

# EASTER PLAYBOOK:

## HOW TO GET AND RETAIN MORE VISITORS

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### INTRODUCTION

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I want to congratulate you and thank you for your heart. If you're reading this, it means you're interested in getting better. Maybe you're a seasoned veteran in the church, and it seems

**“Focus on the opportunities,  
not the obstacles.”**

you've tried just about everything to reach more people in your community with Jesus. You've been there and done that. Or perhaps you've got a few years

under your belt and have experienced some successes and some failures. Whether you've got twenty years under your belt, five years, or less than one, we all need fresh ideas and inspiration at times.

Focus on the opportunities, not the obstacles.

As a seasoned runner, I know I should stretch before and after runs. I know I should stay hydrated, eat well, and get sleep if I want to keep my legs healthy. While it's very easy to fall out of these habits because I'm tired or busy, a quick jolt of inspiration around even one of these core principles may rejuvenate my focus for a season. My hope is that this free download will serve as a jolt of inspiration for you. Even if you walk away with just one core principle to inspire you for a season, that will be a great win! I'm thankful for you, and I'm excited at how God is working through you every day.

# OUTREACH & MARKETING

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When it comes to outreach and marketing, simply think of it as ways to communicate with someone. As such, the more intentional you are in what you're talking about and how often you're in conversation determines how present you may be in that person's mind. There are three main areas of outreach and marketing I'll focus on here:

- **Postcard Mailings**
- **Personal Invites**
- **Doorhangers**

## POSTCARD MAILINGS

A postcard mailing is a great way to reach every home in a designated area. Because it's not in an envelope, it essentially has a 100 percent open rate. Even if someone doesn't take action on the invitation, they're still seeing it—and God can use that to plant a seed in someone's life (or nurture an existing one).

### Who can you reach?

- **Saturation Mailing**—Reaches every home within a USPS carrier route. You can create a radius around your church and select individual neighborhoods that you'd like to focus on. Your best saturation may be the area closest to your church, or it may be a few miles away near a new development.
- **Demographic Mailing**—Similar to a saturation mailing, you can select individual neighborhoods you'd like to reach, but with a demographic mailing, you can narrow down specifics, such as households with families or perhaps households with a certain median income. There's a long list to choose from. NOTE: Facebook no longer allows demographic segmentation, so a postcard is your best bet to reach targeted audiences like this.
- **New Mover Mailing**—Moving is one of the top three reasons someone is open to visiting a church; the other two are a new baby and a new job. This is a time when people are looking for new things: a new grocery store, a new dentist, a church, a community, etc. But it's also one of the top four reasons people de-church because it's easy to fall out of the habit. This is a great opportunity to reach people and extend an invitation.

## Advantages:

Easily reach every home in an area or narrow down specific demographics.

## Obstacles:

Postage can be costly.

## Advice:

Make this a primary tool you rely on throughout the year. If budget is a concern, focus small while you refine your timing, messaging, and call to action on the card, then build from there. Add a digital element such as a QR code that links to your website or an SMS QR code that begins a text conversation with someone.

NOTE: Outreach can help you from beginning to end with a mailing—from design to selecting and providing the mailing list to printing, postage, delivery, etc.

## PERSONAL INVITES

If you were invited by someone to go to an event, would you consider going? Possibly. Perhaps you've seen some buzz about that event on social media, you saw some yard signs

**“82% of the unchurched are at least somewhat likely to attend church if invited.”**

around town about it, and maybe you even got a postcard in the mail. All of these touchpoints are important. But I'm guessing a personal invitation is the strongest. Having someone you know

meet you at the event helps you feel less alone. Similarly, extending an invitation to someone to join you at church is powerful. Research shows that 82 percent of the unchurched are at least somewhat likely to attend church if invited<sup>1</sup> and 80 percent of people who come to Christ were invited to church by someone they knew.<sup>2</sup> That's huge! Having a small card that you can hand someone with a clear “You're Invited” message along with service times provides an easy piece to leave behind.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Thom S. Rainer's research from his book, *The Unchurched Next Door* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> According to research conducted by the Billy Graham Evangelical Association.

## Popular types of cards:

- **2.5" x 2.5" cards**—These fit easily into your pocket and stand out because of the unique size.
- **Business card size**—These are easy to get and are commonly accepted.
- **Square (3.75"x3.75")**—These are a little larger, so they stand out in a fun way.
- **Round (3.75")**—The round size is different and fun.

## Advantages:

Super affordable. Likely your highest ROI. An inviting church is a growing church!

## Obstacles:

You need people to do the work of inviting.

## Advice:

Always have invitation cards on hand, both in the church and in your pocket or nearby. Have a central location in the church where anyone can stock up on cards so they're prepared for conversations they may have throughout the week. Rather than simply telling people to invite, share stories from stage about conversations you've had with people that have led to an invitation. Include other voices by allowing different people to share. This can spark a movement within your church and encourage others to invite.



# DOORHANGERS

Doorhangers are one of the simplest outreach tools. These require a team to go door-to-door and leave the piece on the handle of someone's front door. You may recruit a volunteer team to canvas neighborhoods around the church, or you could give a handful to various members in the church and have them canvas their own neighborhoods. It's a simple but very effective (and cost-effective) way to get your name out there. You can use the doorhanger on its own or insert it into a doorhanger bag and stuff it with other items, such as a pen, candy, or another fun item to leave behind.

## Advantages:

Super affordable. Simple and effective way to get your name out there.

## Obstacles:

You need a team of people to help with the delivery.

## Advice:

Take a couple hours to canvas a neighborhood near the church. It helps to have teams of two or three for motivation and conversation along the way. You can work one side of the street while someone else works the other side. Consider giving a stack of Doorhangers to members in your church for them to canvas their neighborhoods.



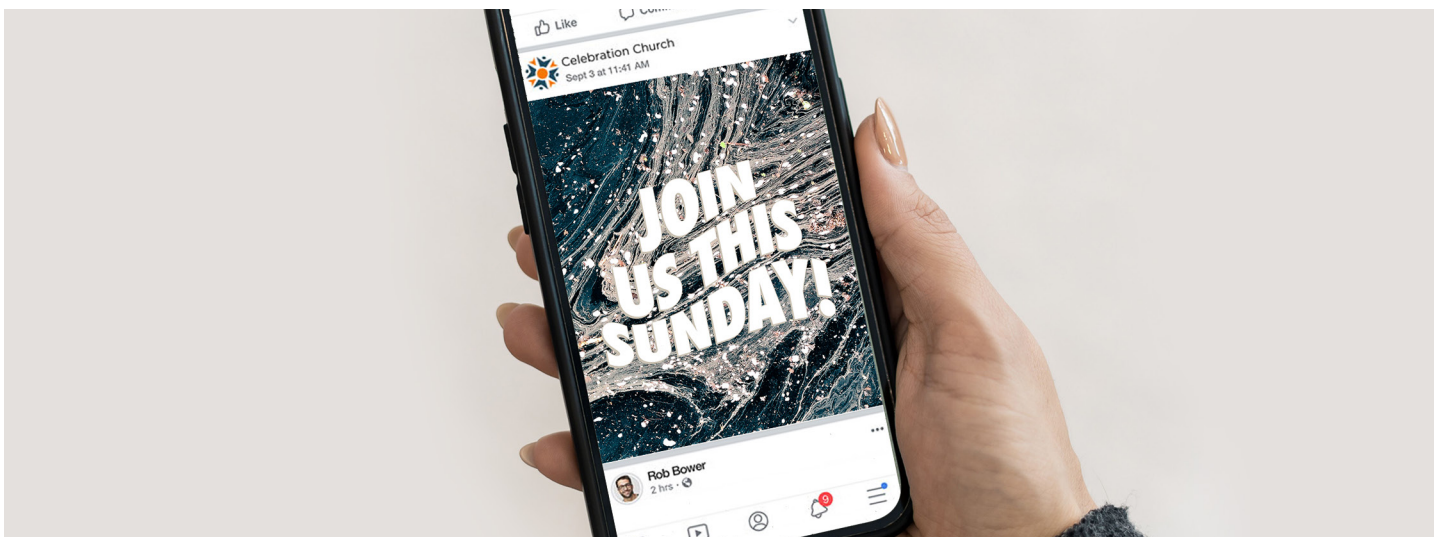


## SOCIAL MEDIA

In order to have a conversation, you need to be where people are.

There are over 302 million social media users in the United States, which is 90 percent of the population! Of the various platforms, Facebook is the most popular, with 74.2 percent of adults using it.<sup>1</sup> In order to have a conversation, you need to be where people are at. With social media, there are organic posts, where you simply post something and people will organically find it. Then there's paid advertising. To make the most of social media, you'll want to do both. For organic posts, create a schedule of posts you'll make throughout the week. The social platforms want to see that you're active and have engagement, such as likes and comments, which helps your organic posts get seen more. With paid advertising, it's not as scary as it may seem. You can run one ad or multiple ads at a time. Consider what you're trying to communicate or what problem you're trying to solve with your ad. For example, knowing that a lot of people are striving for community, you could focus on a message such as "Find Community at (Church Name)," "You're Invited," or "Be Our Guest." Create a clear message with a strong call to action of next steps you want that person to take. You will want to link users to a strong landing page on your website to learn about next steps or perhaps have them fill out a form that triggers a nurture sequence that automatically texts them throughout the week to encourage dialogue and invitational reminders for this Sunday's upcoming service.

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<sup>3</sup> According to Rohit Shewale, "Social Media Users—Global Demographics (2023)," Demandsage, September 12, 2023, <https://www.demandsage.com/social-media-users>.

## **Advantages:**

Affordable. You can start with any size budget. You're meeting people in a space where conversation is happening.

## **Obstacles:**

Thinking you lack technical knowledge might hold you back.

## **Advice:**

Start small to get familiar with how it all works and scale up as you feel comfortable. Whether you lack technical know-how or are a social pro, consider recruiting professional help to offload the work as it is much more affordable than you may think.

NOTE: Outreach offers multiple solutions to help your church with social media. We have an automated solution to help with your organic posts as well as multiple paid advertising options. We've helped thousands of churches of all sizes! If you want to explore getting some help, not only would we be happy to help, we would LOVE to help!

# *ASSIMILATION THROUGH ATTRACTIONAL BRANDING*

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Once you've executed some of your outreach and marketing, the expectation is that you'll see more visitors. I was discussing with a pastor the D. L. Moody saying—if you want people to get saved when you preach, then you should preach in such a way that you expect a response each week. That's a great gut check on intention and focus. In the same way, your outreach and marketing should be intentional to drive in more visitors.

As visitors arrive, what will their experience be? Think through the lens of someone visiting for the first time. Perhaps they're familiar with church, so it may not be as big of a deal, or perhaps someone built up a ton of courage and is finally coming after months of wrestling with it. Will they get a warm, welcoming greeting? You only get one chance to make a first impression. From the moment they drive up, you'll want welcoming signage in front of the church, in the parking lot, near the entrances, and inside the church as well as friendly greeters saying, "Welcome! We're glad you're here!"

There are two main areas of outreach and marketing I'll focus on here:

- **Outdoor experiences**
- **Indoor experiences**

## OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE

- **Flag Banners**—Flags banners are a great way to draw attention to the church. They can feature a welcoming message or communicate service times. Consider at least one flag that says “Welcome” and another that clearly states your main service time(s).
- **Vinyl Banners**—These come in all sizes and are super affordable. Think of these as mini billboards for your church to communicate service times and invite people in.
- **Yard Signs**—These are a great way to spread your message and branding around your church, but they're also a great way to spread the word throughout the community. You can canvas these around busy intersections or give them to your members to put in their front yards.
- **Street Signs**—These are great for general directional parking signage for visitors. You can also include a general “Welcome” message on one side as people pull into the parking lot and a “See You Next Week” message on the back side for people as they leave.





## INDOOR EXPERIENCE

- **Free Standing Banners**—There are many great options for freestanding banners. These are great for communicating a welcoming message as visitors walk through the front door. In other areas, you may want a message and design that communicates your mission, vision, or core values.



- **Apparel**—Having volunteers and staff wearing shirts or hats with the church logo and messaging helps visitors know who they can approach if they have questions. You may want to consider shirts that say “I’m Here to Help” or “Volunteer” on them. I’ve heard many times from people that they feel more bold in directly talking with people about Jesus when they’re wearing the “team” shirt.
- **Volunteer Badges**—For visitors, seeing someone with a lanyard around their neck and a name tag or badge is an obvious callout that the person wearing it can help them. Incorporate “Volunteer” into the design with an area for them to write in their name, or perhaps highlight a specific team like “Kids Crew” or “Prayer Team.”
- **Handheld Welcome Signs**—These have become more popular over the past few years. As people make their way from the parking lot Sunday morning, you can have a few people hold up a sign that says something like “We’re Glad You’re Here,” “Welcome,” or “You Look Amazing Today.” These are a fun addition to the greet team, especially for youth.

- **Wall Art**—What is considered wall art? This could range from a canvas print with an art-type of design to a large square banner with welcome messaging or core values. The type of material can vary from canvas to a hanging vinyl banner with pole pockets to one of the newly popular rigid signs or a quick-change stretch fabric that nestles into a light aluminum frame like you see in airports (my personal favorite). Your church is unique, so find the style that fits you best. Be careful of doing too much; you don't want to make things feel too busy and cluttered. It's helpful to find a design theme and roll it out throughout the church.
- **Digital Visuals**—As visitors enter the sanctuary, work to keep your established branding and theme from the outside, through the atrium, and onto the sanctuary screens. Can you expand or improve on what you're already doing or can you do it a little better than you're doing now? There are a lot of super affordable solutions out there that provide welcome videos, countdowns, sermon bumpers, and customizable slides.

**“Churches who are most effective at reaching new people create a culture that focuses on frequently inviting the unchurched and on hospitality.”**

## *RETENTION & NURTURING*

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**“The goal is to get that first-time visitor to become a second-time visitor.”**

Now that you've gone through all the work of intentional outreach and marketing and done all the fine-tuning with your branding and first impressions,

the goal is to get that first-time visitor to become a second-time visitor. How do you do that? Let's pretend that you're on a first date. You likely got the first date through some form of communication (outreach and marketing). While on the date, the other person has been deciding if they're willing to go on a second date or not. It's almost instinctual that they've taken you through some internal tests in their mind: Does this person present himself or herself well? Could I like this person? Would I consider introducing this person to my friends and family? When that first date ends, if you're not intentional with your follow-up, it's likely you may never hear from that person again. Similar to the D. L. Moody model of intentional preaching, be intentional about wanting to follow up with visitors.

## FOUR RETENTION TIPS FOR VISITORS:

1. Be sure to get their contact info. If you don't have a way to contact them, communication will stop. You can collect information through a QR code on the screen during announcements or on the back of seats, or you can have them fill out a card and connect with someone at a designated visitor area or guest check-in. A common incentive is to offer a visitor gift they can pick up at the visitor area. You can decide what makes sense for your church. Common gifts include a mug, pen, coffee, or Chick-fil-A gift card. Have fun with it. If it's summertime, maybe get some fun sunglasses with the church logo on them. Let your personality shine.
2. Make it known with repetition. At the beginning and end of service, welcome first-time or second-time guests from the stage and tell them what next steps you'd like them to take, such as filling out a connection card or visiting the guest table. Although it may get old to you and your staff, visitors are hearing it for the first time. **“Make the next steps known through clear direction and repeated mentions.”**
3. Have an ongoing conversation throughout the week. Many churches will send a form letter signed by the pastor or a handwritten card from someone on staff to visitors (remember, you can't do this if you don't have their contact info). This is a fantastic personal touch. You may also want to consider an automated texting series that prompts interactive conversation throughout the week, along with intentional reminders that you look forward to seeing them again this coming Sunday. This texting is free through the Gloo app, which can be accessed and managed by your team.
4. Continue to invite! If they don't come back the following Sunday, it's okay. There will be an expected number of people who decide that your church may not be the right fit for them. There's also a chance something came up that prevented them from attending. Don't let discouragement hold you back from being intentional about continuing to invite them back for a few weeks. As time passes, use your judgment on how often to send a message. Keep these visitors in your prayers and follow God's leading because you never know how God may use you to reach them at the right moment.

**“People are more open to the Gospel than ever before, and they're searching for community.”**

I encourage you to share these tips with your staff and key lay leaders, especially the ones you have chosen to focus on this year. And remember the Outreach team is here to help you please visit our website or reach out to speak with a specialist. We're praying for you and your church staff!



# AUTHOR BIO

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Jamie Stahler is a seasoned marketing professional with a decade-long commitment to Outreach, Inc., currently serving as the Vice President of Marketing, Sales & Partnerships. In his role at Outreach, Jamie combines his passion for marketing with a deep commitment to extending an invitation to share the love of Jesus with everyone. Jamie brings a wealth of experience and strategic insight to his current position from previous stints at organizations like National Day of Prayer and global giant, Nike.



Beyond the boardroom, Jamie is a devoted husband and father of three boys. A runner and national park enthusiast, he finds inspiration in both the great outdoors and the challenges of the marketing world. Originally from Canton, Ohio, Jamie's journey has taken him from the scenic landscapes of Colorado Springs, Colorado, where he resided for 15 years, to his current home in the vibrant community of Chattanooga, Tennessee.

## CONNECT WITH US

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We're thrilled to be on this journey with you as you strive to make a difference in your community. If you have any questions, need further assistance, or just want to chat about your goals, we're all ears! Reach out to us at [Outreach.com](https://www.outreach.com) or call us at 1-800-991-6011, and let's work together to help your church flourish. Your mission is our mission, and we can't wait to connect with you. Here's to reaching more hearts and growing together!



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