

A banner with a green and yellow background featuring a blurred image of grass. The text is centered and reads: DR. LAMAR E. SMITH CENTER FOR EVANGELISM & CHURCH GROWTH.

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Seven Ideas That Hardly Cost Anything

The first church growth seminar I attended was in 1978. It was at First Methodist, Brownwood, Texas. I was 25 at that time, and the idea of doing things specifically to grow a church was a novel idea. This idea was pioneered by two men from California, Winn Arn and Donald McGavran. Dr. Arn was the seminar leader that day. I remember three points he made, “Signage, landscaping and unlock all the doors so people can get in.” What that meant to me then, and still does today, is that growing a church does not always cost a lot of money. I am sometimes concerned that we think it takes a lot of money to grow our churches. Often the only resource we need is a willingness to do something.

Here are a few ideas that have helped me, and I hope might help you:

1. Landscaping and property maintenance:

The church building may not look up-to-date, but we can make the church yard look up-to-date. Mowing regularly, edging, a little mulch and new landscaping can make a difference to members, guests and those who drive by. I have planted many a shrub and trees, and I’ve also worn out a few lawnmowers.

2. Cosmetic touches:

Paint and put up new pictures of people, children, ministry and living stuff. Take down the old pictures of what used to be, and put up pictures that help people imagine what it can be and what you want it to be.

3. Preaching:

I may not be able to do anything else, but next Sunday I can preach better than I ever have. Commit to preaching your best sermon ever this next week. Connect people to God, to you, to each other and to the community you are trying to reach. Commit to make every sermon better than the last one. Think, this is the week the message will change everything.

4. Hospitality:

Put the welcome team outside at the entry doors and in the parking lot. Encourage, challenge and train the people who interact with the visitors each week. Put your best interactive people at the doors. In the worship service, welcome everyone, introduce yourself and introduce others leading worship with you. Offer guest “next steps” to get connected with the ministries of your church.

5. Social Media:

This is a free and an often unused resource. The pastor and staff should be communicating here and so should the church. Many new churches grow rapidly and use primarily social media. This is easy to

learn and do; you can use a smartphone to put the Sunday sermon on Facebook each week.

6. Pray:

Pray for your church to grow, invite your leaders and church family to pray with you. Pray in the worship services. Begin changing the culture of your church into a growth culture. Use discipleship and evangelism as a core for prayer.

7. Evangelism:

Every church and every pastor can invite people to surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The good news of the church is that Jesus Christ can save and change lives. Our communities are filled with broken and hurting people – how are we connecting them to Jesus? Every church, no matter the size, can use the book of Acts as a church growth tool. People are drawn to churches where lives are being changed.

Take these seven ideas, add your own and make it a comprehensive plan you share with your leaders. Invite them to participate in worship, celebrate in worship and tell a story of why and when this will be done. Small changes can often bring energy and excitement to any size church. And it will cost hardly anything.