

Back To School . . . and Church

Fall means it is time for back to school, why not leverage the fall months to bring people back to church. With a little bit of creativity you can draw newcomers, build relationships with students, parents and local schools, and send small groups out into the larger community with purpose.

Back to Church Month

Declare September as "*Back to Church Month*," a time to follow up with one-time visitors or people who have fallen off the radar. This is also a great time to encourage your church family to invite their friends to special day just for guest (for example, "Fill the Seat next to You Day"). One church that did this saw their weekly attendance go from 110 to 140 and their youth group added 15 new students by hosting this one event.

Back to School

Principal One-on-One: This summer, meet one-on-one with a local school principal and ask how your church can help meet school needs. Bridge Building, a ministry of 200-attendeo Forefront Church in Lakewood, Colo., meets quarterly with the principal of Bear Creek Elementary School to discuss the school's needs, how the church can support the school, and then reassess progress at year's end. Church teams have led various projects from gardening and recycling to meal preparation. "It is basically a foot-washing for the school," says Bridge Building Director Michael Mele. "We've made inroads and built relationships there that would have otherwise seemed unlikely."

Student Mentoring: Recruit volunteers, including parents of kids involved, for after-school student mentoring and tutoring. Assign each student to a specific tutor and provide useful educational materials and tools. Ask each tutor to provide written summaries of each session. If possible, consider partnering with the [My Life Tour](#) (a partnership ministry with Kansas Youth Alive led by AGK Missionary Travis Dumond) and even offering a small stipend to in-class parent volunteers in under-resourced areas.

Other Outreach Resources and Ideas....

Back to School Idea Starters:

1. Host a free bike "fix-it" clinic to tighten brakes, align gears, grease bearings and fill tires.
2. Offer a range of two- to six-week classes on subjects such as finances, parenting, cooking or home improvement.
3. Provide free school supplies in donated backpacks with color-coded stickers for each grade level and host a block party where kids can pick them up.
4. Take cookies to local schools during parent-teacher conferences.
5. Provide clothes to the school nurse to distribute to needy kids.
6. Videotape school functions like a play or a sports award ceremony and give copies to the appropriate teachers or coaches with a thank-you card for all their hard work.

7. Initiate a program to provide a backpack of food that impoverished children can discreetly carry home from school on Fridays to help their families get through the weekend.

Fall Community Connections:

1. Offer orange slices to football players after practice or hot chocolate and coffee to fans at games on cold fall nights. Volunteer to videotape practices or games for coaches, or enlist your own cheerleading section, wearing church T-shirts to support junior varsity or freshmen teams.
2. Send teams of three or four people to rake lawns and gather up leaves free of charge, deliver baked goods and invite residents to church.
3. Rain gutter cleanup. You'll need some ladders, trash bags and gloves. It's messy work, but homeowners appreciate it.

Thanksgiving Meals:

Contact a local elementary school in a low-income area near your church. Ask the principal to give you 10 names of families they know that are in need of assistance. A week before Thanksgiving, take a basket filled with Thanksgiving meal items and a Bible to each family. This is also a great time to begin a bus ministry offering to pick up kids from the area where you deliver the baskets.

If you would like some help planning outreach events, increasing your church's awareness for outreach or having an outreach brainstorming session give me a call or send me an email. I look forward to helping you connect with your community!



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