

St. George's Church Outreach Forum, October 30, 2022

About 30 Georgians remained after worship and Coffee Hour on Sunday, October 30 for an outreach brainstorming session. Father Vang offered a benediction and Paul Smigelski, Vestry Chairperson for Outreach, led the discussion.

As the New Testament reminds us, we are the Lord's workers and should not be content to worship by faith alone. We need to shine the light of Christ, as we are able, throughout our community and world.

Many parishioners spoke up with ideas that we could implement. Cooperation and teamwork are key. Successful projects need a leader with a passion as well as adequate support.

Opening Our Doors

St. George's Church is well equipped for Stockade gatherings, which used to be the norm before Covid. Activities such as dinners and music recitals are great "fun-raisers" as well as potential fund-raisers.

Alternatively, we could offer free community meals on a regular basis. Another suggestion was to charge a nominal amount for attendance at a community dinner and ask that each attendee also bring an item of warm outdoor clothing (hat, gloves, scarf) to be passed on to local needy.

We could collect gently-used winter coats for the City Mission or offer them for free on a coat rack outside where anyone can select items (or leave their own donations).

It's too late for this year, but our parking lot is the perfect setting for a safe, fun Halloween "Trunk or Treat" event for kids in the area. This would be a good activity to do in cooperation with the other Stockade churches.

We are a polling place. When neighbors drop by the Great Hall to vote, it gives us yet another chance to make a good impression.

Hands-On Help: Visibility is Evangelism

Some churches organize periodic workdays to assist neighbors who might need help with home or lawn maintenance. Such an event is great publicity.

Church members used to participate regularly in meal preparation at the City Mission. This was a fellowship opportunity as well as a good deed for the needy.

Undertaking a visible, creative project outside our doors helps elevate our profile. (Suggestion: Building beds for those who need them.)

Any face-to-face activity gives us the opportunity to evangelize. One idea was to prepare meals to go. When guests arrive to collect their food, we can also provide them with written information about our faith.

Participation in peaceful demonstrations (e.g., against gun violence, in support of Pride Month) could also help show the community what we are about.

Working With Resources Already in Place

The Stockade and City of Schenectady already have some good social service organizations in place. We might want to reach out to a few and invite them here to worship with us and present their own information. In the past we have collected items for Things of My Very Own and the YWCA. Currently, we are launching a collection of bedding items (new pillows and gently-used single-bed sized blankets and quilts) for use by the women served by the YWCA.

The nearby First Reformed and United Presbyterian churches offer some interesting and worthy programming. We should keep in close contact with these esteemed neighbors and work with them on joint projects.

The annual Stockade Christmas Tree Lighting is scheduled for December 4 at 5 p.m., and St. George's has consented to hosting refreshments afterwards in the Great Hall.

Let's not hide our light under a bushel. Churches are given free listings in the *Daily Gazette*. Are we represented there? We could also be submitting regular articles to the *Stockade Spy*.

Welcoming the Stranger

When visitors drop by our church, are we being as welcoming as possible? Young people in particular would appreciate a heartfelt display of hospitality and possibly a tangible gift (such as the coffee mugs that we used to offer to guests) along with a friendly invitation to attend Coffee Hour.

Be gracious within the church. A first-time worshipper may feel ill at ease. Ask if they would like some simple orientation on the Episcopal service, and show them how they can participate by following along with the bulletin and singing hymns.