

**Title** Thinking outside the box reaching inner city children.

**Abstract** This is the story of how one church is working with the children in their inner city community. The outreach program started with the church providing transportation to the children for Vacation Bible School and now extends to the church members bringing the children to church each week.

**Description** The black church has often been the focal point of the black community. It has been the training center for members who have later gone on to be community leaders as well a catalyst for social change. Black children in the inner city may not have the connection to a religious community if someone in the household does not make it a priority. It is important for this connection to be made early in a child's development in order for them to establish connections with the faith community. Greener (2016) supports this premise that early involvement and long lasting involvement lead to the best results in a child's development. The church can assist in this process by creating programs that are specifically geared to introduce and connect younger members to Jesus. Churches' often use Vacation Bible School programs as an outreach program in their community. The question is does the outreach end with the completion of the Vacation Bible School Program? It does not have to end but can serve as a means to build rapport in order to continue the nurturing, equipping, and training process of these children. Church leaders can use community programs to reach out and get to know those who are living right in their neighborhood while fostering an opportunity to extend the gospel to all the world but most importantly to the community outside its door. Crosby, Smith, and Frederick(2015) indicated the importance of children ministry workers' actively listening to the children they are working with in the Sunday school as well learning how to validate their students in unusual ways while providing a secure environment for them to build relationships with other students. Furthermore, as students become more comfortable in the church setting they can be given tasks to do that will increase their self-esteem and resourcefulness (Shaw, 2016). One church used Vacation Bible School as an outreach to minority children where most of them come from single parent homes in low income neighborhoods. The results have broadened the church leaders' perception and response as they started a breakfast program and enhanced their programs for the children who were coming to the church. It allowed the leaders to become acquainted with the needs of the children and their families and this served as a means to build rapport

and connection to other adults outside of their family circle. The church needs to be willing to walk the talk and practice what they preach while instructing their own children in the practice of social justice (Csinos, Jennings, McLaren, & Yust, 2010). The process of creating an outreach ministry that is ongoing is not only rewarding for the church but a learning experience as well. Ingersoll (2014) stated that focusing on the spiritual growth of its younger members is a reward for all the members.

### **Learning Outcome #1**

Learn unique approaches to establishing a genuine rapport with inner city children that may differ from the way church leaders have been trained.

### **Learning Outcome #2**

Learn strategies of how to involve other church leaders to promote programs for this population.

### **Learning Outcome #3**

Learn specific strategies of how to establish an outreach ministry in churches.

### **Bibliography/References**

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Oral presentation