FREE PLANNING GUIDE

12 months of outreach that fits a small church

A flexible calendar for churches with limited time, volunteers, and money.

Use this as a menu, not a quota. Some months call for an event; others call for listening, showing up for a partner, or following through with someone you already know. Swap months to fit your local school year, weather, harvest, holidays, and church capacity.

Choose one owner

A named volunteer or leader can coordinate a modest next step. Give that person a clear time limit, budget limit, and someone to call for help.

Serve without strings

Meet a real need because neighbors matter. If an invitation to worship or conversation fits, make it honest and optional.

Decide the budget locally

There is no universal minimum. Approve the cost of each activity through your church’s normal process; many ideas here can be done with existing relationships and supplies.

Follow up with care

Ask permission before collecting contact details. Thank partners, keep promises, and do not turn private conversations into public numbers.

Quick start: Read the ideas on pages 2–3. Choose one activity for the next quarter, name its owner, and use the worksheet on page 4. Review what happened before adding more.

One realistic option each month

Adjust the sequence. Relationship and follow-through matter more than a full calendar.

JAN

Try: Listen to a school, pantry, or neighborhood leader about one current need.

Keep it local: Ask what they already do well; do not arrive with a ready-made program.

Next step: Bring one specific question to the next church leadership meeting.

FEB

Try: Send handwritten encouragement to isolated neighbors or partner staff.

Keep it local: Coordinate with a trusted local organization so notes are welcome.

Next step: Ask whether practical help, visits, or continued contact would serve.

MAR

Try: Host a small repair, clothing, or resource-sharing day with a local partner.

Keep it local: Only offer what trained volunteers and approved space can support.

Next step: Thank participants and ask the partner what was useful.

APR

Try: Prepare clear Easter hospitality: signs, a greeter, children’s information, and an honest invitation.

Keep it local: If Easter falls elsewhere locally, move this to the right month.

Next step: Offer one simple, optional way to connect again.

MAY

Try: Ask a school or family ministry how to support teachers or graduates.

Keep it local: Follow school rules and avoid using student details without consent.

Next step: Thank the school and review whether the help matched its request.

JUN

Try: Share a simple meal or picnic with a community partner.

Keep it local: Keep the menu, cost, and volunteer load modest; choose an accessible venue.

Next step: Invite feedback and make the next gathering only if people want it.

Keep serving, listening, and inviting

No month requires a new program. Repeat a useful action when your community asks for it.

JUL

Try: Help a local partner with one summer need, such as supplies or a workday.

Keep it local: Ask the partner to name the need and let them lead the plan.

Next step: Report back to volunteers and the partner on what was completed.

AUG

Try: Coordinate school-supply help only if a school identifies a real gap.

Keep it local: Confirm requested items, privacy, drop-off process, and available funds.

Next step: Ask whether any further support is wanted after school starts.

SEP

Try: Host a neighborhood table conversation or small shared meal.

Keep it local: Use a familiar public space and listen more than you announce.

Next step: Name one concern or asset to discuss with church leaders.

OCT

Try: Join an existing fall community event as helpful volunteers.

Keep it local: Respect the host’s purpose; do not turn service into a sales pitch.

Next step: Thank the host and ask what help would be useful next year.

NOV

Try: Visit or write to local partners to thank them and hear their priorities.

Keep it local: Do not ask for public praise or a photo in exchange.

Next step: Choose one relationship to maintain through winter.

DEC

Try: Offer simple Advent or Christmas hospitality and practical care.

Keep it local: Account for grief, work schedules, transport, and weather.

Next step: Make an optional invitation and follow through on any promised help.

COPY THIS PAGE EACH QUARTER

Quarterly outreach plan

Choose one meaningful action, two lighter relationship steps, and a review date.

Quarter and local seasons or events to respect

What a neighbor or partner has asked for (source and date)

One action we can actually staff and fund

Two small relationship steps we can repeat

Owner, volunteers, needed approvals, and spending limit

How we will invite participation without pressure

Follow-up owner and review date

Decision: If the owner, partner, permission, or budget is unclear, keep listening and delay the activity.

COPY FOR EACH ACTIVITY

Simple project card

A one-page brief for a meal, service day, school partnership, or neighbor gathering.

Purpose and who requested this activity

Partner or host; approved date and place

Team roles, supervision, accessibility, and safety requirements

Supplies, approved spending limit, and who holds receipts

What people will experience from arrival to goodbye

What information we may collect (with consent) and why

Who will thank participants and complete follow-up

Use your church’s safeguarding policy and any local requirements for children, transportation, food, finances, and public events.

AFTER EACH ACTIVITY

Follow-up and learning review

Review within two weeks, while details are fresh. Keep private stories private.

What did the partner or neighbors say was useful?

What did volunteers find sustainable or difficult?

What promises or follow-up requests need an owner?

What should we stop, change, or repeat?

Next review date and person responsible

Keep the next step small: A meaningful relationship, a kept promise, or an improved plan may matter more than attendance. Ask before contacting anyone again.

When you need a fuller system

The **Small-Church Outreach Action Plan and Team Toolkit** adds a 39-page guide to listening, team roles, project decisions, invitation, follow-up, and review. See ministryplace.net/product/small-church-outreach-action-plan-and-team-toolkit/.