

# Evangelism



# Resource

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# Reaching Out with Bible Study

FOR USE BY PASTOR AND EVANGELISM COMMITTEE



# EDITOR'S NOTE

*Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the name of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquilla heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.*

Acts 18:24-26



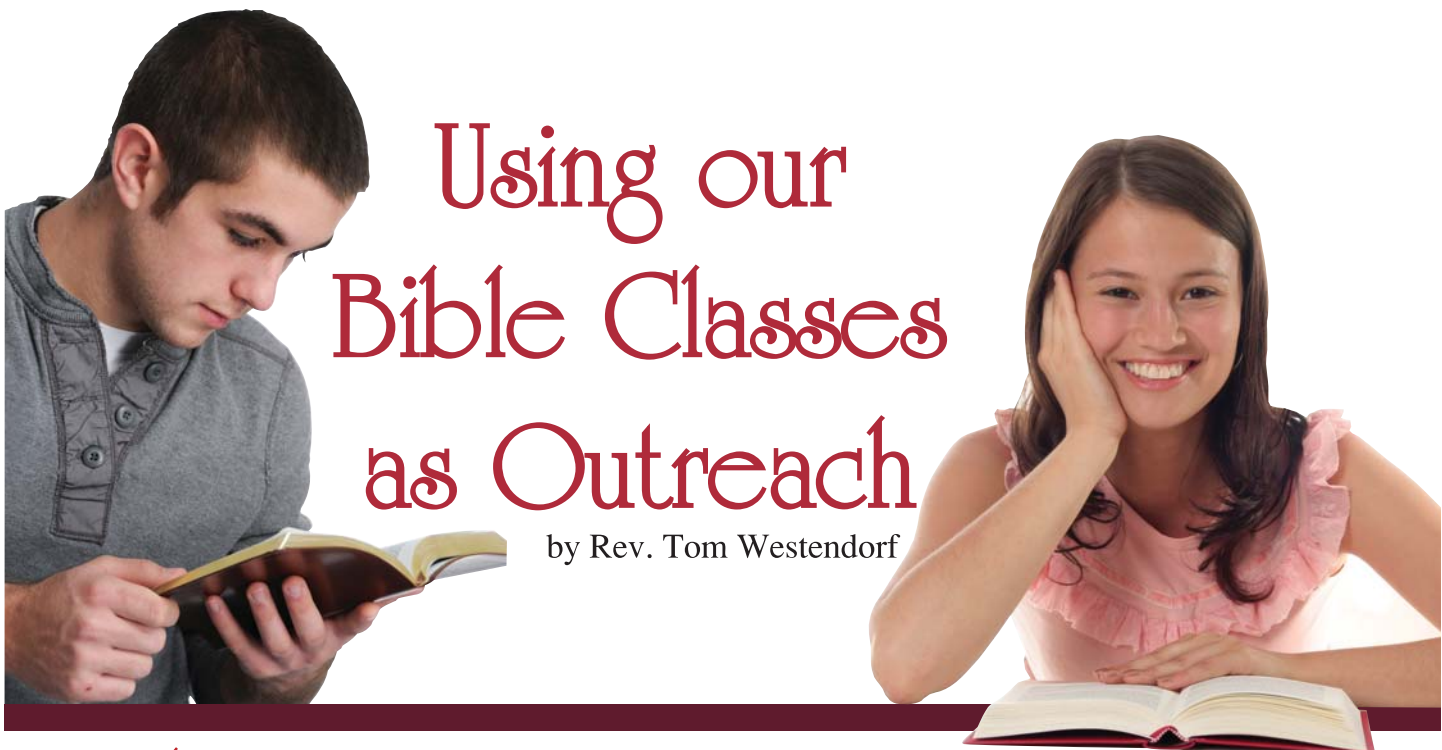
The account described above tells us about three early New Testament believers who knew the Scriptures well, and by God's Spirit were communicating it to others. One of them, Apollos, did this publicly, in the synagogue of Ephesus. The other two, Priscilla and Aquilla, did this through private instruction of Apollos, who knew the Word well, but still needed to learn it better.

What can we learn from these three early believers? In order to witness about Jesus and the salvation he won for the world we need to learn the Word, and always strive to learn it better.

To learn the Word and to strive to learn it better is a life-long project for any Christian. No one knows the Word well enough that there is nothing left to learn. If we take the time to read the Word, go to worship, and attend Bible study on a regular basis, our knowledge will grow, and we will be able to speak with increasing confidence and accuracy. Martin Luther understood the importance of learning the foundational truths of Scripture. This led him to write the Small Catechism and Large Catechism, to help families, clergy, and local congregations to learn the Word of God.

In Evangelism Resource 2009, you will find a central article on Bible study. It will speak about the role of Bible study in the Christian's growth in faith and knowledge, as well as its role as an avenue to spread the Gospel in the world. Also in this issue, you will find the ELS Evangelism News and Events feature, twelve printable devotions, and an "evangelism idea submission page," which can be filled out and returned to me, at the address noted on the submission page.

Through Jesus, the Living Word,  
Rev. Matthew W. Crick  
Chairman, E.L.S. Board for Evangelism



# Using our Bible Classes as Outreach

by Rev. Tom Westendorf

## Introduction

Conservative Lutherans have come a long way in my lifetime in providing Bible classes for their members. When I was young, many of our congregations were offering worship services both in English and foreign languages, filling the time slot that otherwise could have been used for Sunday morning Bible Class. Also, many congregations and pastors at that time assumed, correctly in many cases, that family devotions and personal Bible study were regularly taking place in members' homes, thus making the need for organized Bible classes at church less necessary.

But times change, and the various activities of our congregations have adapted with them. Today there are more opportunities than ever for Bible study in perhaps all of our congregations. They play an integral role in the maintenance ministry of our congregations. They help our members to put into practice the encouragement of Scriptures regarding the study of God's Word, like Psalm 1:1-3: **"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the Law of the LORD, and on His Law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers."** St. Peter's also encourages his readers: **"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good"** (1 Peter 2:2-3), and, **"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever! Amen"** (2 Peter 3:18).

But before we go further, permit me to digress for just a moment. There has been some concern expressed in our

circles regarding Sunday School becoming an overly essential part of a congregation's ministry to the children - besides, of course, Baptism and Confirmation classes, or an occasional Lutheran elementary school. It may seem hard to over-emphasize the importance of Sunday School in the spiritual upbringing of children. But the point goes something like this: while eagerly encouraging parents to make use of the Sunday School, congregations may have inadvertently given the impression that Sunday School has replaced the parents as the ones who are primarily responsible for the spiritual training of the children. St. Paul's words are quite clear: **"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord"** (Ephesians 6:4). The desire of leaders in our congregations has been only to assist the parents with the spiritual training of the children - certainly not to usurp the spiritual responsibility of the parents! But congregational leaders must always take into consideration the deceitfulness of the sinful flesh, which is damnably lazy in spiritual things - indeed, it is absolutely rebellious toward the things of God. St. Paul reminded his readers: **"The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so"** (Romans 8:7); and: **"The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned"** (1 Corinthians 2:14). In fact, it is sometimes the case that parents will drop off their children for Sunday School, leave, and then return to pick them up and take them home after Sunday School is over, without ever coming to worship or Bible Class themselves.

This same concern could also be expressed regarding congregations providing a variety of Bible classes. The argument is certainly valid that congregations would be at

least remiss, if not irresponsible, if they did not provide their members with organized opportunities to study the Scriptures (and there will be more to say on this in a moment). Yet are we running the risk of replacing the responsibility for the personal study of the Bible with too many Bible Class opportunities? It is always necessary for congregational leaders to closely scrutinize all of their congregational activities, to be certain that the responsibility of individuals and parents to provide for the spiritual well-being of themselves and their family as well is always emphasized. Planning for organized Bible studies in the congregation, then, can assist clearly the members in their spiritual responsibilities, without running the risk of unintentionally omitting an emphasis on personal responsibility for spiritual growth.

One last general thought before we look at specifics. Many E.L.S. congregations are quite small. Combined with the advanced age of some of their members, the situation for the Synod, humanly speaking, could become akin to “life-threatening” in the next decade or so. It is important that

congregations not allow themselves to become mired in a “maintenance ministry mindset,” and excuse their lack of effort to reach out to their communities because they are too old, or too busy already taking care of their own members. Using Bible classes as outreach opportunities - indeed, looking at the congregation’s entire ministry with outreach in mind - will keep us from being overwhelmed with “busyness,” and help us to focus again on the Great Commission from the Lord Jesus to His Church, which is: **“Go into all the world and preach the Good News to all creation” (Mark 16:15).**

Let’s now return to our main focus. This article is intended to encourage pastors and congregations to think about how they can use all Bible class opportunities also as outreach tools. Many are already doing this in nursing homes, retirement centers, or the like. This article will take that type of outreach activity and expand it. Hopefully, this will plant a seed in the minds of pastors and congregational leaders, where it can germinate and grow best for each unique situation.



## Sunday Morning Bible Class

This has become a very important part the ministry of the Word in many congregations, similar to Sunday School for the children. And with good reason: given the training E.L.S. pastors receive, and the importance of the Scriptures in the life of the church, this should be a fundamental strength of our Synod. Our training and our heritage, by God’s grace, have wonderfully and uniquely prepared pastors to provide the quality study of God’s Word to their members.

Sunday morning Bible Class is a wonderful opportunity to meet with our God and Savior. With the Psalmist we pray: Lord, **“Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in Your law” (Psalm 119:18).** As the Holy Spirit works through His Word, He leads pastors and members to rejoice in the love of God and forgiveness for all sins that is offered freely to all through faith in the Lord Jesus. Bible Class will offer to members additional guidance for Christian living, as

well as give them a chance to ask questions that are weighing on their hearts and minds. This is also a great opportunity for Christian fellowship, one of the hallmarks of the early Christians in the days after Pentecost: **“They devoted themselves to the Apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42).** This is following the example of the Berean Christians, who **“received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true” (Acts 17:11).**

There are a couple of practical goals for Sunday morning Bible Class in our congregation that are perhaps similar to the goals other congregations have. The first goal, by God’s grace, is to encourage more of our members to attend. Typically our attendance is 25-30% of our worship attendance on a Sunday morning, not including Sunday School attendance. This translates into about 15-20% of our total adult membership in attendance at our Sunday morning Bible Class. Obviously, there is much room for improvement!

There are several ideas to encourage more members to attend Bible Class on Sunday morning. Communication in congregations is, of course, rarely if ever overdone. Mention of Bible Class in sermons and announcements can help, as can mailings to members highlighting what is being studied. Study sheets can guide Bible classes, and give the people a sense of direction - as can study booklets, etc. And it is always important to remember to pray for Bible classes - both privately as well as in Bible Class itself, that our gracious God will use these times for study in His Word to His glory and the blessing of His people. This is also

something to encourage all members to pray for, whether they attend Sunday morning Bible Class themselves or not.

One other goal our congregation has in this regard is to encourage our members to see Sunday morning Bible Class as a wonderful opportunity to which to bring guests. This will happen, of course, only if our members are attending Bible Class themselves. But so often, when our members have guests with them, they come only for the worship service, or perhaps don't even come to church that Sunday at all. When guests and visitors attend only the worship service, they don't always understand or appreciate everything we do and the way we do those things. People today are not always as familiar with the liturgy, infant Baptism or Close Communion, for example, as perhaps people once were. The Sunday morning Bible Class is a great place to teach on these things that may cause confusion for people. It is the perfect opportunity to explain why we do what we do, and to present the guidance that God's Word gives on these and other subjects.

One other thing we may want to consider concerning Sunday morning Bible Class: is it visitor friendly? Are there things we can do to make it more inviting for visitors? Is Bible Class at the best time for visitors? Is the space too small, causing it to look over crowded and intimidating?



## Other Bible Classes

Many congregations offer other opportunities to study God's Word. Youth groups, ladies' organizations and men's fellowships also typically include Bible study.

But are these organizations also visitor friendly? With youth groups: are members inviting their friends to the Bible studies, or just to the activities? Are visitors welcome, or even invited, to the ladies' organization? Are there circumstances connected with the meeting which make it difficult to invite guests and welcome visitors? Is the men's fellowship open to all, including fellow members who have strayed or to a stray visitor who may walk in?

These questions are not meant to be accusatory. Rather, the idea is that congregations would examine existing Bible study opportunities with questions like: "What can we do to make this Bible study open to more people - member and non-member alike?" Again, Bible study is something that,

Some Bible classes offer refreshments - is that something that would work? Can a late-comer sneak in without causing a scene? These are just a few things to consider in making Sunday morning Bible Class as visitor friendly as possible.

There is one word of caution, however, if congregations invite, and start seeing "outsiders" at Bible class. People don't always express themselves correctly - in fact, even members will sometimes say things that sound almost heretical. But, as people are allowed to express themselves, they will become more articulate in sharing their faith. This was Paul's prayer for Philemon: **"I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ" (Philemon 6).** 1 Peter 3:15 says: **"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."** And when their comments do stray, member and non-member alike can be gently guided into the truth as it is found only in Jesus, as we remember Solomon's encouragement: **"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1).**

by God's grace, the E.L.S. trains its pastors for so well. It just makes sense that we continue looking at these opportunities to meet with our Lord and Savior with the thought in mind: "How can we offer this to more people?"

Here are a couple of additional ideas for Bible study that are geared even more to reaching out to the neighbors and the community. Two neighboring pastor-brothers are trying something a little different. One started a Bible Class during the week for his members; but the site they chose was the back room of a downtown storefront owned by one of his members. With a little advertising and word of mouth, they began seeing, not just their own members in attendance, but others as well. The other pastor started a Bible study in a middle school in his community. With the consent of those in authority, he has begun this "release time" program for his own members, who in turn have invited their friends to join them as well.

Pastors must always remember that their call is to minister to the members of their congregation. But the call ultimately comes from our Lord and Savior, who commanded His disciples to bring to all the world the Good News of God's love and forgiveness through His sacrifice. He once told them: **"I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to My voice, and there shall be one flock and one Shepherd" (John 10:16).**

There are, of course, many other ideas for Bible classes that could include, or even focus on, reaching out to the unchurched in our communities. Potlucks or suppers that include a Bible study, guest speakers who focus on Bible topics like creation or the environment, some kind of series on a Bible topic, an introduction to historic Lutheran Christianity. . . The list is developed by the timeless truths of God's Word, current issues in our community or nation or world, and our own, including our members' creativity. Banners that advertise the activities, doorknob flyers, community calendars, web sites, as well as other ideas can invite the community to these special events.

My congregation has been given an unique opportunity for outreach: our city is building a new public high school across the street from the entrance to our church. in fact, the student entrance to the high school aligns with the entrance to our parking lot. This is no "better" an opportunity for us to reach out than we had before: we are still in a neighborhood and community where the neglect of spiritual things is epidemic. But the high school presents a unique opportunity for us to focus a part of our outreach on teens and their families. We also have a superintendent who is not only open to a ministry to teens; he actually initiated the conversation with us! What makes this even more interesting is that we currently have no teen members who will be attending that high school. This, by the way, makes

following up with our older V.B.S. students - all of whom are non-members - all the more important for the future.

Therefore, should we sit back on our hands, thank God for the increased visibility our church is surely going to have because of the new high school literally across the street from us, but do nothing more? Or, is this, too, one of those "fields" Jesus once talked about to His disciples: **"Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest"** (John 4:35).

If the goal of our outreach to the high school students is simply "to get more members," there could be a problem with proselytizing - although the vast majority of people of Medford, OR are truly unchurched. But if the goal of our efforts for reaching out to those high school teens is to offer the ministry of the Gospel in some form of Bible study, and not to try to make them members of our congregation, proselytizing should not be an issue. The point here is to be of service to these young people as they deal with the challenges they face every day. Our hope is, through the use of Law and Gospel, in the blessing of the Holy Spirit, that we give them an opportunity to meet with their Lord and Savior, be reminded of their sinfulness, and of His love and sacrifice for them, and to assure them that He is faithful to every one of His promises: He will truly never fail them or forsake them.



## Using Bible Class To Train Our Members To Share Their Faith

When I think of this topic, I think of all the time and effort and expense that go into practicing or training for things like sports or jobs. Think, for example, of all the chasing around we do just to get our children to sporting practices or games, and how life can be "put on hold" until a sports season is over, let alone the time and effort people spend making a career of a sport! Or think of the training we put into our military people, or the years in college or tech schools and all the costs involved in order to prepare people for some job.

This all makes sense to us, I suppose. But then, why should we think that sharing "the one thing needful" would take any less effort in training or practice? St. Paul wrote to Timothy: **"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the Word of truth"** (2 Timothy 2:15). And St. Paul told his dear friends in Colosse: **"Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone"** (Colossians 4:5-6).

There are many great materials available to assist in the training of members to share their faith. The E.L.S. evangelism website is: [www.learnaboutjesus.org](http://www.learnaboutjesus.org). You can find a wealth of helpful information there. Our sister Synod, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, also has material available that can be accessed through their web site. Congregations can prayerfully consider how to incorporate the training and practice of sharing our faith in our schools, our Sunday schools, and in the various groups of our congregations.

In this regard, emphasizing prayer once again cannot be overstressed. Even the most infirm members can pray for all of our efforts to share Jesus with others - and they want to pray, if we will but ask.

# EVANGELISM NEWS & IDEAS



## New brochure from the ELS Board for Evangelism!

### *"The Lord's Supper-What Everyone Needs to Know"*

This brochure provides an overview of the doctrine and practice of the Lord's Supper, as taught in Scripture. It is designed to provide information for your congregation's Sunday morning guests, and membership prospects. It can be used as a Bible study and for personal encouragement in the Christian faith.

Please order now at: [www.learnaboutjesus.com](http://www.learnaboutjesus.com)



## Fall Festival by Rev. Mike Dale

Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church and Preschool of Port Saint Lucie, Florida held its 2nd annual fall festival on November 22, 2008 on its property. The dual goal of the event is to introduce the congregation to its community in the hopes of making more substantial contact out of what begins as casual contact, and to establish greater contact with preschool, VBS, and Sunday School non-member families of present and past (who receive personal mailed invitation).

This year, we had two large bounce houses brought in, as well as a dunk tank. In addition, we featured several carnival type games that the congregation built out of wood and other materials, live music via the pastor and another church member (acoustic, popular and sacred), a clown, face painting by a member, a sale of Christmas craft items, food items including burgers, hot dogs, popcorn, soda, etc.

Tickets for games, rides, and face painting cost .10 apiece. Burgers were \$2.50, hot dogs \$1, etc. Prices were set with the idea of keeping it affordable for families, but enough to offset costs and possibly even make a little as a benefit to our school (which is promoted significantly in advertising and at the event).

Turnout this year wasn't nearly as substantial as last year when several hundred showed up. This year may have been half that. We attribute this difference to cold, blustery weather on the day, the sagging economy, and changes in signing regulations in the city that took us by surprise, and resulted in several of our signs sitting in the church unused.

## How About a Church Family Activity Per Month?

Hope Lutheran Church, the ELS exploratory mission in Farmington, MN, attempts to meet its community through non-church activities that allow families to come together and spend time. A look at their newsletter highlights the effort they are making to meet their community.



## Hope's Family Events

### December '08

### Holiday Workshop



**Sunday, December 6th 10:00a - 2:00a** At Hope's Ministry Center  
This Christmas make your gifts extra special by learning how to make hand-made Christmas tags and Christmas cards to add to them. Katrina Piller will be providing some samples for us to follow at our paper crafting holiday workshop. Please register so we have enough supplies and lunch will be served.

Sign-up by contacting Jody (651-463-5355).

### January '08

### Family Fitness Month



**Saturday, Jan. 17th & 24th 10:00a - 11:30a** At Farmington Elementary School  
What is everyone's new year resolution? To get more exercise and Hope would like to help. Come on the 17th and learn from Kyle, the owner/operator of Anytime Fitness in Farmington on how to exercise and stay active on a very busy schedule. Come on January 24th and learn from our own Dr. Marcus Seywerd about overall health and overall attitude on keeping a healthy body.

### February '09

### Marriage Seminar



**Friday, February 13th 7:00p - 8:30p** At Hope's Ministry Center  
Pastor David Russow (28 years a husband and father of 5 children) will lead a marriage enrichment and strengthening seminar. Whether you are married and want to strengthen and renew your marriage or if you are planning on being married—this seminar will be of great benefit to you.

Space will be limited so sign-up by contacting Jody (651-463-5355).

### March '09

### Sliding Outing



**Saturday, March 7th 1:00p - 3:00p** Neill Hill II, Burnsville  
Join us for an afternoon of sledding fun at Neill Hill in Burnsville.

Hope Lutheran Church (651) 463-1055 [www.hope-farmington.com](http://www.hope-farmington.com)

## Conclusion

Using Bible classes as outreach opportunities, as well as creating new and shaping existing congregational activities with outreach in mind, may involve some adjusting in the way congregations do things. More importantly, it may involve some adjusting in the way congregations think about what they do and why they do it. There is no question that a “maintenance ministry mindset” can easily push outreach thinking, planning and events onto “the back burner” of a congregation’s activity list. There also can be no question that excluding purposeful outreach efforts from a congregation’s ministry is contrary to what the Lord Jesus commanded His disciples to do until He returns.

We must always remember that people are really lost and eternally damned without Spirit-worked faith in Jesus as their Savior and Lord. Our Savior has entrusted us with His precious Gospel truth in order that we may be strengthened by it, and in order that we may share that saving truth with others. Jesus said to all of His disciples: **“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before**

**men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).**

St. John used an interesting term in 1 John 4:12. He wrote: **“No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us.”** The word John used for **“is made complete”** includes the picture of “reaching the goal.” God’s love for you and me has a very definite goal in mind: and that is to bring us to Himself in heaven through faith in His Son Jesus: **“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).** God also has another goal in mind for His love, and that is that **“we love one another.”** When His love for us refreshes us by His grace, and then flows through us into the lives of the people around us - which includes sharing our faith with them - God’s love for us has truly “reached its goal.”

St. Paul’s words to the Ephesians are a good reminder to us all: **“Make the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”** May God continue to bless all of our efforts, including Bible classes, to bring the Good News of Jesus to our people and to our neighbors.





# SUBMIT YOUR IDEA/EVENT

*Do you have an evangelism idea to submit?  
Do you have a congregational evangelism event to report?*

Idea or Event Description

**IF A CONGREGATIONAL EVENT:**

How much did it cost? What preparations were involved?

How many congregation members were involved? What did they do?

What results can you report?

Please submit to: Rev. Matthew Crick  
14819 Jones Maltberger Road  
San Antonio, TX 78247

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