



The Diocese of Virginia

Church Toolbox
Tools to Build and Grow Your Church



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Keys to Reaching Secular People

We in the Diocese of Virginia are blessed with a wealth of resources and a commitment to fulfilling the mission of the Church. I believe that in every one of our 187 congregations in every person of the 87,000 plus baptized membership of this diocese are the God given gifts to pursue the mission of the Church. I believe that part of the ministry of the office of bishop is to provide congregations with resources to enable the pursuit of becoming a "missionary" in the communities that you live.

Churchtoolbox.org is a newsletter and a web site provided by the Commission on Congregational Development. I pray that you will find some of these resources helpful to you as you pursue the mission God has called you to.

*Peter James Lee
Bishop of Virginia*

We are a faith that seeks to grow, baptizing new believers. Evangelism today means speaking to a culture that is increasingly secular. This article seeks to identify keys to reaching secular people, or rather, God's children, living in a secular culture, waiting to hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

1. Bring the gospel to the culture. Do not expect the culture to understand the gospel.

For someone not brought up in church, words like lectionary, stewardship, theology, and diocese have little or no meaning. This leaves us with a choice. We can hope

that these people come to our churches, willing to learn our language and our customs. On the other hand, we can start with what they know and understand and help them learn about what we know and love.

A church I attended on a vacation did this wonderfully. A sermon title for one Sunday was, "What would Jesus say to the World Wrestling Federation?" This church knew that secular people, unfortunately, know more about wrestling than they do about Jesus Christ. This church decided to start with

culture and move to Jesus.

2. Be Ready to Educate.

In our teaching, we must be ready to explain the basics of the gospel message. I personally use my Christmas and Easter sermons to present a simple three step outline of the gospel targeted at those whose only attend on these occasions. For those who join our churches, we should be ready to teach doctrines such as Trinity, sin and redemption, resurrection, etc. in very basic terms.

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Developing Parish Leaders

It is extremely important that laity assume their proper role in leadership of a parish. This importance has several underlying elements. The first is to get away from the good old model that the job of the minister is to minister and the job of the congregation is to congregate. We are all ministers, therefore we all have a role to play in ministry and leadership. Secondly, it is important that leadership be spread as widely as possible among

the laity because participation breeds commitment.

Lay leadership differs from ordained leadership in one important way. Lay people have the luxury of being able to offer a gift they have, while the clergy must use the gift called for in a particular situation, whether they feel it is one of their strong points or not. Since everyone has gifts, and all are needed by the church, a large percentage of your

congregation has the potential for a leadership role. Help them find their gift. Encourage them to use it for the church and in the community and the small circle will grow until everyone is a part of it.

*Mr. Robert Thomas
Visit www.churchtoolbox.org for complete article*

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3. Present the Deep Meaning Inherent in the Christian World View

There is a great opportunity for Christians if we can understand and respect the scientific world view, and yet be aware of its limitations. At the same time, we should be articulate enough to assert the Christian world view. We have answers that modern science simply cannot provide.

4. Christian Community— A Precious Commodity

Churches have within their midst a precious commodity: community. Events where people can get together, make friends and deepen relationships are rare in our culture. Churches have always specialized in this. Do not underestimate the power that even simple community events can have. Potluck suppers, spaghetti dinners and cookouts can provide life-changing connections for lonely people.

5. Meet the Community in Non-church Settings

Consider holding “non-church” church events. A good example of what I mean by this is the service of the Blessing of the Animals. This is a religious ceremony, but is usually held outside, not in the church building. Secular people who attend can get a taste of what church is like, but in a much safer environment.

The Rev. David Keill
 Visit www.churchtoolbox.org for complete article

Healthy Vestry Leadership and Healthy Congregations

The task of leadership is a crucial one for us as we attempt to lead God’s church into faithful action in the world. In our polity, vestry members are elected to be leaders in the church, though roles of leadership clearly are not limited to those serving on vestry.

The Bishops in the Diocese of Virginia have called all 187 congregations to a vision of Unity, Love, and Witness and asked us to live into program priorities of ministry with Youth, Church Planting, local and global mission, and living as healthy and vital congregations. To live into this vision and mission we look for strong leadership, and just as individuals offer us characteristics of leadership to reflect and learn from so too we look for characteristics of leadership for healthy

vestry leadership in healthy and vital congregations. The following are some suggested characteristics of vestry leadership and congregational life.

Vestry Leadership	Vital Congregations
Strives for open communication with one another and congregation	Have clearly stated vision statements based on biblical values and has articulated goals for making this vision a reality
Lives first as a community of faith, studying scripture, praying, and nurturing one another in a ministry of leadership, rather than operating as “board of operations”	Lives generously and reaches out in meaningful and relevant ways to those not yet part of body
High energy striving to support a model of 80/20. 80% resources on mission 20% resources on maintenance	Orders its work according to its vision; eliminates activities not congruent

The Rev. Anthony Pompa Visit www.churchtoolbox.org for complete article.