

some thoughts on outreach  
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Outreach from a Christian community to others is a commandment from God. Yet, like other commandments, the intent, I believe, is not to dictate behavior but encourage connections and the furtherance of the gospel. That being said, outreach can play out in a myriad of ways and to me, include these essential components:

- Outreach should be relational in intent and flavor.  
Any hidden or primary agenda to bring people to Christ or have them join the church will be detected if not felt and will undermine the work at hand.
- Relational outreach is hard work and requires time.  
“Friendship evangelism” has perhaps become a trite phrase yet the heart of it – getting to know and love the people we reach out to – is biblical and has a great impact. We cannot show God’s love to others unless we show them ours.
- Building relationships can take many forms from meeting physical and financial needs, to engaging others in discussion forums, to centering around social events. The key to success seems to be:
  - The type of outreach taken on by a community must be authentic to that community. While there is nothing wrong with stretching ourselves a little, the task should be under girded by a firm belief in *what* we are doing and *why* we are doing it.
- Outreach must be systematic.  
Those who become connected to a few or to a particular setting need to be embraced by the whole, making new and deeper connections within the Body. As in the parable of the seeds, careful preparation will be deeper impact and growth for each individual involved.
- Outreach taken seriously brings us face to face with the essentials of our beliefs. In the effort to embrace the lives of others around us we very likely will encounter some who do not understand what we believe. We must be sure that our principal beliefs are more strongly based in scripture than in tradition or dogma.