

Comments on Outreach Program

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The leadership of the church has made a commitment to community outreach for the year 2007. For that purpose we have signed a contract with Jeff Littlejohn of Imagine Northwest to help us with outreach, we have hired an intern, Markus Von Steinfort, to help with this effort as well (among other tasks). I have had several conversations with Cindy Sink about outreach. She sent me a jewel document with her thoughts about outreach. I have attached this document—read it carefully. We also have ongoing discussions with the Word of Truth International Ministries (WOTIM) and its pastor, Clarence Pressley, about outreach involving youth. All these activities point to a moving of the Spirit to be a light in the community.

Curiously, we do not have an Outreach Team or a description of such a team. Other possible terms that could be used to describe the sphere of activity are evangelism, community outreach, witnessing, and so forth. I have attached a draft proposal for an Outreach Team that draws heavily on Cindy's thoughts and is also informed by the presentation Jeff Littlejohn made at the Council orientation meeting of January 4. I propose that we discuss these thoughts at the area coordinator meeting on Monday January 22, 2007.

I am struck by one of the key characteristics of the early church: that of hospitality. The Greek word is *philoxenia*. This is remarkable because it literally means *love of strangers* (*philos* = "loving," *xeno* = "a stranger"), the very opposite of *xenophobe* "a person unduly fearful or contemptuous of strangers or foreigners." So we should become *xenophiles* (unfortunately, there is no such word). It is not enough to be hospitable to "our own." We are commanded to start there but are also commanded to move beyond that. That will require moving out of our comfort zone in some ways. But Markus has pointed that reaching out brings a blessing to us as well. In fact, the first blessing is ours.