

LOVE

WHERE YOU

LIVE

**BLOCK
PARTIES**

So you want to host a block party...that is fantastic! We are so glad you are willing to step out in faith to build relationships with your neighbors and share God's love with them. We believe block parties have the potential to be a valuable tool for outreach and we want to help equip you and get you thinking about how to host the most hospitable and effective party possible. It has been said that "good deeds, establish good will and open the door to the Good News" and that is what a block party is all about.

We have compiled the following thoughts and resources to give you a jump start in your block party planning. Our hope is that you will take these suggestions and with your own understanding of your neighborhood, host a party where people have a great time, feel comfortable and desire to grow in relationship with you.

5 Steps for hosting a great block party:

Step 1: Let us know you are going to host a party

We want to know that you are hosting a party so that we can provide you with party resources and be in prayer for your event.

Step 2: Begin your party planning

Pray – As you begin to plan your block party spend time in prayer. Pray that God would make people receptive to your party invitation. Pray that you would have the time energy and excitement to do a good job plan. Pray that God would develop great relationships that can lead to conversations about issues of faith.

Schedule – Choose a day, time and location that you believe will work well for your neighbors and will provide good visibility (wouldn't it be great to have other neighbors just stop by because they were curious what was going on?!)

Partner – Find another family in your neighborhood to help plan/host the party with. It's much more enjoyable and manageable to work with other people. This will also help to expand your relational reach in your neighborhood.

Personalize – Consider exactly what type of party you would like to host. Will there be a theme? Will you cook all of the food or will it be a potluck (potlucks are more inclusive and help to get people involved)? Are there games or other types of entertainment that you would like people to bring?

Invite – Use block party flyers (can be picked up at the church) or your favorite stationary to create invitations for your neighbors. It is also a great idea to put posters up around your neighborhood (mailbox stands, community bulletin boards, park signs, etc.) with the details of your party. Keep in mind that a face to face personal invitation is the best way to invite someone, so try and find a time to drop invitations off when you know your neighbors are home (Sunday afternoon can be a great time).

Step 3: Host Your Party

Now that your planning is done, enjoy hosting your party! At this point the most important thing you can do is build relationships with your neighbors. The hope would be that as your neighborhood relationships grow, so do your opportunities for having conversations about faith, invitations to church or church related events, etc.

Step 4: Celebrate A Good Time!

After having successfully hosted a block party you deserve to celebrate and we would like to celebrate with you. Email highlights or photos of your party to MVPC so we can see the great time you had. Your stories also provide great motivation for others to host future block parties. You may also wish to collect the email addresses of people in attendance and send your guests a few pictures.

Step 5: Keep Connecting

With all of the new relationships you have created, see about finding a few ways to nurture some of those relationships. Create a neighborhood emergency contact list, invite a family over for dinner, host an outdoor movie night, offer to provide babysitting, find a service project for your neighborhood to work on together. Most importantly, keep praying for your neighbors!

5 Ideas For Meeting Your Neighbors:

1. Deliver your favorite homemade cookie or dessert to a neighbor.
2. Make a point of connecting with neighbors when they are out in their yards or getting the mail.
3. Invite a neighbor(s) to go on a walk with you.
4. Offer to help a neighbor with a project around their house or yard.
5. Host a neighborhood water fight for the kids.
6. The most important idea however is to pray for the Holy Spirit's leading.

5 Ways To Build Relationships At Your Party

1. Learn your neighbor's names. People want to be known by name and so the more intentional you are about getting to know your neighbor's names the better. If you have people at your party that you don't know, say their name back to them in conversation as many times as you can comfortably. Nametags can also be a helpful tool at this type of gathering.
2. Invite people into the process. Find tasks for people to help with, ie. manning the bbq, setting out food, greeting people as they arrive, arranging chairs, etc.
3. Ask people about themselves. People enjoy sharing who they are and what they are all about.
4. Have fun together. Play bocce ball, croquet, volleyball, or another fun game.
5. Pray before your meal. In doing so you will allow people the opportunity to get to know a bit about who you are and what you believe in.

Suggested Block Party Implementation Timeline

2 weeks before – Personally pass out your invitations.

1 week before – Hang flyers around your neighborhood.

A few days before – Put a sign in your yard so people know where to go for the part.

Day of the party – Pray for your party and set up your tables, chairs, food, games, etc.

Week after your party – Email highlights and pictures to MVPC so we can celebrate with you!

Why a Block Party?

At the end of the day, we see block parties as a fantastic tool for helping us to love God and even more specifically, love our neighbor as we have been called to do in the great commandment (Mark 12:31).

Even though many of us live in very close proximity to dozens of people, we often don't take the time to really get to know them. However, we believe that through relationships God really opens the door for faith conversations and tangible compassion and care.

For this reason we want to help provide you with an excuse to go meet your neighbors and invite them over for a fun time of food, games and relationship building.

FAQ's:

How do I start planning a block party?

In order to help make your life a little easier we have compiled a party packet that walks you through the process step by step. It also includes tips on how to meet your neighbors, how to build relationships at your party and a suggested implementation timeline for your planning purposes.

I don't know where I'd host the block party?

Block parties work best in a visible area within walking distance. How about a local park, cul-de-sac, front yard, long driveway or even rope off an area of your parking lot or street? Get approval from your HOA or residential manager first, but they love these sort of things and will be glad to help.

That's a lot of food, do I have to pay for it all?

Not at all, we'll help you with that. You can reserve a \$50 gift card to get you started along with the other additional supplies (see below). Also, we've found people really enjoy a potluck so advertise it on the room provided on your flyers and posters and save a lot of work. It helps build the community as you're all working together.

What additional supplies can I borrow/receive from the church?

- \$50 gift card (see last page for request form)
- Fold up table
- 10x10 Shade tent
- Fold up chairs
- Large garbage cans

If you would like to borrow an item from the church, please email David Miles at dmiles@mvpc.net for availability.

That seems like a lot of work?

It's a lot more fun to do with friends! Invite your friends, small group or ABF to join you. Ask them to come early to help set things up.

It's Seattle, what if it rains?

July and August are the two safest months of the year but you're right, nothing is certain in the Seattle area. However, you can check-out a 10x10 shade tent to help keep people dry if need be.

What if no one comes?

Personal invitations are key. Plan a time to go door to door inviting neighbors – go when you know your neighbors will be home (i.e. Sunday afternoons) and give them a few weeks to get it on their calendar. Then, the week of, hang up the posters provided and yard signs to remind your neighborhood. You'll be pleasantly surprised how warmly your neighborhood will receive someone going out of their way to throw a block party. We all crave community. (Especially in the Seattle area)

Thoughts on Missional Living

What does it mean to be a missional Christian?

Don Everts in his book *Go and Do*, defines a missional Christian as “a believer who is personally marked by and caught up in God’s mission in this world.”

- Would you say that you are “marked by,” or identified as being a part of “God mission in this world?”
- Does your life reflect being caught up in “God’s mission in this world?”
- On an individual level how can you take steps to become more of a missional Christian?
- How can fellow believers (perhaps your small group) help encourage you in this process?

How do I live a more missional life?

It is important to keep in mind that sustainable, effective missional living has to start with your everyday life.

Jonathan Dodson says, “Missional is not an event we tack onto our already busy lives. It is our life. Mission should be the way we live, not something we add onto life...We can be missional in everyday ways without even overloading our schedules.”

What does this practically look like?

Consider the following six strategic frameworks for missional living:

- 1. Strategic Patronizing** – Be intentional about the places you frequent. Go to the same stores, coffee shops and restaurants. Get to know the people who serve you and allow them to get to know who you are. Through your interactions, be deliberate about demonstrating Christ’s love and if/when the opportunity presents itself to have a conversation of faith, take advantage of that moment. Also make a point of praying for these individuals and their families.
- 2. Strategic Recreation** – Find sports teams, cultural events, community festivities, service days, etc. and talk with people outside of your everyday sphere of influence. Get to know those who live in your same community, build relationships, share your story and be in prayer for those you socialize and serve with.

- 3. Strategic Service** – Find local organizations that you can establish ongoing service relationships with. Be a mentor or tutor, work at the food bank, serve meals to those in need, serve with transitional housing organizations like Vine Maple Place and Vision House. As you engage on a regular basis with these groups get to know both the staff and those they serve. Take time to listen to people’s stories, demonstrate God’s love and be ready to share your story of faith when the time is right. Make sure to keep these organizations and the people they serve in your prayers.
- 4. Strategic Work** – Instead of simply being coworkers, try and become friends with the people you see five days a week. Learn about their families, their interests and hobbies. Share about yourself and consider finding times to get together outside of work. This might look like helping a coworker move or complete a home improvement project. It might also mean inviting them over for dinner and board games. Get to know these people, and allow them to get to know you. Pray for them and if opportunities present themselves, share your story of faith.
- 5. Strategic Families** – Be missional as a family. Incorporate your children into the missional relationships you are creating. Teach them the value of serving others, sharing their faith, and living a life that reflects Christ. Through this you will not only be missional in helping your children grow in faith but you will also be exposing your children to everyday mission work. In fact, it might be through your children that missional opportunities present themselves. Get to know the families of your children’s friends, pray for them and demonstrate Christ’s love.
- 6. Strategic Neighboring** – Take time to get out of your house and meet your neighbors, bake them cookies, help with yard work, host a dinner or block party, start a book club, offer to babysit. As you serve your neighbors you will be demonstrating God’s love in very tangible ways that will be appreciated. This will often times open the door for great conversations about your motivation for doing such things. Take advantage of these opportunities and continually pray for those in your neighborhood.

Missional living is relational living.

If you want to live a missional life and be a missional Christian, it is going to require you to be relational. You will have to get to know the people around you. This doesn’t mean you need to become best friends with everyone (we only have so many

relational connectors), but it does mean that when you interact with others it should be done with intentionality and thought.

Here are 3 missional living questions to ask yourself each day:

1. How best can I reflect God's love to those around me today?
2. What needs do I see in my sphere of influence that I can help meet?
3. What are the gifts that God has given me that I can use to serve others?

As a small group how can we be missional together and support each other as individuals trying to live as missional Christians?

Small groups are great environments for fostering a missional lifestyle and there are several practical things you can do to help raise the value of missional living.

1. Take time as a group each small group session to serve somewhere in the community. This might even be on one of your regular meeting nights. You might decide to serve with a local organization or it might be more organic and come from a need you or someone in your group has personally noticed.
2. Share stories in your group of how you have been missional.
3. Pray for the people that group members are connecting with and serving.
4. Encourage each individual or family to be intentionally missional.

Keep in mind that missional living is not a one size fits all proposition. How we live on mission will depend on our circumstances, personalities, personal gifts, etc. However, we all have been called to be missional.

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” – Matthew 28:19-20

Tim Chester and Steve Timmis do a great job of summing up missional living when they say; “we must do all we can to live in a way that exposes and manifests the true nature of the cross.”

Use this worksheet to remember your neighbor's names and any interesting facts you learn about them. Let this also be a reminder to keep them in prayer.

Neighborhood

1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	3
1		1
2		2
3		3
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	3

Network

1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	3
1		1
2		2
3		3
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	3

Gift Card Request Form

I, _____ would like to request a \$50.00 gift card to help cover the expenses associated with the block party I am hosting on _____.

It is my desire to use this party as a missional living opportunity to love and develop relationships with the people around me, ie. neighbors, co-workers, etc. In particular, it is my desire to develop new relationships.

I will document my party by taking pictures, and share them with MVPC so that the church can celebrate the missional work being done in and around our community. I recognize that these pictures may be used in slide shows, posted online, etc. as a method of telling the story of my block party and encouraging others to live with a missional mindset.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Best Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

*Please return to the Connection Center on Sunday or the church office during the week.