

Starting New Resort Churches

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A majority of the people in the United States are lost and do not have a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Why Do We Need New Churches In Resort Areas?

1. Christ commands us to go into all the world. The biblical command to make disciples is our primary motivation. As Christ's followers, we must be obedient to Him. The Church will multiply as we follow His commands.
2. America has more than 180 million lost people. Resort communities are often areas of high population growth. All around us are people who are unaware of Christ's love and salvation. Resort communities are but one mission field that needs Christ's love and salvation.
3. Many areas have little or no Southern Baptist witness. Many resort communities are isolated from other Southern Baptist churches and many have no strong Southern Baptist witness.
4. America's ethnic population is growing. The great cultural diversity within our country demands that thousands of churches be established so people can hear the gospel in their native languages and cultural settings. Resort settings offer many job opportunities that appeal to a diverse ethnic population.
5. The complexity of our society dictates the need for new churches. Resort communities share some church starting factors, which are common to resort communities. These will be discussed later.
6. New churches usually grow faster than older, established churches.
7. Cults and other religions are increasing in America. This is especially true in resort communities.
8. People are often open to a Christian witness in a resort setting.

Sam Worley of Tahoe Resort Ministries has identified some key factors that are common to resort areas that might be helpful in understanding the church starting needs of resort communities.

Key Factors:

1. Resort areas are by nature, transient. People come and go in a matter of days, weeks, or months; usually the shorter time period is the rule.
2. Ministry to the permanent locals is the base for starting a church in a resort area. Church starting efforts must be open to reaching different lifestyle groups that are found in the resort community.
3. Flexible time of worship. Typical times often do not meet the needs of people in a resort area. Other than normal times and multiple times need to be considered. This is true of other ministries besides worship, like Bible study.

4. Location. There needs to be an openness to meet anywhere, under almost any condition. If you have the choice, then ministry points with visibility are most important. Generally people have a shorter time in which they are willing to travel to ministries in a resort setting.
5. Worship/Programming. Resort churches are often based upon worship. Programming should only be instituted as membership provides the leadership. Do not overextend the resort church just to have traditional church programs.
6. Know and relate to the resort community. Build relationships with resort-based businesses, chamber of commerce, tourism and planning councils, and so forth.
7. Promotion. Promotion is a key. Get the word out. Flyers, brochures, ads, radio, television, and cable TV are some ways to promote. Prime targets for promotion should be hotels, time-shares, multi-housing units, property management groups, and the chamber of commerce. Use the Yellow Pages but think of both traditional placement and non-traditional placement of ads (also true of the phone directory).
8. Timing is everything. Note the seasonal patterns of the resort area. The resort-based church will experience ups and downs in attendance and finances. Plan for the seasons and remember that the locals are at their busiest during the resort area's prime time.
9. International/ethnic diversity. Ministry to internationals and other ethnic groups should be provided in a resort area because of the tremendous growth in the population of these groups in resort areas.
10. Needs. Identify and address the church's outreach to real needs not "perceived" needs (examples: Parents Night Out program, employees early Bible study, etc).
11. Longevity. Being committed to minister over a long period of time will make a difference in the resort area. Being an "old timer" will make a tremendous difference in the resort area. Stay with it.
12. Multi-denominational ministry. Resort areas offer a cross-denominational opportunity for ministry. An understanding of other denominational backgrounds will be helpful.

Steps to Starting New Resort Churches

I. Define your target.

Three key questions:

- 1) Where are the unchurched?
- 2) Who are the unchurched?
- 3) Why are they unchurched?

II. Develop a strategy.

Remember there is more than one way to skin a cat.

A. Models

- 1) Cell groups (Paul Cho)
- 2) Sunday School (Andy Anderson)
- 3) Lay ministry (Frank Tillipaugh)

- 4) Networking (Bill Hybill)
- 5) CAMEO (Rick Warren)
- 6) FAITH (Johnny Hunt)

Every Strategy Should Focus On The Unchurched

If we are to develop resort churches that reach the unchurched then it is essential that we understand them.

B. Key Components

- 1) Minister to real or felt needs.

Find a need and fill it, find a hurt and heal it.

- 2) Minister to people who are experiencing change.
- 3) Understand the lifestyle systems in resort settings.
- 4) Focus on quality programming, not quantity programming.
- 5) Major on relationships.

Focus on the Unchurched in Worship

1. Quality childcare.
2. Atmosphere of acceptance.
3. Positive and practical sermons.
4. Celebrative worship.
5. De-emphasize money.
6. Clear gospel presentation.

Ways to Get the Unchurched into Church in Resort Settings

1. Telemarketing
2. Direct mail
3. Newspaper
4. Radio
5. Relationships
6. Big events
7. Lay ministry

Based on an article by Bo Simms in the 1993 National Resort Ministries Conference notebook. Used by permission.