



December 2017

Dear North East District Family,

As the events and activities pick up their pace for Advent and Christmas, I want to share some brief ideas for you to consider:

1. Creating a culture of invitation takes work and intentionality. This time of year is one of the few times when unchurched and de-churched people are more open to an invitation to church. Print cards with your Christmas Eve worship times and distribute them to your church members now so they can, in turn, give them to friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers. Challenge your people to invite people on their social media. If you can produce a graphic (like a JPEG) that they can use on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram even better! People won't be attracted to your church by osmosis. Think about tangible ways you can give to your people so they can invite, invite, invite!
2. To go along with that idea, make sure that on Christmas Eve you have something to which you can invite your guests. You want to have an event in the very near future that might peak their interest. One idea is to have a special sermon series kicking off in January. Another idea would be to have an event that's more than a study or small group that will interest people. Don't just verbally invite them; give them a card that has the date and time on it so they can take it home.
3. On Christmas Eve during every worship service include a time of inviting people to follow Jesus. When I was serving the local church, I didn't do an altar call, but I did offer people time to pray along silently under their breath with me if they wanted to make the choice to follow Him. You will have people with you that day that you might not see again, so please don't be afraid to take advantage of that fact. Bill Hybels, the lead pastor at Willow Creek Community Church, says you have to "ask for the order." I don't ever apologize at offering people the chance to say "yes" to God's saving grace!
4. When I was serving the local church we always made the decision to give away our Christmas Eve offering. We did it because it was missional, but we also wanted the many guests that were with us that evening to know the church cares about people who aren't yet a part of it. Might I humbly suggest [Campus to City Wesley](#) if you want to make an impact in making disciples of college-aged kids? The [Hurricane Irma fund](#) that the Annual Conference has to help churches who have been damaged is also a good option.
5. This has been a good year for the stock market. Don't be shy about inviting people who have been especially fortunate in their investments to give a gift towards the church's mission. Don't forget that for folks who have retirement accounts (IRA, 401(k), 403(b)) that if they're over 70 ½ that they have to take a required minimum distribution. If they don't need it and want to avoid the tax liability, they can give the distribution to the church to remediate the tax liability.
6. This last one is hard for preachers...but...intentionally preach shorter sermons during Advent and Christmas. Preach shorter sermons so you can include more Christmas music. People only get to hear this music one time a year and there are so many great songs to sing. If you can add more opportunities for people to participate with music, you'll make a large impact. You won't have to write as long a sermon, either!

God bless you, laity and clergy alike, as you engage in this busy time of year. I pray during the many demands that will be placed on your time that you'll also find time to be still and spend time with Jesus as you celebrate the Gift He is to humanity.

God bless you and Merry Christmas!

All God's love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jay Therrell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jay Therrell
Superintendent