

MISSIONARY TIPS FOR HELPING NEIGHBORS IN A PANDEMIC

6/9/2020

1. SAFETY

- a. We always go out in twos or threes, never alone
- b. Wear masks¹
- c. Don't enter houses or enclosed porches
- d. Stay six feet away
- e. Bring hand sanitizer
- f. Avoid touching doorknobs, railings and other "high traffic" surfaces

2. GETTING STARTED

- a. Some suggestions for opening lines:
 - Hi! My name is _____ and this is _____ and we live right around the corner from you.
 - We've been visiting our neighbors, trying to see how they're doing with everything that's going on.
 - We just wanna make sure everybody is doing OK and see if there's anyone that needs help with anything.
- b. What's your name?
- c. How have y'all been doing since the pandemic?

3. KEEPING THINGS GOING

- a. Most people say "we're doing fine" at first. They may not trust us enough to share their needs, or their needs may not be on their minds at the moment. It normally takes time for their needs to surface in the conversation.
- b. At first, we try to ask open ended questions about what it's been like for them since the pandemic hit. We try and avoid "interrogating" them about their needs.
- c. Some helpful "what's it been like?" questions:
 - What's changed since the pandemic?
 - How have you been keeping busy?
 - What's different about work? [if they're still working]
 - How's it been for your kids?
 - What do you miss the most?
 - Have there been any upsides to life in a pandemic?
 - Got any pandemic-survival-tips you can share?
- d. It can be helpful to share about our own experience too, but only if people seem interested.
- e. Sometimes it takes multiple visits to develop a strong enough relationship to start helping.

¹ It's probably unnecessary to wear masks outside. We find that wearing masks is a simple, non-confrontational way to communicate where we stand on a potentially controversial topic. It's a way to say "don't hug me!" without having to say it. That's a big plus!

4. IDENTIFYING NEEDS

- a. Neighbors rarely ask for help directly. They tend to talk *about* their needs, often obliquely.
 - “My kids won’t eat the free meals from school”
 - “My daughter’s been taking me to my doctor appointments, but now she’s working again”
 - “I’ve been trying to get on unemployment”
- b. Once we identify a need, we try and make it specific.
 - “What kinds of foods do your kids like?”
 - “When is your next doctor’s appointment?”
 - “What’s the process for getting on unemployment?”
- c. Then, if we identify a need we think we can meet, we ask them if we can meet the need. We try and be as specific as possible: how, when, where.
- d. We ask if we can write stuff down (we carry clipboards)

5. SOME SPECIFIC WAYS TO HELP

- a. Delivering food and supplies (See our a plan for a low-cost food box in a separate document.)
- b. Picking up meds (if you have their name and birth date you can pick up non-narcotic prescriptions in Indiana)
- c. Running errands
- d. Giving people rides (they’re in the back seat, masks, all windows down, etc.)
- e. Connecting people with other services and agencies
- f. Yard work
- g. Activities for kids (crafts, coloring books, games, etc.)
- h. Help with utilities (if we have the name on the account and the address, we’ve found we can pay bills directly and even anonymously)
- i. Help with rent (we prefer to help directly and anonymously but there’s a risk with unscrupulous landlords just pocketing our money, so we try and be careful and always get a receipt)
- j. Prayer

6. WRAPPING UP

- a. We have a dedicated Google Voice number we give out so people can call or text us if they need anything²
- b. It’s helpful to ask “Can we come back and see you again?”
- c. It can be helpful to review names before parting (it’s amazing how quickly I can forget someone’s name!)

² Google Voice is a free service from Google. They give you a new phone number that forwards to your personal phone (or multiple other phone numbers). The two big advantages are (1) you don’t have to give out your own number (perhaps a privacy concern), and (2) you can change where the calls get forwarded to (e.g. if you go on vacation you can have the number forward to someone else).