

Urban Summit Summary



The following is a summary of items recorded on flip charts during the 2011 Urban Summit. As with most summaries from flip charts – there is a lot in the margins that was missed.

Thanks to all of you who made “withdrawals and deposits” at this event.

Day One: Similarities and Differences

The group was asked to identify the similarities and differences between the three “stories of urban breakthrough”. (St. Gregory of Nyssa Church, Ss. Cyril & Methodius Church and the Milwaukee Lutheran parish.)

Similarities

- Reach out to neighborhood; saw Christ in the poor, homeless, etc.
- Never gave up
- Encourage out of comfort zone
- Didn't fret over lack of resources
- Often resources appeared
- Common faith
- Did not fear street people
- Affirmed dignity
- Look for basic need
- Let neighborhood express needs
- Lack of politics
- Encountered struggles
- Take risks
- Transparent in love

Differences

- 2 dying/1 new parish
- Lutherans heavy support/Orthodox minimal
- Different needs
- Lutherans focused on children
- Lutherans physical/partnering
- Arts, meals
- Multiple dimensional

Day Two Workshop 1 *Design an Urban Ministry*

The purpose of this workshop was to define and design an urban ministry for the mythical parish described in [appendix A](#). We divided into four groups. One group used a slightly modified case – one that reflected a suburban location.

Potential Ministries

The following is a composite list of potential urban ministries created by the groups. (Had to involve face to face contact with non-Orthodox; involve some cost.) I tried to combine duplicates as best I could tell.

Food

1. Dinner Spaghetti/pancakes etc.
2. Sandwich run give to homeless/hungry
 - a. Sandwich Sunday
3. Recycling food (farms/restaurants)
4. Food shelf
 - a. In parish
 - b. Supply/staff an existing nearby pantry

Shelter/Clothing

5. Blanket distribution
6. Warming shelter
7. Overnight shelter
8. After school latch key program
9. Clothes bank for children

Social

10. Annual block party
 - a. Free carnival/street fair
11. Game night with food for kids
12. Community garden
13. Library
14. Monthly neighborhood social activity
15. Weekly B-ball /sports

Classes/Teaching

16. Tutoring (math etc.)
17. Safe place to study
18. Financial Management
19. Job prep
20. Develop catechetical materials for those with special needs
21. Life skills mentoring

b. Self care

22. Cooking classes/home economics/healthy
23. Quilting/ sewing
24. Parenting/family wellness classes
 - a. Parents group
25. Teach home renovation skills
26. Baking with kids
27. Office equipt/place (provide a mailing address, access to PC wifi; place to type resumes ... a variety of office services generally unavailable to poor)
28. Assistance with filling out forms.
29. Day camp art classes
30. Free pre-school
31. ESL (English as second language)
32. Education –spiritual and other
33. Creative arts to all (poor, mentally challenged)
34. Lecture series

Hospitality

35. Reading to shut ins/nursing care
36. Hospital nursing home visits

Other

37. Prayer groups carried out by shut-ins
38. Coffee house
39. Street ministry program; involve young men in parish
40. Neighborhood block watch; show community concern by church
41. Day care
42. Reframing ministry to charity (?)

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| 43. Fellowship group (coffee and donuts) | a. Immigration |
| 44. Networking; broadening profile | 47. Interfaith networking |
| 45. Addiction recovery support | 48. Rent booth at fairs |
| a. Meditation group | 49. Church tours |
| 46. Advocacy CSEC (??) / adults | |

Obstacles

The groups were asked to make lists of ‘generic’ obstacles that would likely be encountered in this parish’s first foray into Urban Ministry.

1. Priest w/o vision (a given for the case)
2. Fear of the other (this is unfamiliar territory)
3. Cluelessness (perceived lack of skills; we don’t know how to do x,y,z; need training)
4. \$ -- parish is not used to spending money on this; has none
5. Paradigm shift (need to consider new issues; budget, liability)
6. Apathy
7. Insensitivity
8. Potential burn-out –need to replenish ministry workers
9. Lack of critical mass of parish workers to undertake something that can deliver impact and has staying power
10. Fear of change

Group 1

What -- “Cooking Combo”

Build on availability of kitchen and cooking skill to engage the neighborhood by offering:

- Cooking classes
- A monthly neighborhood meal
- And to stock a food shelf.

For Whom

Anyone but primarily focus (classes) on young parents, single mothers, teens,

Where?

In church hall/kitchen

When?

Monthly

Why This?

Builds on existing cooking facilities and cooking related efforts within the parish.

Possible Obstacles

- “Not in my kitchen”
- Where will the \$ come from for this?
- Regualtions and liability

How to get this going

Maintain current cooking baking etc. schedule. Sales from bakery pierogis etc needn't stop. Insert the classes and meal into the schedule once per month. Find modest core group within the parish that can see the value/importance of such a ministry. Talk to priest and gain at least his neutrality –show that a few people are willing to take this on –and he won't get blamed/battered. Be sure that someone from current kitchen group is consulted and slowly committed to support this. Research liability and insurance issues and make sure parish council etc. reviews insurance. More... needed...

Group 2 After School Program

What

Individual tutoring / homework help. Nutritious snacks/self care. Blend in some recreational activities

Frequency

1x/week

Who

Adults & children all ages

Where

Local playground/church

Why

Grandparents sharing love; lots of kids in neighborhood; Christ impels us

Obstacles

- Not our people (racism and classism)
- No \$/time
- Priest not on board
- Liability
- Background checks,
- budget battle
- we've never done it
- fear
- lack of capable persons

How to build an appetite for this?

Pulpit. Hosting an event. Church tour as a way to break in slowly.

Group 3 Community Block Party

Elements

- Not a fundraiser
- Simple foods donated – meat/chips/drink
- Involve kids to do poster, flyers: post at schools, neighborhood, radio, newspaper
- Goal is to have contact with people
- Tours of church
- Core group of trained greeters
- Kids event games stickers
- Take home flyer
- This can lead to an afterschool program or other ministry
- A way to survey neighborhood on their needs
- Engage elementary school

Obstacles

- Building trust/personal contact
- Parishioner trust
- What does this do for us?
- Costs too much
- Lack of time
- Who is going to do it.
- Stinginess
- Lack of priest leadership
- Need a responsible person

Group 4 (Suburban)

What: Ministry Fair

Link all parishioners to a particular ministry via a ministry fair.

Obstacles

- Getting people on board; participating
- Preparing opportunities
- Getting parish council/priest on board
- Self centered rather than outward centered
- Not social – Christ centered
- Education, spiritual formation, nurturing
- Priest to preach on this
- Everyone MUST make a deposit.
- Follow through/follow up
- Regular communications; reminders/accomplishments
- Operators of program

Day 2 Workshop 2 Case Studies of Urban Parishes

We heard presentations from Ss Peter and Paul Cathedral in Detroit and Holy Assumption Church in Canton OH. Feedback was provided by the group but no organized notes were created.

Day 2 Workshop 3 Policy Planks

Basically we operated around the question “What actions or assistance or policies would be helpful from the Diocese or the OCA to help parishes to make more rapid progress in delivering effective urban ministries.”¹

1. Annually publicize/celebrate success either highlighting a parish or a ministry.
2. Urban Ministry grants –set aside one parish development grant annually for use by a parish beginning an urban ministry.
3. Urge publication of/use of Spanish language liturgical texts.
4. Urge seminaries to offer:
 - a. Spanish language lessons
 - b. Instruction in Urban Ministry
 - c. Offer courses in missiology
 - i. Urban immersion
 - ii. Patristics/biblical texts explaining urban ministry
 - iii. Pastoral care on a public scale
5. Establish a policy on working priests (“tent making” clergy)
6. Active recruitment of priests for Urban parishes
7. Deanery based effort for partnering among urban and suburban parishes.
8. Major financial support for distressed urban parishes
9. “Urban Ministry facilitator” – subject matter expert on staff to assist parishes.
10. Adjust the way assessments are calculated for urban parishes. (urban *discount* if struggling)
11. Build a grant writing capacity within diocese or OCA.
12. Restructure Diocesan council – coordinate people with certain skills & talents with associated responsibilities
13. Develop a structure for networking on this topic. (facebook, blog, google+, google docs, twitter etc.) Fr S. Hrycyniak agreed to be the focal point on next steps on this issue.
14. Liaison to network with other urban ministries and agencies
15. Develop culture of organized charity as integral to Orthodoxy. (instead of letting others do it.)

¹ I think this workshop could have been much better than it turned out. I should have given better thought to structuring the discussion to help it become less random. Nonetheless we created a list of ideas/actions. JK

Appendix A

“Design a Ministry” Workshop

Day 2 Time: 45 minutes

GOAL

Describe one ministry effort that seems to fit the mythical parish situation best. See box for a description of the parish.

WORKSHOP STEPS

Individual Action

1. Ask each participant in your group to write down four ideas for a ministry that reaches out to non-parishioners in your area. Then write down some of the obstacles that each of these ideas will encounter within your parish. (5-6 minutes) *(Yes, this requires actual thinking!)*

Group Action

2. Discuss everybody’s list as a group. The facilitator should write down on a flip chart sheet the combined list.
3. Discuss the combined list and, using whatever process you like, select one of the ideas.
4. Now describe this selected ministry in greater detail. How would you implement it? You can do this by considering the following questions. (Or you can do it some other way!)
 - a. What will you do? (2 sentences)
 - b. Who will be helped aided by this ministry?
 - c. When? How often? Weekly? Monthly? Once?
 - d. Where will the work be done?
 - e. Why does this idea seem to be the best idea to the best fit for this parish?
 - f. What are the key obstacles these ministries will face in gaining traction in this parish? Why aren’t we doing this already?
 - g. How? What would it take to build an appetite for such a ministry in your parish? How will you “sell” this idea?
5. What needs to happen next? What are the next three steps once you return back to your parish?

Mythical Parish Description –

St. Comfortus

- Location – Midwest city; metro area of > ~300,000 population.
- Neighborhood - residential & ethnically/racially diverse.
- Founded - 1935.
- Building - domes; still well maintained & handsome
- Parishioners- mostly live in the suburbs. 100 adults 20 children. Median age ~ 55.
- Parish Life - church school, choir, parish council. Retirees meet during the week to bake or cook items to sell.
- The term “ministry” is unfamiliar to this parish.
- Priest - Is not particularly adept at leading change. With respect to the topic of outreach he is neither a driver nor a hindrance.

Key Requirements

1. The ministry must touch people who are not necessarily Orthodox, who live within ~ 5 miles of the church.
2. Must involve face to face contact with those receiving ministry from those parishioners offering the ministry.
3. Must have a least some modest cost to the parish.