



Ministry Sphere 6 | Outreach as Overflow

The sixth ministry sphere, outreach, is the natural consequence of ministry that overflows from our churches. Like a bubbling spring, the rich resources within our churches can spill out to the community and world around us. But sometimes we need to raise the lid of our vision to allow outreach to come forth.

The aim of this page is to report more than to instruct. This ministry is new and we look forward to additional stories and insights that others will share. Consider contacting us with yours as well!

Outreach as Overflow

Effective outreach is a sign of a healthy church. Outreach to our communities and world with acts of love and the proclamation of the Gospel are to the church what exercise is to the body: essential. Sometimes it is difficult to exercise, but once a person develops a routine, it can be one of the best parts of the day. It becomes natural, and it adds good health and good feelings (a dose of endorphins) to enliven one's day.

If your church is on a plateau and not growing, your leaders may have developed an introspective approach to ministry. Struggling to survive, they may be placing emphasis on program maintenance rather than on vision to reach the world for Christ. It is easy to think that if we give of ourselves to the people around us, there won't be enough resources or energy left to sustain our ministries. But the magnificent irony in the kingdom of God is that the more we give away, the more we get back (Luke 6:38). When we focus on blessing the world around us, people want to be part of the action and are drawn to our churches.

Your congregation has areas of natural strength. Regarding the ministry spheres, for example, your church is likely strong in some areas and weak in others. It is most natural for your church's areas of strength to become its outreach source. As you think about the ministry spheres, ask yourself which spheres are likely to develop as outreach for your congregation.

Too often when we think of the topic of sexuality, we think the only "outreach" our churches can have is to preach against sin. And as the culture changes around us, we become divided about how to confront sexual sin without breeding further controversy. But our focus is on ministry. We are reaching people for Christ. The world is waiting for a church like yours to show the very love, grace, compassion, and uncompromised truth of Jesus to them in a Christ-like manner.

Ideas for the Ministry Spheres

Ponder each of the ministry spheres in light of your church's strengths and weaknesses. Allow ideas from others to spark new vision of your own. As you find success and joy in outreach, share them with us so that we can post them on this website to inspire others.

Establishing a Prayer Shield

A solid conviction about the power of prayer is often lacking in the average church and church leadership team. We have become so excellent in organizing programs to keep up with the competing events in our fast-paced society that our church members seem too busy and unsettled to gather for serious and sustained intercession. There are wonderful exceptions to the norm, however, one of which is described in the account that follows.

In the book, *Turning Controversy into Church Ministry*, WP Campbell described in brief the significant ministry of healing prayer that has developed at The Falls Church in Falls Church, Virginia. We encourage you to peruse their website (http://www.thefallschurch.org/pages/page.asp?page_id=32430) and to catch a sense of the breadth and depth of their prayer ministry. As you do so, remember that it all began with a pastor who carried a burden from God to his people, and who encouraged the people as they helped to build a work of prayer that is now touching churches around the country.

Training Leadership

Leadership training is what moves ministries of the church from the sidelines to centerfield. Unfortunately, it is because of a lack of leadership training that outreach to people experiencing sexual and relational brokenness is sidelined in many churches. With this in mind, Church Reflections has designed the training series described on this website.

One congregation trained its leaders with the vision upheld on this website, and then launched a conference to equip leaders from other churches for the same ministry to those experiencing sexual and relational brokenness. The event drew in participants from several states. Now that the Cutting-Edge Ministry Training is available for all churches, we look forward to hearing more stories of leaders impacting other leaders around this unique ministry focus.

Building Family Values

When our churches embody biblical values, we need not hide them. Love, truth, humility, and a desire to bless others can be contagious and can draw others into our congregations.

One venue for the expression of a church's values is the church's website. Many potential visitors to our congregations investigate our churches through the portal of the Internet before they ever step foot in our buildings.

What kind of values does your website portray? Does it exhibit a Christ-like blend of grace and truth? If you have made a statement about sexuality on your website, you must be especially careful to maintain this Christ-like approach. An example of such a statement is found on the website of Westgate Community Church: <http://westgatechurch.org/about/what-we-believe/>

Mentoring Made Practical

When a church's members embrace biblical values and begin mentoring the people who come to them for help, new and unexpected doors may open for ministry.

Pastor Patrick Payton of Stonegate Fellowship in Midland, TX had no idea what he was getting into when Mike Goeke and his wife Stephanie came to his office for counseling. Mike explained to Pastor Payton that he had experienced unwanted same-sex attractions for years and that those attractions had nearly destroyed his marriage. As Mike and Stephanie shared their story, Patrick realized this was something the whole church needed to hear. Mike and Stephanie testified about their past before the whole congregation and the church began to understand more about the need to support those who struggle to overcome unwanted same-sex attractions.

Mike was eventually brought onto the church staff team, and through Patrick's support, Mike developed an outreach, Cross Power Ministries, which has touched many broken lives and marriages not only within the church, but around the country. One of the Stonegate Fellowship's Cross Power programs, for example, is an annual conference for marriages that are impacted by homosexuality. The conference is free and each attending couple is encouraged to bring a "mentor" couple, who simply commits to walk along side the couple receiving support. The mentor's couple expenses are completely covered for the trip!

Small Group Discipleship

When we develop ministries of small groups, our vision need not be limited by the word "small." Many of the largest churches in the world rely on small groups as a critical component for the spiritual growth and development of their people. Smaller churches, equally important in the sight of God, enjoy the same benefits of God's life-changing power in the small group context, even if the church is so small that the entire congregation is itself one small group.

The book, *Turning Controversy into Church Ministry*, offers numerous examples of churches that have utilized small groups to help people find freedom from the grip of sexual sin and brokenness. Such churches, of all sizes and types, can be found all over the world. Many of

these congregations are networked through umbrella organizations which help these small group ministries connect with people in need in their communities and beyond.

To gain appreciation for the impact small group ministry is having around the world (and can have in your community through your church), take a few minutes to peruse the groups connected to the following networks:

- Desert Stream Ministry groups: (<http://desertstream.org/groups/>). The curricula used by these primarily church-sponsored small groups are an excellent resource.
- Celebrate Recovery groups: (<http://www.celebraterecovery.com/index.php/cr-groups>)
Note the ministry groups in your area.

These websites alone represent hundreds and perhaps thousands of churches that are using small group ministry to help others along the journey of sexual and relational wholeness. The same networks that help them turn their groups into outreach are available for your church. Other specialized ministries like Parents and Friends of Gays and Lesbians (PFOX) (<http://pfox.org/resources/parents-and-friends/>) and Homosexuals Anonymous (<http://www.ha-fs.org>) also have contact persons available for this purpose.

Resources on Outreach

Alban Institute (www.alban.org) - Provides research, consultation and conferences for pastors and church leaders.

Barna Group (www.barna.org/) - Offers research to help Christians understand our culture and the postmodern world.

Gospel and Our Culture Network (www.gocn.org/) - A network of Christian leaders from a wide array of churches focusing on making the Gospel relevant.

Willow Creek Association (www.willowcreek.com/) - Resources for church leaders.

Youth Specialties (www.youthspecialties.com/) Insights for youth workers and leaders.

Percept (www.perceptgroup.com/) Demographic resources to help you understand your community.

Purpose-Driven (www.purposedriven.com/) - Resources connected with Saddleback Valley Community Church.

Books on Church Outreach

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