

HARVEST SUNDAY: EVANGELISTIC SERVICE

Harvest Sunday at the church building Suggestions

For the pastor (or the Harvest Sunday coordinator, if not the pastor)

Harvest Sunday is a day of celebration! The goal for **ACROSS MONTANA 2010** is to reach every home in your area with prayer and a Gospel presentation, as well as an invitation to attend your church for an evangelistic worship service on September 19, 2010.

At this point, you have done what you set out to do. Your congregation has been prayer walking, praying for individuals and families in your community. They have worked hard, going door-to-door inviting people and their families to church. It's possible that you've hosted an evangelistic event this week to share the Gospel. And now on Harvest Sunday, you are witnessing some of the fruit of the labor: new faces appearing in your worship service.

The following suggestions will help you capitalize on Harvest Sunday:

- 1. Understand when the service begins.** The Harvest Sunday evangelistic worship service starts the moment newcomers arrive on your church campus. Within the first 90 seconds of their pulling into the parking lot, they will make significant decisions about your church—whether it's a warm and welcoming place, whether they and their children will be comfortable here, whether they want to go in or whether they will ever come back.
- 2. Think like a newcomer as you plan for Harvest Sunday.** Don't expect newcomers to know people; have church people wear name tags and allow newcomers to make and wear name tags as well. Don't expect newcomers to have a Bible; as they come in, make available to them copies of the Scripture. Don't expect newcomers to know their way around the Bible; preach a simple Gospel message without a lot of cross-referencing. (Another helpful idea is to project applicable Scripture passages on a screen at the front of the sanctuary for newcomers to follow along.) Don't expect newcomers to be patient with a slow-starting worship service; start on time! Don't expect newcomers to anticipate or understand the flow of the worship experience; explain the parts of the service as you go.
- 3. Set the stage for God's Spirit to move freely on Harvest Sunday.** Establish a prayer room in the church building, staffed with intercessors praying continuously before, during and after Harvest Sunday activities. Include prayer as a focal feature in the small groups as well as in the worship service. Consider having believers give testimonies as part of the day's activities. Utilize worshipful praise music and give special attention to the flow of the worship service, with little interruption or distraction between prayers, testimonies, songs, and the sermon.

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4. **Extend a warm welcome to newcomers from the outset.** Have church people greeting newcomers in the parking lot and at each entrance to the building. (Greeters should be on hand at least 15 minutes before scheduled start times for small groups and/or the worship service.) Be sure that the greeters are friendly people who can show a genuine interest in new folks. Also, it is imperative that greeters know their way around the church building and can accompany newcomers to the appropriate small group classroom or to the sanctuary.
5. **Involve newcomers in a small group.** When they attend, involving newcomers in small-group Sunday School classes or Bible studies is one of the most effective ways to help them connect with church members. Introduce each newcomer to the small group in which he or she can feel most comfortable—that is, the age or affinity group that fits him or her. Prepare small group leaders to receive newcomers and make them feel welcome. Take special care to provide coffee and refreshments, extra study materials, and extra chairs. Encourage each small group to have a plan for assimilating newcomers; that is, making them part of the group.
6. **Preach a simple Gospel message.** Harvest Sunday is not the day for an in-depth theological or doctrinal treatise from the pulpit. With non-churched newcomers in the service, most of whom may not be believers, Harvest Sunday is the day for a simple, straightforward presentation of the Gospel. Be sure to rephrase religious terms in language that non-churched newcomers can and will understand.
7. **Give an effective evangelistic invitation.** Being a good steward of the opportunity to present the Gospel means, in part, allowing newcomers an opportunity to respond by placing their faith in Christ. “Drawing the net” takes skill. The central point of the message should be the stack-pole around which the invitation is built. Consider the possible felt-needs of those who are attending the service, and plan to address those needs through the invitation. Have church members available (at the time of invitation in the worship service as well as during small groups) for one-on-one sharing, praying with, and counseling newcomers who respond. Most importantly, allow the Holy Spirit to direct the invitation time.
8. **Connect newcomers as well as new believers to the life of the church.** For those who place their faith in Jesus on Harvest Sunday, certainly you want to acknowledge their commitment on-site and have the church respond with joy.

Just as important, however, is following up with newcomers who do not register a decision. The first four weeks following a non-churched person’s visit to a church are critical. At this time, they are most receptive to the church and to the Gospel, but the receptivity gradually declines. If no contact has been made between the church and the newcomer in four weeks, the newcomer will become indifferent again. Work with the Follow-Up coordinator to plan an appropriate follow-up strategy.

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Suggested Order of Worship

For the pastor (or the Harvest Sunday coordinator, if not the pastor)

Harvest Sunday is a day of celebration! This is the day to praise God and worship Him. Newcomers to your service will be drawn into the spirit of praise and worship, allowing God's Holy Spirit to work His work of redemption in them.

The following suggested order of worship is designed for a 75-minute service with 15 minutes of pre-session instrumental music. The time allotments simply provide a framework around which to build the service. Obviously, the time allotments you make for different aspects of the service will be in keeping with the overall time frame you allot for your worship service.

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15 mins	Pre-session music; before the start of the service (instrumental, as people are entering)	Praise Team
15 mins	Service begins with praise and worship (worship leader leads into opening song; congregational participation)	Praise Team
05 mins	Welcome Brief testimony—"Why I'm excited to be in worship today" Opening prayer	Worship Leader
05 mins	Video montage—church folk participating in Across Montana 2010 (either set to music or showing on a screen behind someone sharing highlights from the effort)	
05 mins	Brief testimony—"How I came to place my faith in Jesus Christ"	
15 mins	Praise and worship (congregational participation)	Praise Team
30 mins	Evangelistic sermon Invitation * Concluding prayer	Pastor

* As newcomers respond to the invitation to place their faith in Jesus, connect them with church members who can counsel them, walking them through the plan of salvation and praying with them on-site. Make this a special day—a day of celebration—for each one.

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Leading Someone to Faith in Christ Step-by-Step

For the Harvest Sunday invitation-time counselor

Thank you for committing to counsel with newcomers who respond to the invitation to place their faith in Christ during the Harvest Sunday evangelistic worship service. Your role as the counselor who talks with a newcomer is a sacred one.

- 1. Understand the position of the newcomer.** As a newcomer responds to an evangelistic invitation in a worship service, he or she is on a path of discovery. Do not assume that the newcomer understands the commitment he or she is making.
- 2. Walk the newcomer through a plan of salvation.** A plan of salvation is a set of Bible verses that explains why, how and what happens when we place our faith in Jesus. One simple plan* is found in the Book of Romans (in the New Testament):
 - “For all have sinned; all fall short of God’s glorious standard” (Romans 3:23 NLT).
 - “The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23 NLT).
 - “God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners” (Romans 5:8 NLT).
 - “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9 NLT).
 - “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13 NLT).

* Other salvation plans are found in this packet, with the Door-to-Door Gospel Distribution and Evangelistic Event information.

Lead the newcomer from verse to verse, explaining as you go. Ask questions such as, “What is this verse saying?” or “How do you understand this verse?” Listen carefully to the answers, affirming clear understanding and clarifying any misunderstanding.

- 3. Conclude the counseling time with prayer.** Invite the newcomer to receive Jesus through prayer. Offer to share an example, such as, “Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am sinful and I need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died to pay the penalty for my sin. I want to turn from my sin and follow You instead. I confess that You are Lord, and I invite You to come into my heart and life. In Your name, Jesus, I pray. Amen.”
- 4. Give the new believer a memento of the occasion.** Provide a pre-prepared card for him or her to complete. The card should have spaces for the new believer’s name, the date and place of his or her new birth, along with your name and contact information, as the person who led him or her to faith in Jesus. You may also want to give the new believer a Bible and/or a Spiritual Birth Certificate.