

## Community Engagement

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## Church Number One

- 80 years old and has seen the neighborhood change over the years
- People drive to the church on Sunday.
- The building insulates them from the neighborhood.
- They don't understand why people do not come to church.
- Insider mentality

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## Church Number Two

- 80 years old and has seen the neighborhood change
- Big on social activism: participate in a Saturday meal to feed the hungry. They do a clothing give away a couple times a year.
- The expectation is people will come to them for food or clothing.
- Not insulated like the first group, but still an insider mentality
- Being socially active is not how I think we should think about community engagement.
- Emphasis is on the community coming to them

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## Missional Mindset

- John 21:15-17
- Practical
- Spiritual
- Community

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## Church and Ministry Taxonomy

**Swamp**



**Reservoir**



**Canal**



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## Swamp

- Inwardly focused
- Not willing to risk anything to move forward
- Have become satisfied with the status quo
- Missional Mindset
  - At most give money, but no physical engagement
  - Only want to follow Jesus when it's comfortable
  - Happy with an inwardly focused community



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## Reservoir

- More outwardly focused, but often it is a pet ministry
- Can morph into a social agency attitude
- Risk is usually connected to getting people to come to us
- Prefer status quo, but can change at times
- Missional Mindset
  - Focus on pet project or ministry
  - Take doing for others seriously, but still want comfort of pet ministry or project
  - Happy with maintaining a set group to keep pet ministry or projects going



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## Canal

- Outwardly focused
- Willing to take risk in service to mission
- Understand the importance of adapting
- Missional Mindset
  - Seek ways to have transformational impact by fully engaging those outside of congregation
  - Willing to follow Jesus even when it is not comfortable and do something new
  - Seeking to expand the community to include others



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## Community Engagement

- What I am proposing for community engagement is different.
- It is not an inside-out approach, but an outside-in approach
- In my opinion, it is an approach that does not lose sight of discipleship that transforms the world.

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## Community Engagement

- Let me give you an example of an inside-out approach that was the tagline for a denomination.
- Open hearts, Open minds, Open doors
  - Let me be clear that this is not a bad tagline, and its purpose is to communicate an openness to everyone and to be welcome.
- If you think about it — it perpetuates an inside-out approach
- Our doors are open we are waiting inside with open hearts and minds for you.
- My point is one can take this tagline seriously, but it would not require them to move beyond their building.
- Includes socially active congregations

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## Community Engagement

- Outside-in approach requires us to move beyond our building.
- Outside-in approach requires more than being willing to welcome people.
- Outside-in approach requires us to dialogue, learn from, and participate in the work of transformation with those in the community.
- Outside-in approach recognizes that God is already at work in the community; we are simply participating in the work God is already doing.
- Outside-in approach is making a change for how we think about what it means to be a church.

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## 7 Practices

- These practices are not all-encompassing.
- Practices help us to reframe the way we think about being the church.
- Let me say this means taking a hard look in the mirror.
  - We cannot simply say we are friendly church — Who are we friendly to?
  - We must see ourselves not as what we think, but as those in the community do.

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## Practice 1: Sign, word, and deed

- Theologically understand that God is already at work in the community.
- We are not saving people.
- We are called to share the gospel in sign, word, and deed.
- This is what Jesus called the disciples to do.
  - Feeding of the 5,000 (Jesus preaching: word; boy shares loaves and fishes: deed, the few loaves and fishes feed all present: sign)
- It is what the first believers of the way did.
- Question is, “How are we engaging the community through sign, word, and deed?”

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## Practice 2: Called to Go

- We have to physically go out into the community.
- This may mean hanging out at the Starbucks.
- This may mean hanging out at the local BBQ joint.
- This may mean hanging out at the bus stop, beauty salon, barber shop.
  - We go to these places so we can listen and hear what is going on in the community.
  - We go so we can build authentic relationships.
- In the gospel of John, Jesus goes out to Samaria and at noon he encounters the Samaritan Woman at the well. Jesus physically went out.
- Question is, “Are we expecting those in the community to come to us or are we going to them?”

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## Practice 3: Walk the streets

- Obviously, this is not possible for everyone due to age or physical capacity.
  - Census data reports like MissionInsite can help.
- Called to go — learn who is in the neighborhood
  - Nehemiah when he repaired the gate went out and walked to see what was happening
  - What businesses, schools, apartments?
  - How is the community changing?
  - Managing Director of the Institute for Community Engagement (Urban Fellows)
  - One of the things we begin to learn is assessing the community where you're working.
- Start with a 2-mile radius — seems small, but a lot happening within two miles
- Question is, “Are we learning something new about our community daily?”

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## Practice 4—Building Relationships

- We talked about meeting people out in the community.
- We should do this to build authentic relationships.
- Inauthentic relationships
  - We simply are trying to get them to come to church.
  - We want them to do something for us — pay the bills.
- Pastor in KC talked with fence hangers — He would not simply walk in every morning, but stopped and talked with those hanging by the fence. When someone was missing he would ask about them. After a few months they started participating in church activities because he was authentic.
- Pastor in Seattle where it is tough being Christian — Someone went on Facebook and bad-mouthed the congregation. Others in the community, many of whom did not even attend the church, rallied around the congregation because of the relationships they had built in the community.
- Question is, “Are we building relationships for the right reason?”

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## Practice 5: Collaborate

- We often think because we're the church folk should listen to us and follow us.
- We want to take the lead.
- Learn to collaborate with others who are passionate about the community.
  - Paul had to work with others in ministry. Priscilla and Aquila.
- May not need to start an after-school program or a new exercise ministry at the church. Collaborate with the school or with a local fitness place.
- Developing a shared understanding for the community
- Question is, "Are we trying to be lone rangers or collaborate with others?"

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## Practice 6: Making a Difference

- As Christians we are hoping to participate in God's work of transformation.
- My suggestion is that we start small and focus on one thing and not try to do everything.
  - A lot of opportunities not do everything
  - Use our gifts toward a common end.
  - Not compete with what others are doing
  - Church in a rural area about 20 people. Not have a lot, but they could do small house repairs.
- Question is, "Are we trying to do too much?"

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## Practice 7: Reshape our Understanding of Community

- We have to expand how we think about community.
- *Not Safe For Church*
- Not think about community as those who come on Sunday and maybe to Sunday School
- Community has to be those we are connected to in various ways, be it ministry, worship, Bible study, or collaborations.
- Community is not just those inside the building, but those connected on the outside.
- Question is, "Do we see those outside our building as part of the community?"

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## No Excuses

- A couple common excuses are we have only a few people.
  - Does not take a lot of people
  - Where two or three are gathered
- We are too old.
  - Church had a knitting group — moved the knitting group to Starbucks where they were able to connect with others.
  - **Not enough money**
    - Not do it alone
    - Start small with what we can do

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## Outside-IN Congregation

- Shares in sign, word, and deed
- Goes out — doesn't wait for others to come in
- Walks the streets — Joe Daniels talks about claim your ZIP code.
- Builds relationships
- Collaborates
- Makes a difference
- Reshapes our understanding of community

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## Outside-in or inside-out

- The question is are you an outside-in or inside-out church?
- We are living in a culture where being an outside-in church can help a congregation be vital.
- What I have outlined are practices that can help you to make the shift.
- My hope and prayer when you leave here today is that you will not think about quick fixes, but dedicate yourselves to really being an outside-in church.
- A church that seeks to engage the community participating in God's work of transformation

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## Questions

- "How are we engaging the community through sign, word and deed?"
- "Are we expecting those in the community to come to us or are we going to them?"
- "Are we learning something new about our community daily?"
- "Are we building relationships for the right reasons?"
- "Are we trying to be lone rangers or collaborate with others?"
- "Are we trying to do too much?"
- "Do we see those outside our building as part of the community?"

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