

Community Organizations and Service

*Each of you should look not only to your own interests,
but also to the interests of others. Philippians 2:4*

A church that is becoming externally focused will increasingly see itself as vital to the health and well-being of their surrounding area. Such a church believes that God has placed it where it can be salt and light – that is to be a blessing. When we care about the physical needs of a community, as well as its spiritual needs, we are more like Christ who ministered to the whole person.

Today there are numerous community organizations that are doing good works to help people. How can we come alongside these organizations and let them know that we care about their important work? There are several organizations with which FBC is developing a relationship of service. For more information about how you or your group can come alongside one of these organizations, pick up FBC's "Externally Focused Opportunities" list at the info table on Sundays or online at www.fbcdavis.org/resources.

First Steps

*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive
yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:22*

We do not drift our way into making a difference in the world. It always begins with a decision to take a first step. Whether you start small or big, it matters not. The important thing is to start. Will Rogers once said, "Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there."

Before you begin consider one more thing. There is power in numbers. Jesus died that the world might see his followers serving together in his name. If you are in a small group, consider enlisting their involvement. Or ask a friend to consider serving alongside you.

Where does God seem to be leading you to become externally focused? After you've decided, start praying, and ask God to give you one or more to link arms with.

Becoming Externally Focused

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Where do we begin?

We begin one step at a time. It takes faith to say no to our comfort and step out and try something in the name of Jesus. At first, we may have doubts – “will this work or will this fail?” But what matters is not our success or failure, rather our obedience in taking a step of faith. That is what will honor Christ.

In word and deed, Jesus served. He has invited us to join him in this same high calling by becoming a servant to the people of the community in which we live. Every time we do good, every time we serve someone in the name of Christ, we advance God’s kingdom here on earth. So, where can you begin? Perhaps your first step is to pick one area or venue where you can focus your service. It may be an area in which you are already active. Instead of adding something new to your busy life, try changing your approach to that area of life you’re already engaged in. It might be your workplace, your school, neighborhood or a sports team. Or perhaps God has given you a passion for something in your community, such as a community organization that is doing a good work.

Take some time to pray, asking God to grant you wisdom and a sense of direction as to where he would have you serve. After praying and considering, choose one area where you can use your gifts to serve others in the name of Christ. Some suggestions follow.

The Neighborhood

Love your neighbor as yourself. Mark 12:31

Today the rediscovery of neighborhoods is a cultural opportunity for developing community, building friendships, and serving others in the name of Christ. As our culture continues flirting with the failed experiment called “individualism,” people are increasingly open to rediscovering the sense of community that a neighborhood can bring. Representing Christ to your neighbors begins with simple steps such as praying for them, taking time to get to know them, listening to them, and meeting needs as opportunities arise.

Articles/Books for focusing on the Neighborhood:

- *Evangelism without Additives* by Jim Henderson
- *Watching for Open Doors* (This article is located online at www.fbcdavis.org/resources.)

The Workplace

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men... Colossians 3:23

For many of us, we spend more time at work than in any other locale. Our workplace provides a host of opportunities to serve others and build relationships. But where to start? How can we love our coworkers in the name of Christ? Begin by praying for your workplace and the people you work with. Ask God to open your eyes to opportunities that present themselves. For example, when a coworker experiences hardship personally or in her family, there are a multitude of ways to express concern and meet real needs. For more on making a difference in the workplace, consider the resources below.

Resources for focusing on the Workplace:

- *Watching for Open Doors* (This article is located online at www.fbcdavis.org/resources.)
- *The 9 to 5 Window* by Os Hillman
- www.marketplaceleaders.org

The Local School

For we are ... created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10

Many churches throughout the U.S. are discovering something they have in common with their community leaders. Churches and communities alike want their schools to succeed. Schools matter because children matter. Through work projects, tutoring, and mentoring, churches are finding creative ways of serving their schools. Why not begin by praying for God’s blessing upon your local school? What relationships with parents, staff, or children can you invest in? Consider networking with other believers to find creative ways to be a blessing at the school. Develop relationships and find out what needs exist at your local school.