

# HARVEST SUNDAY: EVANGELISTIC SERVICE

## Harvest Sunday outside 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 worship with your congregation 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 gone door-to-door inviting people and their families to worship with them. It's possible that you've hosted an evangelistic event this week to share the Gospel.

You have even decided that the most effective way to involve your community in worship is to take church to them. So, you are holding the Harvest Sunday worship service in a public place away from the church building, and you are anticipating fruit of all the labor: new faces appearing in worship with your congregation.

The following suggestions will help you plan for Harvest Sunday outside the church building:

- 1. Understand when the service begins.** The Harvest Sunday evangelistic worship service starts the moment newcomers arrive. Within the first 90 seconds of pulling up, they will make significant decisions about your church—whether you are a warm and welcoming people, whether they and their children will be comfortable with you, whether they want to stay 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 arrive, 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. 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 as you go.
- 3. Set the stage for God's Spirit to move freely on Harvest Sunday.** Establish a place of prayer, staffed with intercessors praying continuously before, during and after Harvest Sunday activities. (This may be a prayer room back at the church.) Include prayer as a focal feature 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 at each entry point into the area. If there is a designated place for distributing name tags, be sure that it is clearly marked with large signs visible from every direction. (Greeters should be on hand at least 15 minutes before the scheduled start time for the worship service.) Be sure that the greeters are friendly people who can show a genuine interest in new folks.
5. **Involve newcomers in a small group activity.** When they attend, involving newcomers in a small group activity is one of the most effective ways to help them connect with church members. Plan a mix-and-mingle, small-group activity as part of the worship experience. Prepare church members to receive newcomers and make them feel welcome. Encourage leaders to have a plan for assimilating newcomers on-site as well as for following up with them after the service to connect them to an ongoing small group in which they can feel most comfortable—that is, the age or affinity group that fits them. Think outside the box! Some newcomers may need a Discovery Group that meets on their turf rather than an established small group within the church. (See Discovery Group information in this packet.)
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) 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.

### Harvest Sunday September 19, 2010

15 mins	Pre-session music; before the start of the service (instrumental, as people are arriving)	Praise Team
15 mins	<b>Service begins</b> 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.

# HARVEST SUNDAY: EVANGELISTIC SERVICE

## 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.