

“Put out signs, advertise in social media, create simple flyers that you members can give to colleagues, neighbors and friends, ask children and teens to bring their friends.”

### **Engaging the Culture**

I have no data to prove it, but I think that Lent is a church season that is still fairly well known in the culture. Certainly it isn't as recognizable as Easter or Christmas, but I think there is a recognition that once a year, before Easter, Christians observe a period of preparation that usually involves giving up something (chocolate seems to be among the most popular). And if you listen to news stories about Shrove Tuesday or Carnival celebrations there is almost always a mention of it being the party before Lent!

Assuming that I'm on to something here, the church needs to take advantage of this. Evangelism is part marketing, and marketing is part taking advantage of trends and events and trying to persuade others to join you.

So...invite people to Lent! I know it seems a bit counter-intuitive, but it isn't really. What do all the studies tell us that people in the U.S. want from religion or spirituality? They want a sense of mystery, silence, a connection to God and connections to others. How can you open your many doors and offer this to your community during Lent?

### **Invite People to Shrove Tuesday**

Put our signs, advertise in social media, create simple flyers that you members can give to colleagues, neighbors and friends, ask children and teens to bring their friends. Coming to Sunday worship can be very intimidating to many people, especially those who have little experience with formal worship. It feels much less threatening to come to a dinner. There are many doors into the church - Sunday worship is but one. Meals are another.

### **Offer Ashes to Go on Ash Wednesday**

This is taking the church out onto the street, and it is a wonderful way to open the doors of your church. All the information you need is on [this website](#). There are many doors into the church, and the community and streets around you are some of them.

### **Invite people to special Lenten programs**

This can be book studies, meals, worship, special Lenten speakers. Try to offer child care at these events to make it easier for families with young children to attend. I try to avoid having meals be pot luck - people are busy and having to come with a casserole is just more than many folks can manage these days. Instead have a group or committee from your church host a meal, or bring in take-out. Set clear start and end times, and include this in your publicity. An ideal length is 1 ½ -2 hours which includes worship, meal and some program time. There are many doors into the church, and small groups are one of them.

### **Invite someone to join you in your Lenten discipline**

Ask a colleague to walk with you at lunch; offer a brown bag book group at your office or in your neighborhood. If you participate in an online Lenten program or activity share that information with others and invite them to join you. There are many doors into the church - workplace activities and dinners or groups at your home are among them.

### **Spread the Word**

Put information about your own Lenten discipline and/or programs at your church on your personal social media sites, always extending a welcome to your friends to join you. There are many doors into the church and technology is one of them.

Lent is an opportunity to name all the doors in your church, reach out through them and invite others to join you.

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