

What is relational outreach?

Relational outreach is a ministry designed to build relationships of trust with individuals who are non-practicing, with the fallen away, and especially with non-believers.

Relational outreach typically serves individuals at the thresholds of pre-trust and trust.

What makes relational outreach successful?

- Outreach implies an outward-facing orientation and the missionary desire to forge new inroads with unreached people and groups. (Social events designed for active parishioners are not outreach.)
- Successful outreach must be personal. It involves an individual disciple cultivating relationships and curating trust with individual friends, neighbors, and co-workers.
- Parishes assist by creating spaces and opportunities for conversation, but they inevitably rely on the initiative of missionary disciples to forge relationships of trust.

Common Elements

Relational Outreach can take many forms, but fruitful initiatives tend to share some common elements.

Element	Description
Shared meals	Whether in a home, at a restaurant, or in a parish hall, shared meals are a tangible way of serving others that creates an environment for building relationships. <i>Example: School mom monthly brunches</i>
Informal conversations	Discussing everyday topics helps people feel known and loved in the uniqueness of their humanity instead of feeling like the object of some religious or political agenda. <i>Example: Enjoying drinks around the backyard fire pit</i>
Shared hobby or interest	Finding a shared hobby or interest provides opportunities for conversation and relationship building on an ongoing basis rather than a one-time event. <i>Example: Joining a neighborhood softball league.</i>
Shared stories	Non-judgmental listening to stories of life and faith demonstrates a desire to understand and walk with others in the midst of the hardships of life. <i>Example: Asking people in conversation “So, what’s your story?”</i>

Common Elements (continued)

Element	Description
Celebration	Recognizing and celebrating the good in others grows a sense of love and appreciation and helps them feel like they belong and are valued. <i>Example: Hosting appreciation events for non-Catholic groups within the parish boundary who are working toward the common good.</i>
Collaboration on a community project	Working on a community project together builds trust with others who care about the good of the community and desire its flourishing. <i>Example: Working with neighbors to create a community garden.</i>

Spaces for Relational Outreach

Location	Benefits	Drawbacks
Home	Homes provide a comfortable, intimate atmosphere for shared meals, casual conversation, and relationship building.	Capacity is limited by the size of the home, and invitations are often given to those already in relationship.
Parish	A parish can accommodate larger groups and usually has a hall with a kitchen for preparing and serving meals.	People with little trust in the Church are unlikely to attend unless a friend invites and accompanies them.
Public Spaces	Many types of public spaces can feel safer than a home and more familiar than a parish hall (e.g., a neighborhood park).	It can be more difficult to bring people back into the parish community, and there is often less control of the space.
School	A Catholic school can be ideal for mixing school and parish families, and it may be more suitable for family fun activities which neighbors can attend.	The school is not likely an effective location for outreach to people without school-age children.

Resources for Relational Outreach

Option	Description	Access
Sent Evangelization	Sent offers training in door-to-door neighborhood outreach so that parishes can reach all the souls living within their parish boundaries. They offer a full- or half-day workshop to equip parishioners in key skills.	Visit: https://www.sentevangelization.org/
The Art of Neighboring	This “neighboring movement” challenges parishioners to take the next small step of forming relationships with their literal next-door neighbors. The primary resources are the “Art of Neighboring” book and 6-week small group materials.	Visit: https://www.artofneighboring.com/
Elevate! 4x4	Elevate! is a 4-week small group resource designed for meaningful conversations with friends who aren’t ready for a traditional Bible study.	Visit: https://tinyurl.com/4cny2kfr

Please ask the Parish Support Team for a recommendation tailored to your parish.