

## **How to Get Started**

You can start simple with a prayer walk, encouragement door, etc. The Holy Spirit will talk with you during the prayer walk about next steps, which might be a broader outreach ministry.

To do a broader outreach ministry, here is the process that we followed:

Pray Often and Throughout!

Define Your Scope

Build a Leader Team

Develop your Mission and Guiding Principles

Select Leaders for Key Areas

Build a Communication Plan

Build Out Ministry Areas

### **Praying is Essential for Direction, Strength and Overcoming**

Pray for direction, if you should do this, how you should do this, for leaders to rise up, etc. And pray against spiritual warfare because this is the last thing Satan wants you to do. I encourage you to go through a series on Nehemiah while you are doing this (See “Navigating Life’s Surprises” at [shoreline.church](http://shoreline.church) or the “Rebuilder” series at [thebridgechurch.cc](http://thebridgechurch.cc)). I did both and they are very different from a learning and teaching perspective, and both valuable.

### **Define Your Scope So Your Work Can Be Done with Excellence**

This is a critical step and may or may not be obvious. Who will you be serving? I never would have dreamed of doing this for 500 homes until I had 5 amazing leaders with me. Part of this answer depends on what is a natural boundary line, and some depends on your resources.

For example, if you are in an apartment complex, you may alone be able to do your floor, but with others your entire building, depending on size. Once you get that started, you might expand to other apartment buildings in the complex.

A subdivision across the street was mentioned in our first leader meeting and we quickly decided to stay within our subdivision (500 homes was enough!). Starting small and having some success and then growing is a good strategy. Because our Facebook page, the natural communication mode, covers all 500 homes, the entire subdivision seemed to make sense.

### **A Diverse Leader Team Brings Many Resources and Ideas**

If you want to tackle an area larger than what you can handle alone (although even co-leaders for a small area are suggested for encouragement, quality of ideas, and sharing the load), I would suggest seeking other leaders.

I did this by asking on the subdivision Facebook page if anyone else was interested in talking about how we might support and encourage and pray for our neighbors. Seven ladies responded and once it was clear the leadership team was more of a planning role, two decided to wait to help with execution. We ended up with a team of six, three of which I originally did not know. Clearly God called us all together. We represent multiple churches and denominations. We are all very different in terms of skills, personalities, work experience, life situation, etc. which allows for a richer discussion.

Our first meeting we had just three of us, but now we usually can get 5-6 of us on a Zoom call. This is much easier if you can actually meet in person, but we are under shelter in place orders. We use a shared Google Drive for all our docs and have action items to work on in between meetings.

### **Mission and Guiding Principles Set Direction (Verify Your Scope)**

The first order of business is developing your mission and guiding principles (see pdf on website for an example). At this time, you also recheck your scope and gain agreement. The decisions here are critical because they will impact how you do your work and will ensure you don't get distracted.

This is also a good time to develop meeting norms, such as

- Start/end on time
- Come prepared (read info, etc.)
- Listen for understanding
- Stay focused
- Laser-like speaking
- Listen for understanding

### **Co-Leaders for Each Ministry Seem Most Effective**

Jesus sent disciplines out in pairs, so we decided to follow this model using co-leaders. This helps carry the burden and if one cannot attend a meeting, then the other can cover.

What you plan to do will impact your structure. We have 6 leaders and 4 areas of work: needs, encouragement, prayer and care group. We put two leaders on those areas requiring coordination and planning (needs, prayer and care group) and decided that encouragement would be everyone's responsibility with myself doing a daily post.

You will also need to determine leader responsibilities. We kept it simple:

- Handle one Care Group each
- Have one area of responsibility each (Prayer, Needs or Care Groups)
- Help each other out and ask for help
- Encourage each other (and post encouragements)
- Check our email/texts daily
- Pray for each other

### **Communication Plan Should Fit Current Norms and Be Inclusive**

Communication is tricky because people are inundated with media and each person has their favorite modes. First consider current communication mode such as

- Facebook private groups or common social media apps (like Next Door)
- Places where information is posted (by the apartment elevator or mailboxes)
- Regular email distributions like from a subdivision HOA

We decided to develop a Facebook Group because many people are already on a subdivision page and we could drive them to the group. A website would be better, but that can be costly and time intensive.

We also will use the Care Group leaders to share information and we purchased signs and banners.

### **Build Out Ministry Areas to Create Momentum**

We decided that to keep moving is critical. We started with some small activities like encouragement doors, crosses in windows, and an Easter chalk walk (kids drawing on driveways for Easter with encouraging words) and did these as we were building out our plans and developing the Facebook Group (see promotional materials for design ideas). Many things you can do simultaneously if you have the people.

We then launched the Prayer Team because that was the easiest area and seemed most in need (we have many medical centers in this city and front-line medical staff in the neighborhood or as relatives). As the Prayer Team was launching, we investigated the Needs ministry and learned that the Care Groups were needed more quickly than we anticipated to determine the needs, so we are now working on those two ministries simultaneously.

Whatever you do, do it well. And be ready to shift direction as you learn about your neighbors, your capabilities and what works for your area. Pray for direction and keep listening as the Holy Spirit will continue to lead you.

God bless you!