

Subject: Community Outreach -- Keeping Membership and Mailing List Current -- Summary of Replies

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Thank you for the replies to my question about keeping membership and mailing lists up to date. Several have asked for the results, and as some replies came directly to me, I thought I'd send back out the summary. These comments represent the feedback I got. I did not include ones with the similar thoughts. As you can see, the replies fell into three Categories: Membership; Mailing Lists; and Ministry of Care.

Membership Accurate and Current

We regularly purge my membership list. Every year we contact folks we haven't seen or heard from that year, to see if they are still interested in being members. If we don't hear from them, we remove them from the membership list but keep them on the mailing list. By doing this, we've kept contact with folks who were members of our church years and years ago, and know are starting to come back.

We send out a letter to all our membership every couple of years, defining what it means to be a member (i.e., service, tithing, attendance). We state that we are updating our membership list and would like to hear from them as to whether or not they want to reaffirm their membership. We enclose self-addressed stamped envelopes, along with a simple little tear-off thing from the letter for them to return. If we don't hear from people we haven't heard from in awhile, we delete their names. (And the letter nicely states that we will remove them from the membership list if we don't hear from them.) We got over feeling like the list was sacred--if somebody squawked because we removed them, we put them back on. But it's a great way to get things cleaned up.

Our requirement for membership is an annual pledge. Any previous members from whom we did not receive a pledge in the current drive were sent a letter (sometimes we've had members of the Board call), gently reminding them of the expectation and asking them to let us know if something has changed, either in their level of commitment to the church or in their finances. We give them a date to respond back by, and if we don't hear from them, we take them off the membership list.

As far as members go - we divided the membership among practitioners and offered everyone a birthday gift of an appointment with a practitioner. When their birthday rolled around we gave them a Spiritual Check-up form to fill out and call for an appointment. This way we knew who was an active member and who was not when someone did not call for an appointment -we called them to find out their status.

We did a mail out campaign with a letter saying that we wanted to update our membership rolls. And on a separate half-sheet form, asked them to re-commit as members or opt out of letters/e-mails. We were pretty honest about wanting to have an accurate count of committed members and to clean up our inflated mailing lists. We

included a self-addressed stamped envelope for them to return the form.**Mailing Lists up to Date**

We send postcards every once in a while (3 times a year) to our mailing list, and since this is first class postage, forwarding or returns come back to us automatically,. This allows us to clean our mailing list up of old names. We don't take anyone off our mailing list, unless it comes back like this, because you never know when they might be interested again.

Our data base, Shelby, allows us to list people as members or prospects, so we can also check to see whether in six months there is any activity for individual prospects (aka newbies) (classes, volunteering, contributions). If there isn't anything after, say, six months (I'm not absolutely sure what the time frame is), we delete.

My method was simple. Just sent out newsletters three months in a row to the whole mailing list and put on the cover page a request to mail back their desire to stay on the mailing list or not. If they did not respond, we sent out a personal letter asking them if they would advise us if they were still interested in receiving the newsletter. Last year, we changed to e-newsletters and emailed the newsletter to 375 people who gave us their address and 36 who do not have computers requested receiving a hard copy. Those who did not respond at all were removed from the list.

Ministry of Care

Some churches have teleministry where practitioners and trained lay people rotate through the membership rolls/guest lists every month or so to call people and ask how they are doing, if they would like some prayer, etc.

I was witness to the manner in which a church handled this situation. After missing consecutive Sundays a representative from the church would attempt a telephone contact. If this failed a card would be mailed to the individual. The people seemed to appreciate this attempt at contact. The church grew to considerable size in a short period of time.