

TELEMARKETING - (1989) (1997) Early in the initial calling process, we recognized there were a large number of homes in areas where calling was not possible or not permitted. These areas account for over 3,000 homes in our Primary Service Area. Against the advice from denominational officials, we conducted a telemarketing program. I am thankful to our Bishop for his trust and permission to try something from outside the box. Using material from Norm Whan's telemarketing program *The Phones For You*, we completed a telemarketing project to area condominiums and mobile home parks. These are traditionally hard to penetrate markets for churches. Many people in these areas see themselves as *in transition*. I often heard families in mobile home parks say that they planned to look for a church when they found a (permanent) home. Others have moved into "gated" communities for the very specific purpose of avoiding what they see as solicitation. Independent studies of people in this area show they do not want you at their doors.

The telemarketing program we used was very simple:

- Obtain phone numbers from a "reverse phone directory" or some other local data source
- Locate or install a bank of phones, design several mailings, select and train callers, make the calls
- Introduce yourself as calling for a new church in the area - ask if they have time for 2 quick questions
 - _ "Are you actively involved in a local church at the present time?" (if yes, affirm it and say goodbye)
 - _ If not, ask "would it be alright if we sent you some literature about King of kings?"
- For the 10% who say its okay, send 4-5 mailings introducing the church and inviting them to attend
- Approximately 10% of the mailing list will come to the first worship service (overall 1% response rate)

During one week in September 1989, 2,089 calls were made to listed numbers by 25 callers from Christ Lutheran Church in Warren. Five callers called for five evenings working three hours each. 194 families who showed interest received five different mailings inviting them to our first worship service. The same content, design, print style, and colors were used for all five mailings to build some recognition factor. Similar information was included in five different formats: a letter, postcard, letter size brochure, legal size flyer, and a nicely printed invitation on a note card.

The same basic telemarketing method also works successfully for launching a new worship opportunity or just to invite them to a no-occasion *Celebration Service* or *Friendship Sunday*. All of the families we contacted who said yes were placed on our permanent mailing list. Since we never know when the Holy Spirit is going to prompt a response in someone, once a name goes on our mailing list, it stays on until we are asked to remove it or we receive a piece of returned mail from the postal service. Ongoing cost for a monthly newsletter to these people was about \$20 per month for paper and postage.

REFLECTION AND EVALUATION - The cost of our initial telemarketing project was about \$1700 and took a total of six weeks from the first phone call, through the five initial weekly mailings, to the first worship service. Of the 194 on our mailing list, we identified 21 worshipers at our initial worship service. Because we continued with those names on our mailing list, we can now trace 49 members to this single outreach effort. We continued to see an occasional visitor from those who remained on our mailing, even after four years. Like door to door calling, we know that telemarketing is an unwelcome intrusion in the lives of people - but it works. It is basically a numbers game. Make 100 calls, 10 go on the mailing list, and 1 comes to church.

We do not have a continuous telemarketing program at this time because our present membership growth can be difficult to assimilate at times. We do know that telemarketing is an inexpensive and easy way to attract newcomers to King of kings. In October, 1997 we conducted a small scale telemarketing program to help launch our fourth worship service. Information on that effort can be reviewed under the section on Saturday Service.

Many congregations have been launched using this single outreach method, often with 20,000 calls resulting in 200 people at the initial worship service. In one case, 100 callers made 50,000 calls in five weeks, with 506 attending the initial service. One established congregation I talked with uses telemarketing as its primary ongoing outreach tool, calling one quarter of its community (36,000 homes) every six months. The 9000 semi-annual calls bring 60 to 100 visitors, over half of whom decide to join. In the last contact I had with them, they said the program remains effective even though they are making their third round of calls in six years. Telemarketing is an effective way to draw people to any new congregation or a new ministry in an existing congregation.