

The following ideas are adapted and revised from The Media Manual for Ministry (M3), by Dennis C. Benson and published by The Presbyterian Media Mission, 1989. We begin each week of Advent with a special media clue. Ideas for each day of the week follow. In some cases, where a particular theme is addressed, several different ideas are included on a particular day. Feel free to adapt what you read here. The point of these ideas is to stir your creative energy to serve God in a new way with energy, intelligence, imagination and love!

## **Advent Week One**

### ***Striving for Internal Consistency.***

Evangelism and Outreach often begins with reaching *into the congregation* with the love of Jesus and to know that love in our hearts before we can share that love with others.

#### Sunday:

##### **\*Media Clue #1 -- *Help! I Need Somebody***

The manager of the building supply store gave me a puzzled look. Then he smiled and nodded. I had just made a most unusual request. The text for next Sunday's sermon was John 8. I needed small stones for the sermon.

We went to a pile of granite chips at the back of the yard. He shoveled a huge bag full of these marvelous stones. The man refused to take any money. "I bet that will be some sermon."

I have found that people in the world are anxious to be helpful when we are in quest of special media needs. It is also a delight to see the change in their expression when a creative preaching, teaching, or witnessing is explained. These unchurched folks experience a complete transformation of their view of the church.

I find that this is particularly true when I deal with media folks. The media world puts a high value on creativity. When they encounter the creative energy of the Christian, they are drawn to us.

It is unfortunate that most church leaders are afraid to claim their legacy of creativity. Christians seem to enjoy bragging about a lack of creativity.

This book is a powerful witness to the creativity that is celebrated in the contemporary church. In fact, the church is the most creative institution on earth. It may be that God has provided this gift of creativity in order that we may bond with those in the world who don't know Jesus Christ.

I have also found that by going to others for help we are taking an especially powerful stance in terms of evangelism. Once people have a chance to offer something to the service of Christ they are in a receptive mode for accepting the gifts of the church. By asking for the aid of others we are saying that God has use of every person's offering.

People are longing to find a place where they can make a contribution of self. We need only invite them to make their special gift to the work of the church.

Monday:

Welcome and inclusion begins for most churches with touching the hearts of its own members at key moments. Some of the most important moments of touch are those that mark significant transitions, or rites of passage. Here are several creative producers who took full advantage of these windows of opportunity:

\*A pastor in Detroit realized that one of the most important passage rites in our culture is receiving the right to drive. He now invites the young person who has just received his or her driver's license to come before the congregation during Sunday worship. The person is commissioned to this new realm of responsibility. There is the laying on of hands and prayer. The prayer focuses on thanksgiving and intercession. The person is then given a small cross for his or her key chain. "May this symbol remind you of the love, prayer and respect expressed by this people should times come when you need the support of others."

\*A pastor in Rock Rapid, Iowa enabled the children of the church to express care for the choir members. On Palm Sunday the choir offered very special music. It had taken hours to prepare for this music service. Various Sunday school classes wrote small love notes for choir members. These were wrapped around the stems of carnations. The pastor announced that the worship center bouquet was in honor of the choir, and individuals were to take the flower with his or her name on it and read the message to the congregation. It became a powerful moment of Christian love.

\*A pastor in Greenville, Pennsylvania found that many folks from the church were leaving his area because of unemployment problems and other factors: He felt that vocation and commissioning are very important aspects of the Christian life. Why shouldn't members departing be sent forth with a public recognition of their new calling? The pastor developed a short liturgical segment for those departing members. Worship is the proper place to celebrate life's passage points. The departing people could even be given a symbol of their bonding with the body of Christ (e.g. crosses).

\*A talented musician in Portland, Oregon does a lot of supply or guest preaching in churches. One Sunday he was preaching for a close friend. At the offering time he passed out cards and asked the worshippers to write a note of appreciation for their absent pastor and pass them in. He left the comments of validation of love on his friend's desk.

\*And an adult group in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania developed a thoughtful way of communicating their concern for those who are sick or hospitalized. They use paper tablecloths for their meetings. All of those attending write messages to the missing person on the tablecloth. This is then taken to the one who is ill. These decorated, large greeting cards are often filled with drawings, poems, and warm messages.

Beyond the beauty, mystery and wonder of the Sacrament of Baptism, are there rites of passage that your congregation could recognize among your members?

Tuesday:

\*A church in Rock Rapids, Iowa places a lot of emphasis on evangelism. Part of their program involves every person receiving four phone calls a year. The calling committee probes two questions, "How is the world treating you?" and finally, "How are you and God getting along together at this point?" This outreach by phone means that each person on the committee makes about six calls. The callers meet frequently for support and training.

Wednesday:

\*A church in Grand Junction, Colorado decided to use the testimony of its people as the basis for its interpretation of stewardship. The stewardship committee organized a team of adults and youth and trained them to use audiocassette tape recorders and 35-millimeter cameras. It was announced that an oral history of the church would be collected. Everyone would be interviewed! They started with three basic questions: (1) if you were God, looking at our congregation, what would make you happiest? (2) If you were God, looking at our congregation, what would you have us do in the church and community that we have not done yet? And (3) if you were God, looking at our congregation, what would you change? These are sound questions for any congregation exploring God's call to witness and service.

Thursday:

\*A congregation in St. Petersburg, Florida has an interesting program concerning prayer. They call it "The Fanner Bees." It seems that fanner bees are the ones that sit at the entrance to the hive and beat their wings to circulate the air, keeping the hive cool and supplying it with fresh air. The folks at the church have utilized shut-ins in their intercessory prayer ministry as spiritual fanner bees. Prayer requests are made and placed on cards during worship or in the chapel at any time. A list is made and distributed to the shut-ins who each day lift up those in need through prayer. They fan the church's hive! How are you using everyone in the body as evangelists, healers, and agents of grace? Is there anyone in your church family you are overlooking as a servant of the kingdom?

Friday:

\* A congregation in Murrysville, Pennsylvania makes a concerted effort to keep connected to its college-age youth. This church realizes that this is a generation in the church family often ignored except when they come home on break! A diligent effort is made each fall to update contact information on each person. This assures continued delivery of church mailings. E-mail addresses are collected and a weekly email note from the Associate Pastor is sent to the list. This letter is often an entertaining review of what transpired at church on Sunday and a thought for the week. Each deacon is assigned a freshman/woman to connect to all year long. The senior highs make, assemble and mail care packages of food and fun for the college-age folks in time for the reading period prior to final exams (often just before students come home on break!).

Do you have an overlooked generation in your congregation? What are you doing to keep them connected to the family?

Saturday:

\* A church in Tacoma, Washington utilized the traditional crèche figures in a fresh way. They placed the shepherds and the kings at different points in the sanctuary. Each Sunday the sermon dealt with the journey to follow the star. The figures would be moved closer to the worship center (cradle) each week. This dramatic process gave the congregation a chance to establish a living relationship with these symbolic presentations of the Christ event.

## **Advent Week Two**

### ***External Outreach – Understanding the Community Around You***

One of the keys to effective outreach and evangelism is developing a keen understanding of your community in context. How well do you know the people in the community outside of the church? What is it that interests them? What needs do they have? How well does your church understand the folks beyond its doors?

Sunday:

\*Media Clue #2 -- *To Whom?*

Those who sell to the public commit consistent energy, surprising creativity, vast resources and heightened sensitivity to probe their market-audience. It is true that they usually utilize the accurate reading of their customers for the purpose of pandering to them.

The church of our day has suffered from the opposite extreme. We seem to pay no attention to the question of the audience's needs. We are content to serve the gospel in the form that is most comfortable to the person communicating it. The community of faith seems to say by its bland presentation: It is comfort for us. Why should we change?

It is interesting to note that Jesus seemed particularly sensitive to the persons receiving the gospel. How else do we explain the many different media formats Jesus utilized to bring God's message to his listeners? He preached, told parables, physically touched people, utilized objects, and finally communicated by example. Jesus knew that people came to him with different needs and orientations. The content of God's love took the appropriate form for the particular person.

How do we discover the points of communication with particular people? We cannot even assume that every person currently in study or worship is the same. The radio station is a good example of audience analysis. Each station in a major market carefully focuses on a particular audience. They utilized formal (research) and informal (i.e. contests) methods of knowing the receiver of their message. The kind of music, the amount of music, kind of announcements, the amount of announcements and every second is shaped to please the target audience.

Who are the people your church wants to reach? If they are the lost (single parents, the lonely, substance abusers, etc.), what are their perceived needs? What does the gospel have to say to these people and their specific needs? What has to be done to bond the gospel to their points of stress and hunger?

It is amazing how differently the shape of local ministry takes when we let the gospel form a shape fitting for particular people.

Monday:

\* A church in San Antonio sends out all of its literature about the church in both Spanish and English. There is a large Hispanic community and the church wants to express the hospitality of Christ to all people. What languages are really needed to communicate to those outside the church walls? Are there other forms of English, which need to be employed to touch the lives of others? Do we send the messages from the church to the wrong places? Is the religion page the best place to communicate with those outside the faith?

Tuesday:

\* A pastor in Toledo drew upon the people in his congregation who had access to desktop publishing. They designed a bulletin, which was both attractive and evocative. What should the worship bulletin communicate? Does the stranger understand everything in it? How does it contribute to the worship experience? This pastor changed the art on the cover to match the theme of the sermon so that the oral message could be underscored visually. Are the graphics and language of your church bulletin able to communicate with everyone? Is there a lot of code language (insider language and church family terms) that has to be learned in your church in order to understand what is being communicated?

Wednesday:

\* In a confirmation class, a youth who worked in Campbelltown, Pennsylvania wanted to communicate the Good News that no one is worthless in the light of God's extravagant mercy. He distributed current FBI Wanted Posters to the teens. They were asked to share their feelings about the person after reading the crimes he or she had committed. The teens then reflected on how these persons came to be criminals. On the back of the posters, Rich asked the students to write a prayer for the person in the picture. These were then shared and discussed. They concluded that no one is beyond hope or redemption in light of God's boundless mercy.

And this from a church in Oaklands Park, South Australia: The church was surprised when they asked 8-to-12-year-olds what they wanted to do as an Advent project. They decided to help the wives and families of men in prison. With the help of the Prisoners' Aid Society, the children launched a three-month project. They did homework, took the families on picnics and prepared a party for the end of the year. This party went from nine till three with games and lunch, and each of the children brought something precious and personal and offered it as a gift to a child from a prisoner's family.

How does Advent warmth and welcome extend to those imprisoned? How might you practice hospitality to them?

Thursday:

\* A lay leader in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania discovered that the bus company offered a reasonably priced way of raising awareness of the church's ministry. The company that handles the bus display ads offers select buses on certain routes. The 12-foot by 3-foot panels could also be ordered in bulk. They were then able to use the banners in front of individual churches. Billboards? Bus-boards? Street signs? What other places can carry your church's message and invitation to large numbers of people in your community at once?

Friday:

\* A church in Saltsburg, Pennsylvania posted a huge map of its community. All the streets and other landmarks were clearly identifiable. During a coffee hour, the pastor introduced the map. He asked the people to write labels that included their names and addresses. They then took stickpins and pinpointed their location. This graphic representation enabled the people to get a feel for all the vacant areas where there were no members. This picture of the challenge they faced helped to make evangelism a more important activity for them. Where are the gaps in your congregation's map?

Saturday:

\* A church in Kansas prepared its parking lot in a most unusual way. Members wanted to make sure that visitors would experience the hospitality of Christ from the very moment they approached the church. Committee members visited other churches to see how strangers would view the experience of coming to church for the first time. They returned with several interesting recommendations. They reserved parking places next to the door for the handicapped and for visitors! They painted large green footprints on the parking lot, leading to the doors that worked. The footprints continue along the walls, making a visual trail to the sanctuary. They also stationed greeters at the entrance to the parking lot.

### **Advent Week Three**

#### ***Making the Match – Bringing Internal Consistency and External Outreach together***

Here is a useful definition of church: *“The Church is a gathering of people who have had an encounter with the Risen Christ who seek to share that encounter with others.”* To share Christ with others effectively involves both understanding others in their contexts and being intentional about entering into a relationship with them. The community of the Risen Christ continually seeks new ways to connect its experience of God's grace with the needs and concerns of the stranger.

Sunday:

\* *Media Clue #3 -- Spectacles of Faith*

"The Busy Bees meet at 6 p.m." Such a terse announcement appeared in a church I was visiting. From the perspective of the stranger there was nothing communicated -- Well,

there was *something* communicated: the bulletin wasn't written for me! It was a message for the insiders.

I have asked my seminary students to visit the local fast food restaurants. They are to spend an hour in observation concerning to whom these stores are communicating. The class is then asked to spend the same amount of time in observing their local church. What kind of message is communicated to the stranger?

When the local church members become aware of the fact that they are not reaching out to others, they often turn to media sources for clues to the use of advertising or mass media. It is much wiser to look at the local church from a very common sense perspective. What would you do if a favorite aunt, a long lost friend, or a special mentor were coming to your home as a guest? How would you be assured that he or she could find your house (i.e. a map, sign on the phone pole)? Would you do something special to guide the guest to the right door (i.e. porch light)? How would the room be prepared? What kind of hospitable greeting would you use to communicate welcome (hug, kiss, handshake, etc.)?

Basic Christian hospitality is the foundation for media outreach. Once your church practices this faith stance, all means of expressing it will come naturally. Bright signs of invitation, clearly marked entrances, special parking spaces for guests, handicapped accessibility, clearly designed bulletins, etc. will follow.

Christian hospitality may include "friendliness." Yet, it is based on the love that God has expressed to us through Jesus Christ. God has welcomed all of us, even uncomely strangers, as friends around the Word and sacraments. The act of forgiveness and reconciliation between sinner and creator is the basis for all Christian outreach and hospitality. The inner-directed, closed community church makes it difficult for the stranger to be embraced. When a church can't be found, entered only with difficulty, and is a maze of confusion for the guest worshipper, it is communicating its true spiritual focus. The medium and message must become what they actually are intended to be, a vital link to accepting the stranger.

#### Monday:

Have you ever considered changing your point of view (P.O.V.) in order to see something from another's perspective? Sometimes the change of view leads to new ways to welcome and include others in the life of the church. Consider the changes in P.O.V. below:

\* A pastor in Waukesha, Wisconsin spent time in a wheelchair accompanying a handicapped teenage parishioner for a day at her high school. He faced the same kinds of challenges experienced by Kim, his guide. The local newspaper carried the story and a number of important points could be made about the spirit and abilities of disabled persons. The minister used the wheelchair for the Sunday sermon. This experiential approach raised the awareness of people in the church and community about the question of accessibility.

\* A minister in Chelsea, Michigan, was disturbed by the fact there was little concern for the children of the church. Adults simply wanted them out of sight. He is an advocate for having children in worship. The church did not care about the littlest among them. He used a camcorder to videotape the church from the level of a child! The camera was moved through the church from the height and viewpoint of the child. When he showed the tape to the committee in charge of church programming, they were startled to see that the small child sees unpainted walls and only the bottoms of things. This videotape triggered a serious review of their ministry with children.

\* A church in Drumbo, Ontario, Canada utilizes the ministry of the child in a challenging way. Children are encouraged to design the worship bulletin covers. Sometimes they transfer the children's art to a stencil for the cover. Other times they have the children draw the covers of each of the bulletins used by the congregation on Sunday morning. This gift of the children has been deeply appreciated by the adults.

\* A church in Kansas City, Missouri noticed that children were often excluded from the congregational dinners. It now invites children to come in and decorate the paper tablecloths by coloring them with crayons! The children love it and the tables look fantastic!

#### Tuesday:

\* A Pittsburgh youth leader developed an amazing idea for worship. During the sermon on time (running out in old year, running in for a new year) he passed a snowball around the congregation. As people held it and passed it on, the snowball melted down to nothing. He then developed the theme of how God washes away the failures and sins from the past. Paper towels were passed out as he closed with prayer for forgiveness and pardon. Not a dry eye (nor hand) could be seen. What could you do with melting snow and the theme "come in out of the cold?"

#### Wednesday:

\* A school for disabled children approached a church in York, Pennsylvania. The teacher told the church members that her students got the most from learning situations that were sensual and experiential. With this clue the church decided to develop a Christmas event that could give those who came a true experience of the message and celebrate the season. Each year they transformed the church into eleven different Christmas experience centers. In one room they had live animals; in another they had a mother, father, and baby who tell the story of the birth of Christ. A third room was conducted by senior citizens and was called the "Snowman Room." A giant snowman actually talked to the children. They also had a model train room, a cookie room, a music room, a toy room, a birthday room, and candle room, an angel room and an evangelism room. (continued below:)

\* The evangelism room included an opportunity for people to leave prayer requests. These prayer requests were then passed on to church members who would pray for the people who had expressed their needs. The response to this lively, sensual presentation of the Christmas story was astounding. One year more than 7,000 people came. Special

police had to be hired to direct traffic in front of the church. They opened up the event to schoolchildren and particularly to the handicapped children who experienced it during the day. They take groups of twenty at a time through each room. That meant that each small group had a chance to have a real encounter with the focus of that room. The children were also given items from the room to remember what they experienced there. Since learning styles differ from one person to another, how might your church make the preparatory season of Advent and the celebration of Christmas more experiential and sensual?

#### Thursday:

\* A congregation in Saxonburg, Pennsylvania has found that the postal service works well as an instrument of outreach. They send mailings out before Christmas about their events to every householder in the church's zip code. A congregation in Liberty Borough, Pennsylvania, used direct mail in a different way. They used the Ad slicks created for the original Advent Regional Media Campaign, scanned them into the computer and created a nice invitation on fancy stock paper. Members of the congregation took time to hand sign and address each invitation that were sent to every one in the zip code for a personal touch. And a congregation in Ohio sent out packets of cocoa in simple plain brown wrappers along with an invitation to experience the goodness and warmth of God at their church! The congregation was pleasantly surprised by the responses it received.

#### Friday:

\* Presbyterian Women promote and coordinate "Blanket Sundays" in PC(USA) congregations nationwide. The blankets are made of fine quality wool and are distributed through Church World Service. The blankets provide a tangible sign of caring for many people around the globe. A blanket is a perfect symbol of the warmth of God's love! How might a Blanket Sunday and "the Come in out of the cold campaign" work together for good in your congregation's outreach?

#### Saturday:

\* The Presbyterian Church in Wampum, Pennsylvania decided to combine its church family fellowship with an opportunity to provide welcome and hospitality. During the Advent season, the church held a potluck supper for its members. The program that evening included an overview of the goals for its participation in the "Come In Out of the Cold" Regional Media Campaign. To help people make the idea of invitation and hospitality concrete, the church invited each of the groups that use the church (Sunday school classes, youth groups, others) to decorate every door of the church! This provided a fun activity for those in attendance, gave them a chance to express their creativity and imagination ("What do we want this door to say?"), provided colorful and attractive decorations that others could enjoy – especially visitors, and enabled those participating to see that hospitality and welcome is often first expressed in simple and direct forms of communication and then goes out from there. These folks are first-rate producers who applied themselves creatively and had fun!

## **Advent Week Four**

### ***Sharing Our Gifts***

As the congregation reaches out and brings others into its fellowship, the church has opportunities to share its gifts as blessings to enrich all. God has gifted the church in so many ways – water, bread and wine come to mind – how might the church express its gratitude for all God’s benefits?

#### Sunday:

##### *\*Media Clue #4 -- Giving It All Away*

I used to think that God called us because of our strengths. However, I now realize that Christ beckons us because of our weaknesses! When we feature our strengths, we tend to stay away from the area where our limitations are most clearly revealed. Yet, when we recognize our areas of need, we are free to call upon others to supplement our ministry. This is clearly the foundation for the priesthood of believers.

For instance, I cannot lead singing. I cannot play a musical instrument I cannot sing. In fact, my humming throws the whole pew out of tune. Yet, my struggle with this grave failure has freed me to be blessed by the ministry of others. God always provides someone near me in a class, church or pew who has much to give musically!

Yet, such recognition of deficiencies in any area easily triggers insecurity and even guilt. How can God use me when I am not able to do so many important things?

It helps to grapple with such a question by realizing that we are not leaders in the church because of our skills. Oh, it certainly helps to be gifted. There are many talents each person brings to service. Yet, if we feel that superior piety, superior intellect, or superior talents earn our place of service, we miss the point. On such a basis of authority, we must always keep those served by us, behind us. If we lead them to become better than we are, we lose our authority. But, consciously keeping others from growing in Christ is sin.

Our authority for leadership in ministry is based on the unexplainable reality that God in Jesus Christ has called us. This call is unshakable. This foundation of authority frees us to nurture others to become better than we are. The growth of others in spiritual depth, leadership quality, or Christian understanding is a moment for rejoicing. When others are lifted up in Christian community, we are not diminished!

The implications of this are enormous. From this perspective we are truly free; free to give away all of our expertise in the area of media and ministry. We can share everything with others. Yet, we will continue to increase in grace.

#### Monday:

So much of a congregation’s hospitality and welcome occurs around eating at table: pot luck suppers, strawberry festivals, roast beef dinners, etc. Many of the greatest moments of Jesus’ earthly ministry occurred while breaking bread with his disciples. We are a people invited to restoration and renewal at the Lord’s Table. Shouldn’t we be able to

practice Christ's hospitality of food better than anyone? Here are some ideas to create and sustain community around food.

\* A junior high school class and its teacher in Shueyville, Iowa were concerned about world hunger. They decided to change the situation. The students wrote to 300 missionaries and asked for recipes. This yearlong project led to the creation of a special cookbook. The funds from the sales of these cookbooks were used for world hunger programs. The huge undertaking was accomplished through the hard work of the junior highs, a dedicated Sunday school teacher and the prayers of the congregation. They also studied the work of the missionaries who wrote to them. With email communication becoming more and more standard for mission personnel, those contacts can be made quickly and efficiently.

\* A church in Perry, Oklahoma invited international students from neighboring Oklahoma State University to attend on Pentecost Sunday. When the time came for the selected scripture reading, students from various foreign countries simultaneously read the Scriptures in their own language. They became the honored guests of the picnic that followed the service. How might you adapt such an idea to fit into and augment your Advent worship and welcome to the strangers in your midst? Have you an international community in a nearby college or university that goes unnoticed by others?

\* The people in a Follansbee, West Virginia church organized a Pentecost picnic in an interesting way. They developed the idea that this was the birthday of the church. They asked diners to sit at a table according to the month of their birthdays! This meant that the people at each table had a special kinship. How might you adapt this to center on Christ birth into our lives at Christmas during your Advent preparations and celebrations?

\* A church in San Bernardino, California found several couples that were especially rich in their qualities of hospitality. They agreed to offer a special act of hospitality to strangers who visited for worship. These folks would befriend the new face or family. They then ask them if they will come home with them right now for dinner! The experience has been amazing. Just about everyone who goes home for this table experience joins the church!

Tuesday:

\* A Pennsylvania pastor arranged to make a phone hookup between the local church and an African church in South Africa that was served by a friend. He and the South African pastor had a dialogue sermon during worship via amplified phone. The phone costs (on Sunday morning) were reasonable. A member of the church connected the phone to work through the speaker system. It was very moving to hear a person under racist persecution proclaim his faith. With advances in Internet services, churches can explore a number of ways to connect to others. Live chat and email provide immediate and direct communication with other churches and mission personnel at a distance.

Wednesday:

\* A pastor in Canada realized that most families had linkage with the religious traditions. Parents were not able to pass on what they themselves have not experienced. This minister noted that the children of the baby boom were now longing for a past to which they can relate. She created a special resource basket that focused on Lent, Holy Week, and Easter for members. The materials included the history of the celebrations, connections with today's concerns and problems, activities for families, recipes and other items that would help them experience the season. The minister also suggested that the church families share these resources and activities with another family in the neighborhood. She encouraged them to bring the new family to church for special seasonal activities. How could you resource the season of Advent in a similar way for your congregation?

#### Thursday:

\* The men's group of a Pennsylvania church offers a community phone referral service. But the men had a problem. How could they offer a phone number when there was no one person to take the calls? Using the "call forwarding" service offered by the phone company, each of the five men took turns having the calls directed to his phone for a way to handle calls. This meant that one number could be used in TV and newspaper ads, radio spots, and other promotional materials. What creative ways can you integrate the available technology of communication to make a ministry of your church more viable?

#### Friday:

\* The junior and senior high school students from a church in Spartanburg, South Carolina have developed an exciting project to support mission work. "Muscles for Missions Day" is a time when junior and senior high youths will be available to do any or all odd jobs people had for them to do. The young people asked no fee for performing the services, but encouraged the person for whom they worked to contribute to the youth offering for missions. They often worked in teams. One senior high young person who could not participate due to a part-time job commitment gave his entire week's salary to the offering. "Muscles for Missions Day" was heavily promoted. Flyers, mailings, newspaper articles and even an appearance on a cable show were very much parts of this youth project. On the Sunday before the big day, one of the senior high students made announcements about the day at both services. Adults were urged to save their odd jobs for the young people and the youth were encouraged to come and work. It went very well!

#### Saturday:

\* A pastor in Dayton, Ohio had the youth group work on something special for church at their snow party. They created slides, which could be projected outside on the wall of the church! When there was snow, they used the snow as a screen. They chose all kinds of imaginative images to be cast on the church as a special message to those passing by. With today's computer presentation software, some churches will be able to accomplish this even more creatively with multiple scenes and a continuous play presentation.

## **Bonus Section**

### **\*Bonus Media Clue -- So You Want to Produce a Video?**

The following useful tips have been gleaned from the media staff of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. These questions provide a fine set of guidelines for those who want to produce a video for local church use.

(1) *Who is the audience?* Jesus communicated the Good News in many different ways (parables, acts, discussions, stories, etc.). He chose different approaches for different people. He knew that each person deserved a presentation for the message that would most deeply touch him or her. Potential video producers must answer this question for their project.

(2) *What is my message?* If we don't know what we are trying to say, we will not do a very good job of communicating it to others. Your message can usually be summarized in one sentence.

(3) *Why am I choosing video as my medium?* Sometimes Jesus told a story. At other times our Lord took a handful of grain to teach. You should choose the most appropriate medium for message and audience.

(4) *How will I reach my audience?* Marketing has been a dirty word for most people in mainline churches. Yet the delivery system or distribution plan is vital to the receivers of the message. You are not trying to sell Jesus, as if he was a consumer product, but you desire people to enter into a relationship with him. Does your plan start from and orient towards establishing and maintaining relationships with others?

(5) *How "good" does my video need to be?* Your brother-in-law's camcorder videos may kill them at family gatherings. However, amateur videos don't hold up well before sophisticated church audiences raised on \$400,000 thirty-second commercials. Our media culture has raised sophisticated and savvy viewers.

(6) *How much can I expect to spend?* For broadcast quality video production expect to spend upwards of \$1,000.00 per minute of finished video. This includes the expertise of professional videographers and studio editing in postproduction. With such expenses, a critical examination of the needs, purposes, and outcomes for starting such a process need to be explored. How large is my potential audience? Where and how will they see this production? How long a shelf life does my video need to have before it is outdated? Do I want to do more with this video in the future?

(7) *What tape format should I use?* Tape quality and price increases as you consider these three formats: VHS, ¾ inch, and Beta cam. If you are going to make copies, the cheapest format often does not hold up well as copies are made. Consider alternative means to delivering your church's message. Video may or may not be the most effective means to accomplish your goal.

(8) *Is there help available to process these questions?* Why yes! Presbyterian Media Mission (PMM) has trained consultants who can help you evaluate, anticipate and troubleshoot your media ideas, projects and plans. In some cases, PMM will serve to coordinate and produce your production on a fee for services basis.

### ***Bonus Days:***

#### Thanksgiving:

\* A church in New Canaan, Connecticut gives out small envelopes containing five kernels of corn at their Thanksgiving Eve service. This represents the Pilgrims' daily ration during their first winter in the New World. When parishioners place the corn on their plates the next day, it serves as stark reminder of just how much they have to be thankful for.

#### Christmas:

\* A pastor in Sloan, Iowa was seeking a way to tie the saving message of Christmas into the saving message of Easter. She had members of the congregation assist her on the post-Christmas Sunday. As she preached, these people cut the limbs from the huge Christmas tree. When they finished, there was the outline of the cross! This tree-cross remained at the front of the sanctuary until Lent began and Easter came. The folks in a church in Miles, Iowa wrapped wire netting around the Christmas tree and made it into a cross. On Easter Sunday they had the children place live flowers and butterflies they had made at Sunday school on the cross. A dead tree was transformed into a live cross.

#### New Years:

\* A church in South Dakota added spice to its January outreach by going back to an earlier practice -- with a new twist! On the frontier people were admitted to Holy Communion only if they had a token, which indicated their spiritual preparation. The members of the worship committee realized that people today live in a world, which requires tickets and reservations. They collected Christmas and greetings cards. These were turned into tickets, which welcomed new persons to worship. They were encouraged to give the invitations to the people who had just moved into the community. Church members delivered them by hand.

\* A church in Springfield, Missouri, has utilized a delightful idea for Father's and Mother's Day. They invite the children to transform their sidewalks around the church building into giant cards. The children draw greeting cards on the sidewalks with colored chalk. The children also create cards for fathers whose children are not present or are too far away to attend. After church everyone goes out to admire the greetings. The newspapers and the television news people love them. They are graphic and colorful. A TV news crew can interview someone and use the graphics at the same time. The rain comes and washes the chalk away when the sharing has been completed. Even though the weather outside may be wet and cold, is there a way to adapt this idea for Advent? How might the children be integrated directly into the plan of welcome and hospitality for your church?

\* A pastor in Kentucky found that a local workshop produced large posters that were laminated in plastic and mounted on sticks. Local politicians most often use them during election time. They were very inexpensive. The church ordered one for every member. Developed for Pentecost, the posters had a huge flame symbol on them. People were encouraged to display the placards on their front lawns. How might this idea be adapted

to offer welcome, hospitality and witness during the festival season of lights at Christmas time?

\* For more intentional approaches to outreach, church members in Dayton, Ohio formed a public relations committee. They have been able to co-op local artists to serve on the body. They designed posters, flyers, invitations, announcements and an outdoor billboard. Everything from their weekly hot meal program, flea markets, and Vacation Bible School is advertised with vigor and boldness. Are there people in your church with these kinds of gifts who would be willing to serve in this way who might not otherwise find a way to serve the church?

\* A church in Ohio has rented one of those large signs, which come on wheels. There were thousands of cars passing the church each day. A committee worked on creating fresh sayings for the sign every day! People came to expect a teaching that would make them smile or think as they passed daily.