

# FOOTHILLS DISTRICT PROJECT HOPE SUNDAYS September 13, 20 and 27, 2009

## INTRODUCTION

As Christ ministered to all people in need regardless of social status, gender, ethnicity, or age, we as His disciples have the opportunity through “Project Hope” to reach out to people who may not look like us or act like us, but people whom God loves.

It is the Lord’s will that we are always inviting friends, neighbors and acquaintances to hear the Good News of Christ Jesus. As United Methodists, we tend to be timid at extending an invitation. It is time that we reclaim the word “evangelism” as this is what Jesus calls each and every one of us to do in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19) and as we are directed by the *Discipline* to make disciples for Jesus Christ.

By participating in the step-by-step preparation process for “Project Hope”, church members will gain confidence in their ability to invite others for example to potlucks, special programs, worship services, fellowship gatherings, Bible studies—any and all of which could provide opportunities for conversation about faith and being in relationship with Christ; evangelism in its most basic form.

We hope your church will find this material helpful in encouraging your congregation to invite others to worship. We feel this resource will present a simple plan to use in preparing for your “Project Hope” Sundays and will bring to your church the following benefits:

- Members will grow in their understanding of *invitation evangelism* and will step up to embrace Christ’s Great Commission.
- Members will be equipped to invite others through a planned schedule of teaching from the pulpit and individual small groups.
- Members will gain confidence in inviting others to church.
- Members will understand evangelism is the responsibility of both the lay members and the pastor(s).
- Members will grow in ownership of their church as they use *invitation evangelism* to reach out to their realm of influence.

The opportunities available by implementing this program are endless! The bottom line is that *invitation evangelism* works! Visitors do come and are more likely to return because they received a personal invitation. Please read over this guide and set a meeting of your Adm. Board for this month (May). Your leaders will need to decide who will take responsibility for implementing this program and set a date for the Organizational meeting in June.

## Organizational Meeting (Month of June)

Theme: What’s so special about “Project Hope”?

*Invitation evangelism* has been in practice since the time the two disciples said, “come and see” (John 1:35-51). First, Andrew meets Jesus, then he finds and invites Peter to meet him too. Phillip repeats this process by inviting Nathaniel.

“ . . . Philip found Nathaniel, and he said to him, ‘We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph . . . Come and see!’”

In Scripture, we recognize the importance of personal witness and the benefits of invitation. In the Great Commission, Christ commanded His disciples to share the good news with all humankind. That is what witnessing – evangelism – is all about.

- Plan how you can use this information in your church, adapting the appropriate program guide to fit your available leadership and congregation.
- Appoint Coordinators to cover the following areas: **Prayer, Fellowship, Education, Hospitality, Worship, Publicity, Invitation, External Grounds and Interior Cleaning/Decoration**

The **Prayer Coordinator** creates a prayerful atmosphere in your congregation as you invite people to come. Prayer is the foundation of our outreach.

The **Fellowship Coordinator** is to plan special activities during this event, such as a reception, potluck, concert or other special events.

The **Education Coordinator** plans special programs for this event as well as preparing teachers or topics for new students.

The **Hospitality Coordinator** trains the Ushers and Greeters to make them aware of specific guidelines for recognizing and welcoming new guests. He/She plans follow-up activities after each Sunday, such as letters, phone calls, welcome gifts and/or home visits.

The Pastor and **Worship Coordinator** plan vital worship services and sermons that allow new people to experience God's presence and to address their needs

The **Publicity Coordinator** strives to communicate this event in bulletins, S.S. classes, Newsletters, local newspapers, local radio stations, Bulletin Boards and on websites.

The **Invitation Coordinator** develops note cards, letters, etc in order to help others make personal invitations to people who are unchurched.

The **External Grounds Coordinator** makes sure that the exterior building and land is well kept and looks inviting.

The **Interior Cleaning/Decoration Coordinator** makes sure that the interior of the church looks clean, smells nice, is neat and tidy. The decorations should be warm and inviting!

Establish a time line for each area and assign responsibilities.

## **TIMELINE:**

### **Administrative Board/Council meeting (Month of May)**

### **Organizational Meeting (Month of June)**

- ✓ Appoint Coordinators and begin planning for "Project Hope"

### **External Grounds Crew (Month of June-August)**

- ✓ Hold one or more Work days to spruce up the outside grounds.
- ✓ You want a new person's experience to begin when they first arrive and to see a church that looks cared for and clean.

### **Interior Cleaning/Decoration Crew (Month of June-August)**

- ✓ Hold one or more work days to make the inside of your church shine and smell clean.
- ✓ Put away the “stuff” lying around and decorate the interior of your church so it looks warm and inviting to a “stranger”
- ✓ Check to see that directions to the bathrooms and all rooms are clearly posted
- ✓ Experience your church through the eyes of a stranger and make it more “user-friendly” so their initial visit will be less stressful
- ✓ Be concerned with the senses of sight and smell

### **Second Planning meeting (July 12<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>)**

Review the minutes of your organizational meeting. Is everything set in motion? Are there any areas of concern that need fine tuning? Go over the task force steps for the next two months.

## **July 19 – September 12 Task Force Steps**

### **Plans for Worship**

- ❖ Work with your pastor and Worship Committee to plan welcoming worship experiences. Utilize the three themes for each of the Sundays
- ❖ Consider having a ministry fair to display the various areas of ministry opportunities open to all who may be interested in participating.
- ❖ Provide a place during worship services where members can bring to the altar the first names of those they wish to invite
- ❖ Utilize a bulletin insert to answer any questions about “Project Hope”
- ❖ Have someone share a testimony of how they were invited by someone, met Christ and now are a committed member of the church.
- ❖ Preach sermons on hospitality, caring, evangelism, outreach and loving others.

### **Plans for Publicity**

- ❖ Suggestions to publicize this event would include newspaper articles, radio and TV announcements, banners, flyers, bulletin inserts and website.
- ❖ Design your own publicity or use the samples to be provided
- ❖ Plan congregational awareness.

### **Plans for the Invitation**

- ❖ Prepare a handout or bulletin insert with tips for members to invite their associates, friends, neighbors, and family for this special event.
- ❖ Give out invitation cards so that people can begin to invite their unchurched friends, family, neighbors and acquaintances.

### **Plans for the Hospitality**

- ❖ Possibly order small gifts for all guests to be presented on Sunday.
- ❖ Encourage the use of name tags by members with names, addresses, and phone numbers.
- ❖ Plan to have a working nursery ready and staffed to handle all who may attend on these three Sundays and beyond.
- ❖ Plan to have a training session for Ushers and Greeters.
- ❖ Create a follow-up letter including an evaluation form to be filled out about their visit. Each church can learn much from such an evaluation by a guest.
- ❖ Enlist a team of volunteers to visit each family in person as part of the follow-up process.

## Plans for the **Fellowship**

- ❖ Plan informal times where church people can listen and talk with newcomers
- ❖ Plan special events that allow new people to have fun in an informal setting
- ❖ Plan events that speak to the needs of people and allows them to know that someone cares

## Plans for the **Prayer**

- ❖ Have a prayer team in place and praying for names as they are given during worship or placed on a prayer board.
- ❖ Create a prayer board for first names to be listed and encourage the congregation to hold these individuals in prayer.
- ❖ Provide cardstock prayer reminders for individual prayer time.
- ❖ Hand out prayer cards in order to have people list names of those they want to invite and have them place it on their refrigerator as a reminder to pray.

## Plans for the **Education**

- ❖ Prepare the Sunday School children/adults to welcome their guests!
- ❖ Make this exciting for all age groups by involving the children in creating pictures and designs for use on bulletin covers, flyers, etc..

## **Design your 8-week countdown!**

### **July 19-25**

- Announce this event during worship with a brief explanation printed in the bulletin.
- Mail newsletter with a lead article about "Project Hope"

### **July 26-August 1**

- Print event information in a paragraph in the bulletin.
- Have another committee person give a brief explanation of the event, possibly ending with the unveiling of the banner to be displayed outside the church for the "Project Hope" Sundays.
- Use pictures the children have drawn about "Project Hope" Sunday for future announcements, bulletin inserts, and bulletin covers.

### **August 2-8**

- Have a lay person encourage the congregation to be thinking about who they would like to invite.
- Include an announcement in the bulletin reminding members to consider who to invite.
- Present a children's sermon on inviting friends to church.

### **August 9-15**

- Continue publicity.
- Have the congregation write names of people they want to invite on prepared slips of paper to be collected during the offering.
- During the offertory prayer, mention the gift of these names to be blessed and ask the Holy Spirit to prepare them for the invitation they will receive.

## **Third Planning Meeting**

Review the previous planning sessions and preparation activities for any concerns and address them immediately, making any revisions that may be needed.

### **August 16-22**

- Newsletter mailing with last article of this event.
- Continue involving lay members in sharing plans for these special Sundays.
- Preaching series by the pastor or lay speakers on invitation, *invitation evangelism*, etc

### **August 23-29**

- Continue publicity
- Three-week adult education series on inviting
- Continue sermon series

### **August 30-September 5**

- Continue publicity
- Have a lay person suggest during announcement time that members might pick up their guest and give them a personal tour of the church campus.
- Once again have the congregation write names of people they want to invite on prepared slips of paper to be collected during the offering.
- As before, during the offertory prayer, mention the gift of these names to be blessed and ask the Holy Spirit to prepare these individuals for the invitation they will receive.
- Hand out pre-printed invitations suggesting that they might hand them out in person rather than mailing them.
- Continue sermon series.

### **September 6-12**

- Mail or make personal invitations
- Encourage the congregation to pray for all invited guests to accept the invitation.

### **September 13- How Can I Experience Hope in the Midst of Fear?**

### **September 20- How can I Feel Secure in an Insecure World?**

### **September 27-Where is God When I am Struggling?**

- ☺ Plan services with uplifting music
- ☺ Limit announcements to those appropriate for visitors
- ☺ Welcome everyone- visitor or long time member- and remind all that we are all in need of God's love and grace. We are in this together!
- ☺ Make sure the bulletin and service is visitor friendly
- ☺ Utilize capable leaders in the service and make sure there is life and energy
- ☺ Be sure to ask everyone to sign the registration/welcome sheet in the pews so that you have needed contact information

## **Task Force Steps for Follow up on each of the three Sundays (1:00 to 3:00 p.m.)**

Send out—by two’s—representatives to visit guests **after lunch** with a “thank you” gift and an accompanying card with the church’s name and address printed on it. This follow-up visit is simply to drop off the gift, which—if no one is home—is to be left on the doorstep. This is not to be an extended visit but is only meant to reflect the church’s appreciation for their visit that morning.

Examples of gifts could include any of the following:

- Bag of microwave popcorn with a card saying “Thanks for *popping* in!”
- Loaf of fresh bread
- Jar of homemade jam
- A homemade potholder
- Small bag of cookies

### **Task Force Steps - *On Monday of each week***

Have the Pastor email or mail a note to each visitor thanking them for coming!

### **Task Force Steps – Follow up One Week After Event**

- Handwritten note from pastor
- Letter from Hospitality Committee

### **Task Force Steps – *Follow up in the Weeks Following the Event***

- Track attendance
- After second visit, phone contact to schedule a home visit. Find out as much as possible about them and strive to find ways the church might engage them
- Get them involved

## **Event Debriefing Meeting (September 28-October 4)**

This meeting would be held the week following the “Project Hope” event in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the event.

1. Celebrate what went well.
2. Brainstorm what did not go well.
3. Discuss what can be improved.
4. Implement follow-up activities planned during the organization meeting as a way of continuing the *invitational evangelism* ministry to all the guests who participated in the event.
5. Find new ways to be invitational and continue to reach out

\*Additional resources will be posted on the District Website this month (May) to help in your promotion of Project Hope and in making this an effective outreach in our District.