

Connecting your church

to your COMMUNITY

## First Steps to Externally Focused Ministry



**EXTERNALLY  
FOCUSED**  
NETWORK

Jeremiah 29:7 says, "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." Just as bridges and cities go together, churches and communities are linked. God's people are to be connected to the city, the community, and the world. This Externally Focused Network resource gives biblical insight and six practical steps to helping your church care about your community.

*By Krista Petty with contributions from Alan Kraft, Tom Shirk, and Tricia Richardson*



**About The Externally Focused Network:** The purpose of EFN is to connect and resource church leaders who are either leading externally focused churches or want to move external focus from a tactic to a strategy. We want to connect passionate people with practical resources, tools and relationships that will help them engage their communities with good deeds and good news resulting in transformed communities and changed lives.

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For more Externally Focused resources visit [www.externallyfocusednetwork.com](http://www.externallyfocusednetwork.com)

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# Building Bridges

What do Othmar Ammann, James Eads and John Roebling have in common? Their names may not be recognizable but their accomplishments certainly are. They were famous architects and engineers during the great bridge-building era in America from the 1870s to the 1930s. Eads tamed the Mississippi River with the St. Louis Bridge. Ammann served as chief designer of New York's George Washington and Roebling is the acclaimed architect who oversaw the initial construction of the Brooklyn Bridge, losing his life in the process.

**Bridges—amazing structures that fascinate us and provide so much connection.**

“Imagine a world without bridges. Imagine London, Paris, and Rome without dry paths across the Thames, the Seine, and the Tiber. Bridges and cities go together,” wrote Henry Petroski.<sup>1</sup> Now imagine life without another sort of bridge—one that spans from your church to your community. Jeremiah 29:7 says, *“Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”* Just as bridges and cities go together, churches and communities are linked. God's people are to be connected to the city, the community, and the world.

Another great bridge-building era has come. Congregations of all sizes and in all places are connecting to their communities, providing good deeds and good news to people in poverty, families in crisis, cities in decay, and schools in need. Many of these churches call themselves “externally focused.” In their book, *The Externally Focused Church*, Rusaw and Swanson describe this kind of church as “willing to step outside the safety net of our church pews and cross the street into real-life, real world acts of service in order to share the truth of Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

Building a bridge from the church to the community is possible for a congregation at any stage of life, but not necessarily easy. Why do many churches do it? They must. Externally focused churches choose to love and serve the community for the purpose of fulfilling Jesus' mandate to be salt and light. *“You are the salt of the earth....You are the light of the world...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”* (Matthew 5:13-15) While not easy, leaders of these churches agree that building this bridge has brought life to their churches and light to the world.

Alan Kraft, senior minister of Christ Community Church in Greeley, CO shares, “Every church has a natural inclination toward inward focus and self preservation. For older, more established churches, becoming externally focused can be as tough as a u-turn for an aircraft carrier.” And Alan should know. Christ Community is a 112-year-old congregation with ups and downs throughout the years. “By the late 1980s, it was on the verge of dying with fewer than 100 people mainly senior citizens,” he admits. During this time Alan was in seminary preparing for ministry. “A very esteemed professor told me that he wouldn't touch this church with a ten foot pole, but since it was the only church interested in hiring me, I gladly took the job,” he laughs.

When this young minister came to Greeley, he was able to look beyond the walls of the church and saw a community God loved. “What struck me initially about the building was the location of this church. We were across the street from an elementary school, a block from a high school and

only five blocks from a university. Even though we only had 35 parking spaces and were on less than an acre, I saw the potential,” he says. Since 1990, this church has grown to an attendance of 1700 people. What excites Alan even more is the church’s growing commitment to see the Kingdom advance into the community. “We have a tutoring ministry in the elementary school across the street, a free lunch ministry to 100 high school students, and a few hundred university students attending,” he says.

So what are the first steps to building a bridge connecting your church to your community? Several externally focused churches, like Christ Community, have helped pave the way. While no two congregations follow the same blueprint for community involvement, most have had to answer the following six questions along the way to becoming more externally focused.

**What is our congregation’s current view of outreach ministry?**

**What is our current ministry programming?**

**How are we preparing people for externally focused ministry?**

**What are the needs of our city?**

**Who can we partner with?**

**How can we get everyone involved?**

In his art technique book for children on how to draw buildings and bridges, author and artist Lee Ames encourages kids to be copycats if his work. He tells them to trace over the outlines of his buildings and bridges and mimic other artists they admire. He writes to parents about why this is important, “Mimicry is prerequisite for developing creativity. We learn the use of our tools by mimicry. Then we can use those tools for creativity.”<sup>3</sup> That is what the Externally Focused Network wishes to offer here: a tool that will feed your creativity and offer a framework for discussion and development of your personal and congregational community involvement. As you read about the journeys of the following externally focused churches, reflect on what you learn and consider your church’s unique ministry environment and specific community assets and needs. You’re invited to join this movement of ministries that believe “serving our communities is a normal expression of Christian living and vital to spiritual formation.”<sup>4</sup>

*- Krista Petty*

Christ Community Church and Cameron Elementary School have been involved with Kids Hope USA for the past eight years in Greeley, CO. During this time, hundreds of adults have invested their time and hearts into the emotional, spiritual, and academic growth of students.



## What is our current view of outreach?

The word “outreach” can have a variety of definitions. To some it means reaching out to the needy with acts of compassion across the street. Others see it as works of service and support to missions around the world. Yet others see outreach as a word synonymous with evangelism. Alan Kraft, senior minister of Christ Community Church, sees outreach as advancing the Kingdom of God in all its various forms and churches typically employ one of three attitudes and/or approaches to outreach.

### The fortress approach

In this approach, the church asks people to remove themselves from the world so that they can be pure. Alan says, “The world is viewed as being bad and evil and we are to have nothing to do with it. What this often looks like is a diligent effort to protect ourselves as we huddle in our Christian circles, praying for the lost, but never engaging them in any meaningful relationships. And whenever we do engage in conversations, we directly or indirectly communicate the need for them to get their life straightened out or else. In order for anyone to ever become a Christian, they have to make a huge cultural leap and somehow come to us.”

### The force approach

In this approach, the church doesn’t remove itself but tries to have impact through focus on political power and influence. “We show up in force at a school board meeting or mobilize our church to call our senators. It doesn’t take much to get our blood pumping on issues. We need to be very careful that in our doing something like this, we don’t lose the gospel in the midst of it,” says Alan.

### The fragrance approach

2 Corinthians 2:14 describes this approach: “*But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.*” Alan explains, “A fragrance or perfume does nothing when it is holed up in a bottle. When unleashed, it begins to have an impact, but not in a forceful way as much as a subversive way.”

Jesus gave an example of this kind of outreach impact in Matthew 13:31-33: “*The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches...The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough.*” Alan explains, “Notice how the Kingdom of God advances. It’s not obvious initially but it penetrates and impacts. This is how the gospel moves forward, not by force but by penetrating our society with the same tools Jesus used in his ministry on earth: grace and truth.”

## CONSIDER YOUR CHURCH

1. Which one sounds like your church's current outreach mentality?

A fortress

A force

A fragrance

We lack a strong identity of any kind when it comes to outreach.

2. Which one sounds most effective and why?

3. Describe or draw a model of the current structure of missions or outreach in your congregation.

4. Does your outreach ministry lean towards global missions, local ministry or it balanced between the two? Make two columns and list your current involvement in global and local ministry.

5. List the people who are primarily responsible for bridge-building to your community and the world, including staff, lay leadership, and influential individuals who may not hold positions, but whose opinions on outreach and missions carry importance.

## What is our current ministry programming?

Tom Shirk, senior pastor of Calvary Bible Church in Boulder, CO, admits that Calvary was much like the fortress described previously. As church leadership began to acknowledge the need to be more externally focused, they had to take a long, hard look at the current ministry landscape. First, they catalogued everything they did as a church in every ministry area (women, men, students, kids, etc.) and then categorized each program into a new organizational strategy. Tom shares, “We reorganized to three core commitments: worship, learn and serve. Those three activities are what it means to be a part of CBC. Then we put all of our programs under these categories.”

What did they find after this assessment? Tom admits, “We had 75 things under the learn category and all the serves were to keep those 75 learning programs going! We were a Bible teaching church, so we had all these learning opportunities. One of the things we came to discover together is that people are not spiritually mature if they are not serving, no matter how much they know.”

But adding more programming wasn’t the answer. “You can’t keep layering on more and more things. As we got bigger, we realized we had to simplify. For us, it began with asking hard questions about the current reality and if we could really afford to add something else. We said we couldn’t add. We had to subtract in order to get to a more external focus,” he says. The process of elimination didn’t come overnight. Tom says that as new ministry ideas in each area would come about, they had to fit into the core strategies and they allowed some programs to die of attrition. Over time, room began to surface in the area of service and people were drawn to it. Today, Calvary Bible Church is externally focused at the same time they are internally strong. The church engages thousands in serving local schools as well as multiple community and church partnerships that benefit all of Boulder County, not just the city.

Assessing current programming is not only helpful, but an essential step to improving the church’s effectiveness in all areas. It’s no secret that today’s leaders must look beyond the traditional internal programming of the church if they are to reach the lost. Eric Swanson writes, “In a post-modern world, most people are neither impressed with the size of a church or its commitment to ‘truth.’ Perhaps, in this century, the greatest apologetic for the reality of Jesus Christ living in a community will be observational more than propositional. To have a faith that can be observed is to be living out the truths we want others to grasp and the life of the Savior we want them to know.”<sup>5</sup>



## CONSIDER YOUR CHURCH

6. What is the mission of your church?

7. What are your core strategies?

8. Is your programming balanced for each strategy? What are the strengths? What are the weaknesses?

9. What could be streamlined?

10. If you are an older, established congregation, why do you think God has allowed your church to be where you are for so many years?

11. If you are a new church, why do you think God has placed you where you are right now in relation to your community?

## How are we preparing people for externally focused ministry?

Offering a list of community service projects for people to accomplish may get them out of the pews and into the city, but is simply serving others the bridge God intends for the church to build? What makes good deeds done by church members any different than other social service work done in the community? “Good news and accompanying good deeds are like the two wings of an airplane. Each is incomplete without the other...To study the life and ministry of Jesus is to study a tapestry woven of good news and good deeds,” write Rusaw and Swanson in *The Externally Focused Church*.<sup>6</sup> King Josiah’s short life of leadership gives two examples of how people experience spiritual formation leading to reformed communities.

First, Josiah began seeking the Lord.

*“In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David.”* (2 Chronicles 34:3) Tricia Richardson, former director of involvement at LifeBridge Christian Church in Longmont, CO encourages, “Establish a prayer team for externally focused ministry or integrate prayer for the community and external focus into an existing prayer initiative.” This step will help your church to be both *watchful and thankful*, as taught in Colossians 4:2.

Perimeter Church, Atlanta, GA encourages members to consider prayer walking--both for personal prayer and in organized groups. In their Prayer Walking resource for church members, they write:

*“Prayer walking has been a powerful spiritual tool in the Christian toolkit and a part of our Christian heritage for many centuries, particularly in Britain and America during the great awakening and the evangelical movement in the 19th century. Many British churches had a tradition of ‘beating the bounds’ during which they would lay claim to their parish (town) for God. The revival services of the 19th century were at times accompanied by prayer teams that walked the neighborhoods in which the revival was taking place. Prayer walking has the effect and power of taking our prayers out of our churches and into the community. The Holy Spirit provides insight as we walk the streets. Such insight can have a powerful effect on our heart for the lost, our mission to the community and ministry strategies.”*

Second, Josiah rediscovered the Scriptures.

*“Go and inquire of the Lord for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found.”* (2 Kings 22:13). Tom Shirk (Calvary Bible Church, Boulder, CO) advises a simple start for leaders when it comes to Biblical study on community outreach. “A biblical study on the words ‘good deeds’ and ‘good works’ is a great place to start. Once ‘good deeds’ are in your mind, you can’t help but see them everywhere. It permeates everything. Now as I read Scripture I always find myself asking, ‘How did I miss all this before?’”

One verse that especially spoke to the Calvary Bible leadership was Jeremiah 29:7, *“Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”* Tom explains the impact this verse has had on his congregation, “We began to think of ourselves differently--that God had put us in the city for a purpose and we were missing it. Israel was on the way to exile and the Lord told them to settle down and seek the peace and prosperity. We took that as the way we think about ourselves. Christians understand that

we have a future destination, but while we're here, we will settle and seek the welfare of the community. If Boulder prospers, it will be prosperous for our lives and the church." This was quite a change from the way church members once referred to their city. "We used to make jokes about our city being such a strange place because the mindset of our church was that we were living in a crazy place. We had to change our language and start saying that we love this city and that Boulder is a city God cares about and Christ died for," he says.

As you look for ways to teach about good deeds to a congregation, don't forget to consider the multiple learning environments available. Tricia Richardson, for involvement director of LifeBridge Christian Church, suggests infusing biblical principles of serving into several areas of the church. "You can teach in sermons, small groups, new member assimilation classes or special elective classes. Don't limit your teaching to the pulpit only." She also suggests that leaders not bypass the importance of preaching an externally focused message either. She points out, "It takes both/and."

As Josiah sought direction from God and rediscovered Scripture, it led Israel to a great moment of reform and restoration. Externally focused ministry is more than a trend in church growth, it is a paradigm shift for most leaders, people and congregations. A strong foundation of prayer and biblical understanding of Scripture is key.

## CONSIDER YOUR CHURCH

12. It's been said that you can't lead others where you are not willing to go. Deuteronomy 15:11 says, "*There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded towards your brother and toward the poor and needy in your land.*" How are you openhanded?

13. Proverbs 31: 8, 9 reads, "*Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.*" Who are you speaking for?

14. Is there any sermon or message series planned in the coming year that teaches your congregation about the importance of good deeds? What could that look like?

15. What additional learning venues could be created or re-invented to enhance the biblical study of good deeds and good news?

### Externally Focused Teaching Resources

**Living a Life on Loan**  
message series and training materials for adult small groups, students and children found at [www.externallyfocusednetwork.com](http://www.externallyfocusednetwork.com)

**40 Days of Community**  
message series and small group curriculum found at [www.purposedriven.com](http://www.purposedriven.com)

**Outflow**  
small group curriculum on servant evangelism found at [www.group.com](http://www.group.com)

**Walking Alongside**  
study series exploring the theology of care and love found at [www.baylor.edu/social\\_work/ccm/](http://www.baylor.edu/social_work/ccm/)

*"Every church that seeks to be more externally focused can do so with the assurance that Jesus has gone before. He has shown the way."*

*- from The Externally Focused Church*

## What are the needs of our city?

Some needs in your city might be very obvious, like a newspaper headline that shouts, “Local stabbing connected to city’s gang growth.” Some needs in your community may only be a whisper throughout the community, such as a staggering number of under-resourced single mothers or the rising rate of grandparents raising grandchildren. “A great first step to becoming an externally focused church is to know the community you want to help and the people you need to serve. Information can help direct your path,” shares Tricia Richardson, who in her time as LifeBridge Involvement Director saw the church develop over 40 important partnerships with local schools, social service agencies, and non-profits. Her advice is to do a community assessment. “It’s not as difficult as you might think,” she encourages.

Where can you find information about your community? One starting point is reviewing the statistical data available [www.factfinder.census.gov](http://www.factfinder.census.gov). This is the official US Census web site and it is filled with various levels of reports. Simply put in the name of your city and state to receive the data instantly. The fact sheet gives more than population data. It shows social, economic and housing characteristics. Dig a little deeper and you can find out things like how many grandparents are raising their grandchildren, how many people are out of work because of disability, how many are divorced, or how many people live below poverty level.

Why does this information matter? Behind the numbers are people, families, and neighborhoods. Statistical information can be the first step at “seeing” people. Nancy Karpenske, director of women’s ministry at LifeBridge, heard a community statistic at a staff meeting that caught her attention. “There were 1785 single moms in our city of Longmont. That surprised me,” she admits. Nancy, along with other volunteer leaders, decided to engage these women in meaningful relationships of support through the formation of a new ministry called “Surviving and Thriving as a Single Mom.” The 7-week program provided dinner, mentoring and connection with other single moms while their children were well-cared for in another area of the building. The start of that group has led to the involvement of the LifeBridge men’s ministry as well. The men’s group provides oil changes and car maintenance on scheduled work days for the single moms. And that serving led a local oil change company to offer their facility at no charge for the work to be done.

Beyond statistical data, Tricia recommends church leaders learn about their community from other local organizations that care for the community. “Pick up the phone. Call the agencies in your area and learn about their mission. You will be amazed to find out how many non-profits could overlap in the services provided and what services seem to be falling through the cracks,” she says. Schools, social service agencies, clubs and associations, and other churches are great places to start.

Finally, look at your own church members. “Look where God is working today. Discover the ways people from your church are already involved, from coaching little league to serving at a shelter. Let those already involved in the community be the champions,” advises Tom Shirk (Calvary Bible Church).

## CONSIDER YOUR COMMUNITY

16. What local non-profit organizations does your church currently support with volunteers and/or donations?

17. How could you strengthen or expand those partnerships to learn more about the needs in your city?

18. Who, in your church, is already well-connected in the community by vocation, civic leadership, or volunteering?

19. How well are those people connected to the church? How could you leverage their knowledge of the community to strengthen your congregation's external focus?

20. Does your state or community have an association for non-profit agencies? Could your church join in an effort to learn more about community needs?

### **Community Assessment Tools**

found in the EFN online library  
[www.externallyfocusednetwork.com](http://www.externallyfocusednetwork.com)

**Tutorial on Using the Census 2000  
Web Site to Find Statistics** - a Fasten  
Network resource by Leanne Higginbottom,  
Mary-Kate Brissett and Amy L. Sherman

**Community Study: A Guide to  
Understanding-** a Fasten Network  
resource by Heidi Unruh

## Who can we partner with for community transformation?

*“Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken,”* writes the author of Ecclesiastes 4:12. Many externally focused churches have taken that message to heart. They not only learn from community agencies, they partner with them for transformational impact. Tom Shirk shares, “We pursued partnerships not replication. We saw all the social service organizations that were doing good work and we gave up on the daunting idea of creating all new ones ourselves. Over time, we developed friendships with these organizations. One of our aims is to become a trusted partner, because partnerships create a greater effectiveness.” Tom echoes one of the guiding principles of the Externally Focused Network of churches, “They (EF churches) partner with existing ministries or human-service agencies that are already accomplishing a shared mission in the community.”<sup>7</sup>

Second Baptist Church in Springfield, IL, serves as an excellent example of how community and church partnerships help strengthen communities. It primarily began as several SBC pastors participated in a prayer group with 15 other congregations. These leaders would encourage one another in their ministries and pray for the city. The group increasingly began to talk about “doing something” together. Bob Roberts, minister of Springfield missions at SBC, was in a position to serve as a catalyst for collective action.

In 2003, a series of “community listening” sessions for the multi-church prayer team were held. The top 50 community leaders in Springfield were identified and invited to meet with the ministers. “We invited police chiefs, the sheriff, school district officials and others,” Bob explains. To better understand needs, the prayer group asked each city official to answer the same four key questions:

What is the difficult part of your job?

What is the impossible task?

How may we pray for you?

What can the churches of Springfield do to make this a better community?

The intentional listening and prayer process set the stage for the churches’ collective action in the city and helped gain credibility in the eyes of the mayor, sheriff, and other city officials. With the original prayer members at the core, a network called The Churches of Springfield soon grew to 75 engaged congregations. Their signature initiative is a city-wide tutoring program for at-risk third graders, which was borne out of one of the prayer meetings with the school district and police chief. The Churches of Springfield have worked together on numerous projects, including tutoring, supporting community arts, disaster relief, and city planning projects. “The mayor knows he can call the Churches of Springfield for anything and we’ll come through. When we had a terrible ice storm, the mayor did not hesitate to pick up the phone and ask The Churches of Springfield to help clearing the debris of 1100 elderly residents’ homes,” shares Bob.<sup>8</sup>

## CONSIDER YOUR CHURCH

21. Do any of the churches in your community come together for a common purpose, such as prayer or community action? If not, could your church be a catalyst for such a gathering?

22. On a scale of 1-10 assess your church's familiarity or involvement with the following community entities (1 being "We don't even know the name of someone to call." 10 being "We have a working relationships and growing partnership with this group.")

- \_\_\_ Public Schools
- \_\_\_ Mayor and his/her office
- \_\_\_ Police Department
- \_\_\_ County Sheriff's Office
- \_\_\_ County & City Social Service Agencies
- \_\_\_ Community Food Bank
- \_\_\_ Local Chapter of the United Way
- \_\_\_ Local Chapter American Red Cross

Others: (List other influential agencies or entities specific to your community and rate your church's current level of knowledge or involvement.)

### Collaboration Resources

found in the  
EFN online library

#### **Second Baptist Church & Perimeter Church Profiles**

Fasten Network resources by  
Krista Petty

**Church to Church  
Collaborations on the Rise**  
a Leadership Network resource  
by Krista Petty

23. In the above list, which relationships could be important to strengthen?

24. What would be your first steps to intentionally growing or starting a partnership? Who should lead that initiative? Who is praying for the people listed above?

## How can we get everyone involved?

One important step for LifeBridge Christian Church was to survey the current level of individual community involvement happening, possibly under the radar. “The church is filled with community-minded people who have yet to see how their work life, home life, social life and church life might intersect. You can help people recognize those intersections by surveying the entire congregation about their community service,” says Tricia Richardson.

For at almost two years, the LifeBridge Community Involvement Team quarterly surveyed the entire congregation on their volunteer involvement, both in the church and in the community. The survey was placed in the weekend bulletin and members were asked to fill it out [anonymously, if they wished] and place it in the offering. “We simply asked how many hours a month, on average, they had served in the church and in the community,” says Tricia. By asking this question, church leaders began to validate that a member’s community service as a little league coach, PTO member, or Habitat for Humanity worker was valuable to the Kingdom of God. The survey also asked members if they wanted to get more involved in church and community volunteering and gave information on who to contact for details.

But the survey was only one piece of the externally focused puzzle. LifeBridge began to tell stories in a number of venues of how people were making a difference in the community. “We invited a volunteer to become a member of our team and her primary role was to interview people and write their stories of serving the church and the community. These stories were shared in our weekly newsletter and the church’s quarterly magazine,” says Tricia. The church also used video and photos to communicate the “serving” message.

The survey and story-telling came alongside one of the most critical pieces of mobilizing the congregation: creating opportunities to serve. “To give people a taste for ministry, your church must increase the number of drop-in, get your feet wet opportunities,” write Rusaw and Swanson.<sup>9</sup> Externally focused churches have found a number of ways to create and communicate those opportunities.

LifeBridge created an all-church emphasis called *A Time to Serve* and communicated on-going community service opportunities. *A Time to Serve* was [and is] a concentrated season of serving in the community. “It is an all-church emphasis over the course of four to six weeks designed to connect as many people as possible to one-time serving opportunities outside the walls of our church. It creates easy entry points for everyone to try serving,” shares Tricia. Over the past six years, LifeBridge has used *A Time to Serve* to engage thousands annually in service. From these one-time service opportunities, the church has seen the level of leadership in externally focused ministry grow to three teams covering two counties and three cities. LifeBridge engages volunteer agency liaisons from the church to at least 30 ongoing community partnerships.

Casey Yorman, community ministry pastor at Northcoast Church in Vista, CA calls this the “pink spoon” approach. “Just like you get a little pink spoon at the ice cream shop to choose what flavor you like, most people in the church need a taste of serving before diving in long-term,” he explains. But Northcoast took a slightly different approach when growing their externally focused



ministry. They first took a look at their current church culture. “Seventy to eighty percent of our church is involved in a small group,” says Casey. To mobilize a majority of their congregation, leadership asked each small group to accomplish one community service project during the year. The church has not only met that goal, but exceeded it, completing 387 community service projects in less than one year. Many small groups have adopted community agencies for long-term service and relationship.



## CONSIDER YOUR CHURCH

25. Describe the current level of commitment your congregation has to meeting the needs in the community, either individually or corporately?

26. List all the story-telling venues your church already has in place. How do you or could you use those to encourage an external focus in individual church members?

27. What stories are floating around your church right now that need to be shared?

### Mobilization Resources

#### Externally Focused Small Groups

a Leadership Network resource by Krista Petty found in the EFN Library

#### Six Catalytic Service Approaches

a Leadership Network by Krista Petty found in the EFN library

#### Faith in Action

a Zondervan, Outreach Inc., and World Visions project which includes a message series, small group curriculum and service event campaign found at [www.putyourfaithinaction.com](http://www.putyourfaithinaction.com)

*Questions continue on page 18*

28. List the programs or core values that your church does with excellence right now.

29. Is there a way to leverage what your church already does well to jump-start or strengthen your externally focused ministry?

30. What existing church ministries might have a strong external focus that you could learn from? (i.e. Many youth groups take teens on mission trips or service projects. How could you validate that service? What could you learn from their involvement with these projects? Could you expand elements of that existing service to other ministry areas of your church?)

31. Are there any existing programs that could have an external component that maybe haven't had before?

32. Does your church plan any special events? How could you adapt your current volunteers, planning and project

## Conclusion

# Fear of Heights

The Sydney Harbour Bridge may not be the longest steel-arch bridge in the world, but it is the largest and widest. At 151.3 feet wide, the Guinness Book of Records lists it as the widest long span bridge in the world. Along with being a recognizable and beautiful tourist attraction in Australia, this 75 year-old bridge is one of the only structures of its kind in the world that allows supervised climbing of the bridge. In fact, hundreds of individuals suffering from acrophobia, or fear of heights, have taken the “Bridge Climb” to help overcome their fears.<sup>10</sup> It’s believed that acrophobia affects 5 % of all people.



As your church begins to cross from the safety inside the walls to the unknowns of externally focused ministry, some may experience fear--fear of negative influence that outsiders may have on the congregation or fear that involvement in too many community service opportunities will negatively affect internal church volunteerism. Just as the fear of heights is real to some, these concerns likely to be raised are valid and will and should be wrestled with along your journey. But people with a fear of heights who allow their fear to paralyze them miss out on some of the most amazing views. Eric Swanson cautions, “While the church is called to be separate in lifestyle it has *never* been called to be isolated from the people it seeks to influence.”<sup>11</sup>

I Peter 2: 11, 12 promises a beautiful view from the summit of the bridge you build to your community and people in need of God’s grace:

*“Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, **they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.**”*

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Henry Petroski, *Engineers of Dreams: Great Bridge Builders and the Spanning of America*, 1995, Random House, New York, NY, pg 1.

<sup>2</sup> Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson, *The Externally Focused Church*, 2004, Group Publishing, Loveland, CO, pg 12.

<sup>3</sup> Lee J. Ames, *Draw 50 Building and Other Structures*, 1980, Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.externallyfocusednetwork.com/network-2what.php>

<sup>5</sup> Eric Swanson, *Ten Paradigm Shifts Toward Community Transformation*, [http://www.leadnet.org/Resources\\_Downloads.asp](http://www.leadnet.org/Resources_Downloads.asp)

<sup>6</sup> Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson, *The Externally Focused Church*, 2004, Group Publishing, Loveland, CO, pg 112.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.externallyfocusednetwork.com/yourchurch-2getstarted.php>

<sup>8</sup> For a complete profile of the Churches of Springfield and Second Baptist Church see <http://www.fastennetwork.org/qryArticleDetail.asp?ArticleId=0999222C-5969-4E21-B9DF-C4C09C227EA1>

<sup>9</sup> Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson, *The Externally Focused Church*, 2004, Group Publishing, Loveland, CO, pg 178.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.bridgeclimb.com/theClimb/heights.htm>

<sup>11</sup> Eric Swanson, *Ten Paradigm Shifts Toward Community Transformation*, [http://www.leadnet.org/Resources\\_Downloads.asp](http://www.leadnet.org/Resources_Downloads.asp)



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