friday nights to Jesus." It is one of the best investments a church can make. Granted, it costs money, but the souls are worth it. I am betting 90% of them will move on in the disciple making process if we will buy them pizza. Besides, the average family of four who attends our church regularly gives \$2000 a year, so the dinner budget is well worth it. *Cast your bread upon the water and it will come back to you.* (Ecclesiastes 11:1)

I Peter 4:9 commands, "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." "Without grumbling" means that sometimes people will come to your house and their rowdy kids will tear up your play room and not offer to clean it up. Offer hospitality without grumbling. Sometimes you will invite people over and they will promise to come and then not show up. Offer hospitality without grumbling. Sometimes they will be social bores, obnoxious, or rude. Offer hospitality without grumbling.

The Bible commands, "Get in the habit of inviting guests home for dinner." (Romans 12:13b, LB) If we will simply do what this command says, we will see tremendous fruit. That is what it all comes down to, doesn't it? Just being obedient to what God called us to do. It is amazing how much of church growth comes down to doing what God told us to do. You Can Double your class in two years or less if someone in your group will give Friday nights to Jesus.

1. George Barna, *Evangelism that Works*, (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1995), p. 68.
 2. George Barna, *Evangelism that Works*, (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1995), p. 70.
 3. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1995), p. 210.
 4. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1995), p. 312.
 5. William Hendricks, *Exit Interviews*, (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1993), p. 260.
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Each Thursday evening from February 13 to April 9 we are offering the Financial Peace University class to people who participate in the Bethany Ministry, Mother to Mother, and the Parents as Teachers program. A meal will be offered at 5:30 p.m. and the video-based class will be held from 6:00 to 7:15 p.m.

We need church volunteers for the following jobs:

- Prepare simple meals
- Clean up after the meal
- Help with children
- Participate in the meal & class with our guests.



Call the church office or sign up in the foyer.

Births

Congratulations to Brandon & Michelle Mahler upon the birth of their son, Maris. He is welcomed by proud grandmother, Linda Hill, and his Aunt Jonnie.

Come to Pairs & Spares

You are invited to join us at Pairs & Spares. We are a group of singles and couples who meet at 8:30 a.m. on the first Monday of each month at the Airport Café for breakfast and a time of fellowship. Call the church office if you would like more information. Our next meeting will be on February 3.



In Our Mailbox

Dear First United Methodist Church, Thank you so much for serving a wonderful dinner for our family after my mom's funeral. Pastor Lawman spoke beautifully at the service and we are so blessed to have such a wonderful church family. Mom loved our church and we appreciate the many thoughts and prayers during her illness. Blessings, The Carroll Family

Our Staff

We are very excited to welcome Ginger McCoy as our new Director of Children's Ministries. She has some great ideas for building our Children's Program. Please remember her in your prayers and support her as she begins this new journey.



I am excited to be starting Children's Worship! I need volunteers to help with the 9:15 and 10:30 services. If you are interested, please let me know within the next couple of weeks so I can get a schedule made up! Sign up sheets are located near each entrance.

Thank you!

Ginger McCoy



February 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 Wesley Hall reserved
2 Morning Grace, 8:15 SS Class, 9:00 CrossOver, 9:15 Traditions, 10:30	3 Pairs & Spares, 8:30 Scouts, 7	4	5 Praise Band, 6:30 Choir, 7	6	7	8
9 Morning Grace, 8:15 SS Class, 9:00 CrossOver, 9:15 Traditions, 10:30	10 Scouts, 7	11 Bethany, 4-5	12 Praise Band, 6:30 Choir, 7	13 Meal, 5:30 Class 6-7:15	14 	15
16 Morning Grace, 8:15 SS Class, 9:00 CrossOver, 9:15 Traditions, 10:30	17 Scouts, 7	18	19 Praise Band, 6:30 Choir, 7	20 Meal, 5:30 Class 6-7:15	21	22
23 Morning Grace, 8:15 SS Class, 9:00 CrossOver, 9:15 Traditions, 10:30	24 Scouts in WH, 7	25	26  Ash Wednesday	27 Meal, 5:30 Class 6-7:15	28	29 Church reserved For Music Festival

February Birthdays

2/1 Alishia Trammell
 2/2 Keith Byrd
 2/5 Rex Keller
 2/6 Shirley Alexander
 2/8 Clayton Keller
 2/9 Deana Jones
 2/16 Loretta Reid
 2/17 LeAnn Kelley, Judy Rimel
 2/18 Tanner Rickman
 2/20 Jeannie Baker
 2/25 Dana Degen
 2/26 Austin Matthews
 2/27 Harold Barks

February Anniversaries

2/17 Gene & Janice McCane
 2/18 A.J. & Bettie Nugent
 2/18 Ted & Barbara Mills
 2/29 Rex & Donna Keller



February 11
4:00 to 5:00 p.m.

The Bethany Ministry

The Bethany Ministry provides personal care and household products to people in need in Stoddard County each month. In February we will be open on the 11th of the month from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m. Each month we highlight 3 items from our supply closet for our members to contribute. In February we will be collecting body lotion, shampoo, and toothpaste.

OUR PRAYER MINISTRY

Current Prayer Requests

Mike Overfelt, Bob and Joyce Muse, Terri Hall, family of Becky Asher, Ponna Mayhan, Marvin & Jean VanMetre, family of Reba Ward, family of Terry Stickles, Baby Kensley, Jana Flannigan, family of Carl Hill, Marie Quinn, Andrea Backfisch, Brian Crawford, Alvin Smyth, family of Dorothy Burk, family of Charlie Corlies, family of Jasper Edmundson, Ann Worley, DaKota Southerland, Susanne Hielt, Carson Clark, family of Doris Leggett.

Our Sympathy

We extend our Christian love and sympathy to Linda & Jonni Hill upon the death of their husband and father, Carl Hill. We extend our Christian love and sympathy to Bud Coffey upon the death of his grandson, Andrew James.

Special Giving

In memory of Carl Hill - Peggy Palmer, Mark & Sherry Snider, Mike & Kristi Williams, Don & Deana Jones, Mel & Lynda Jones, Charlie & Jana Flannigan, Larry & Carol White, Terry & Glinda Almond, Ted & Vicky Matthes, Kitty Kandalaft. In memory of Wanda Nolan - Larry & Carol White, Loretta Reid, Bruce & Kay Plummer. In memory of Carolyn Carroll - Bruce & Kay Plummer, Loretta Reid. In memory of Vera Almond - Loretta Reid, Bruce & Kay Plummer. In memory of Betty Branum - Loretta Reid. In memory of Clifford Wamble - Erin & Mike Burlew