Caring for Homebound Members A New Model

What's the point of this?

To share what Forest Hills Baptist (Raleigh, NC) is doing to connect sustainably with homebound members, so that you might take away ideas for your ministry context.

Where are we going?

- 1. Demographics of religious life in America (10 mins)
- 2. What Forest Hills does to address this challenge (30 mins)
- 3. Challenges we still face (10 mins)
- 4. Questions (10 mins)

Evangelical Protestants in North Carolina

Age distribution among adults in North Carolina who are Evangelical Protestant % of adults in North Carolina who are Evangelical Protestant who are ages... 36% 29% 20% **15%** 18-29 30-49 50-64 65 +

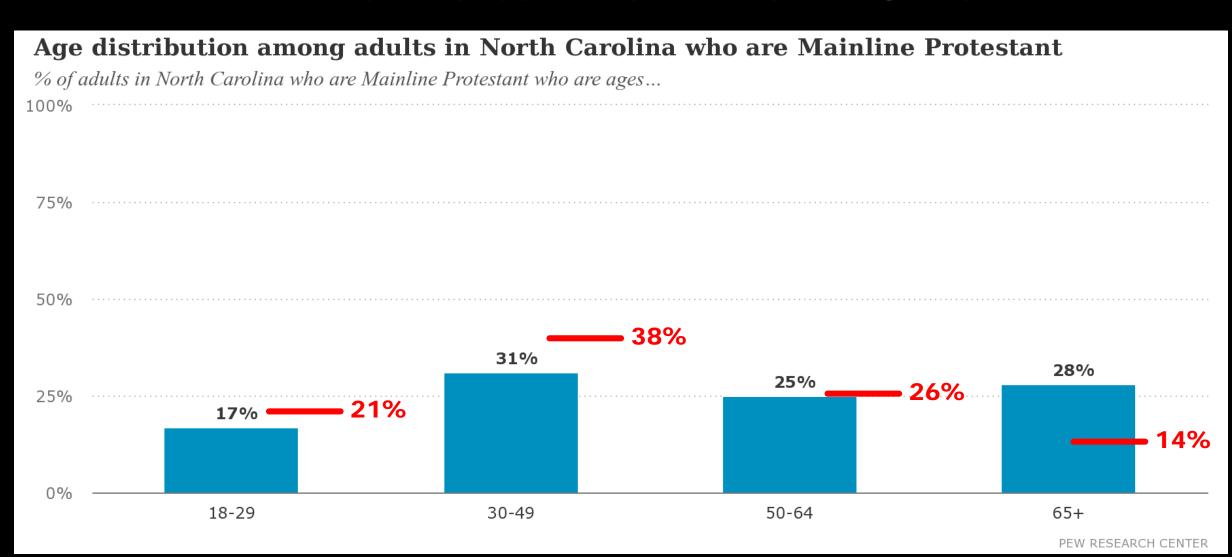
Evangelical Protestants in North Carolina

Age distribution among adults in North Carolina who are Evangelical Protestant % of adults in North Carolina who are Evangelical Protestant who are ages... 29% 20% **15%** 18-29 30-49 50-64 65 +

Mainline Protestants in North Carolina

Age distribution among adults in North Carolina who are Mainline Protestant % of adults in North Carolina who are Mainline Protestant who are ages... 31% 28% 25% 17% 18-29 30-49 50-64 65 +

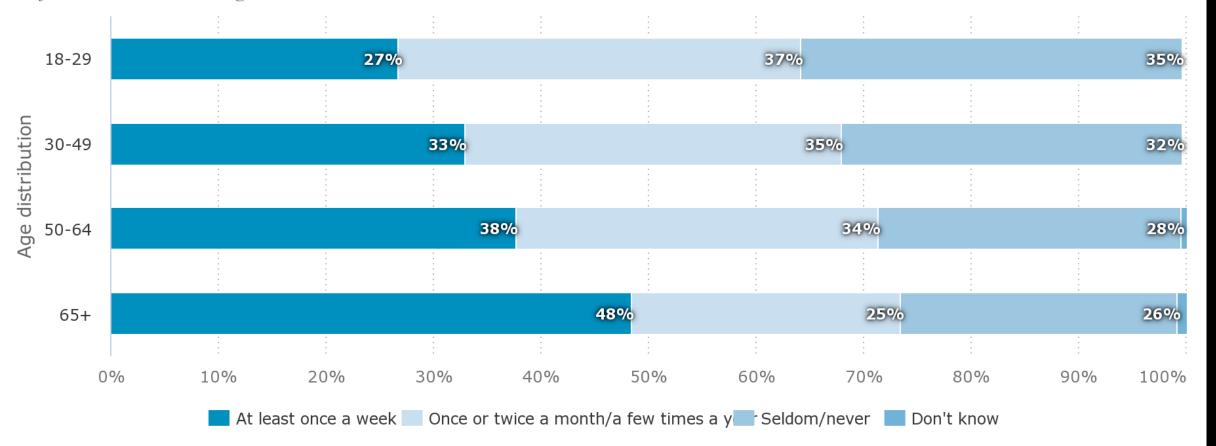
Mainline Protestants in North Carolina



Attendance at Religious Services Nationwide

Attendance at religious services by age group

% of adults who attend religious services...



A Thought Experiment

- ♦ Most homebound members come from these older generations: generations that have been very faithful to the church, often attending on both Wednesdays and Sundays (or 8-10 times per month). This was their opportunity to grow spiritually, connect with friends, and connect with a pastor that they cherished.
- ♦ Assume that a pastor wants to honor this commitment by visiting those who, through no fault of their own, can no longer come to church. So the pastor will take church to them.
- ♦ In even a moderately-sized Baptist church, there can easily be 40 persons considered "homebound."
- ♦ Assume that it takes the pastor 15 minutes to travel to a member's house and 45 minutes for a visit.
- ♦ It would take that pastor one week (40 hours) every month to visit everyone. This is impossible.
- ♦ But even if the pastor miraculously met this bar, most homebound members would still be dissatisfied. To go from decades of constant and faithful membership to 45 minutes a month seems like neglect.

The Problem:

Aging church population that increasingly can't come to church, but still feels a strong connection to the church

+

Shrinking/stretched church ministry staff

Dissatisfied older adults, burned out staff

A Model Forest Hills Has Adopted

- ♦ An "opt-in" ministry called the In-Crowd.
- ♦ Ministry is primarily lay-led by a team of deacons/members who believe in the ministry.
- ♦ A minister provides support (Could be staff-driven at your church).
- ♦ There are three key aspects of what we are doing:
 - ♦ <u>Lay people</u> are the primary contact between church and homebound members.
 - Ontact between church and members is highly organized.
 - ♦ We track this contact in a systematic way.

Organization

♦ Minister:

- Provides suggestions & guidance for lay team
- Occasionally prepares training or educational material
- ♦ Visits In-Crowd members as able, and when specifically requested.

♦ Lay team:

- ♦ Receives requests to join the In-Crowd.
- Assigns volunteers to each In-Crowd member.
- ♦ Maintains records of visits.
- Organizes trainings, appreciation events, etc.

Volunteers:

- Reach out to In-Crowd member as they have agreed to (and record contact).
- ♦ Notify primary contacts/minister of any concerns.

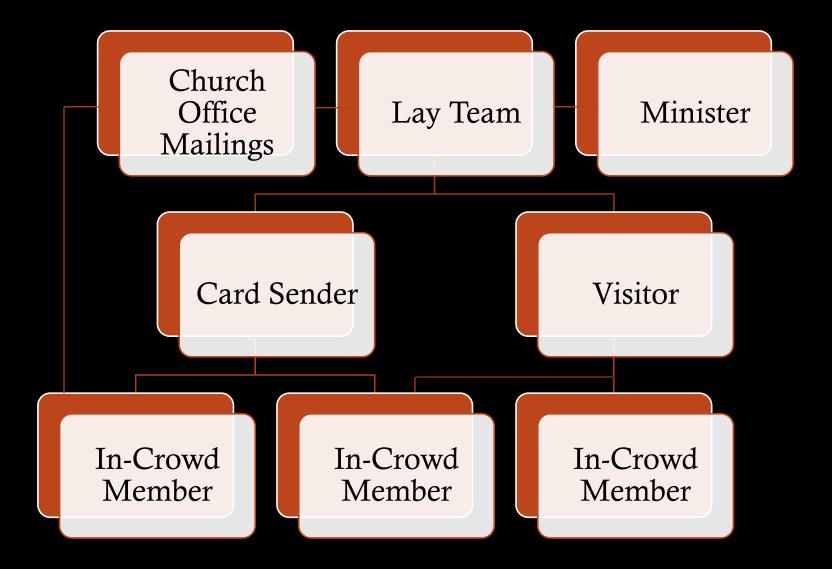
An Opt-In Ministry

- ♦ No one can be placed on the In-Crowd list without their consent.
- * When a homebound member joins the In-Crowd, we record (at minimum):
 - ♦ Name
 - ♦ Address, Phone, Email
 - ♦ Date of Birth
 - ♦ Photo
 - ♦ Details for a "primary contact" person (child, relative, close friend, etc)
- ♦ The lay team assigns at least two volunteers (a visitor and card sender) to that member.

Four Modes of Contact

- ♦ <u>Special mailings from the church</u>. We do not typically mail anything anymore, but we do for those on the In-Crowd list.
- ♦ <u>Volunteer visits</u>. Each In-Crowd member is assigned one lay visitor to visit in person and/or call the In-Crowd member. We ask volunteers to take a poinsettia around Christmas and communion around Easter, but otherwise contact is up to the volunteer.
- ♦ <u>Volunteer greeting cards</u>. Each In-Crowd member is assigned at least one card sender who sends a card on holidays, birthdays, etc.
- ♦ <u>Pastoral visits</u>. A minister visits as able, and when specifically requested.

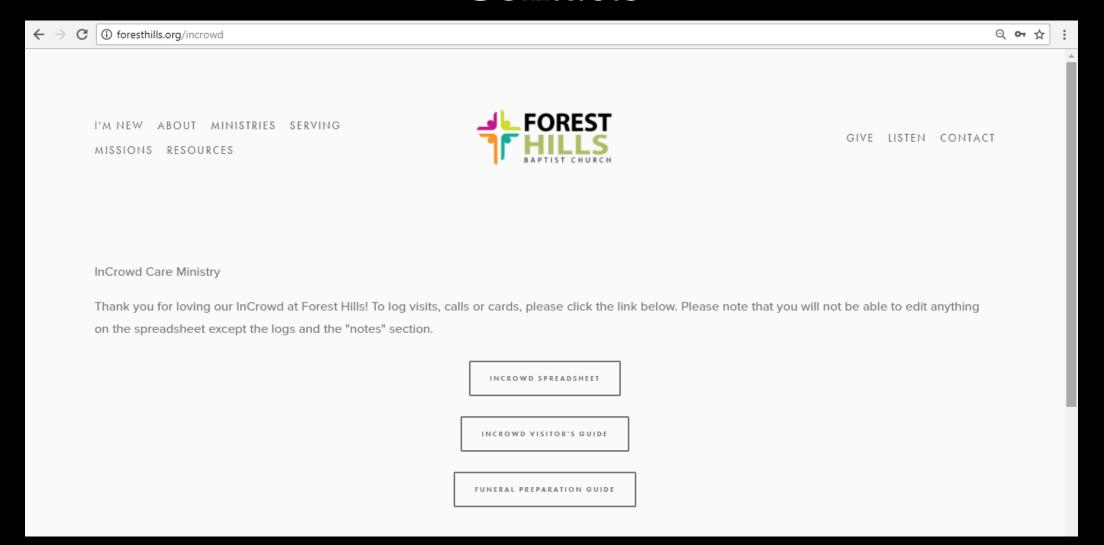
A Recap



Systematically Tracking Members, Volunteers, & Contacts



Systematically Tracking Members, Volunteers, & Contacts



Master List of In-Crowd Members

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Master List of In-Crowd Volunteers

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Each member has an individual record stored online.

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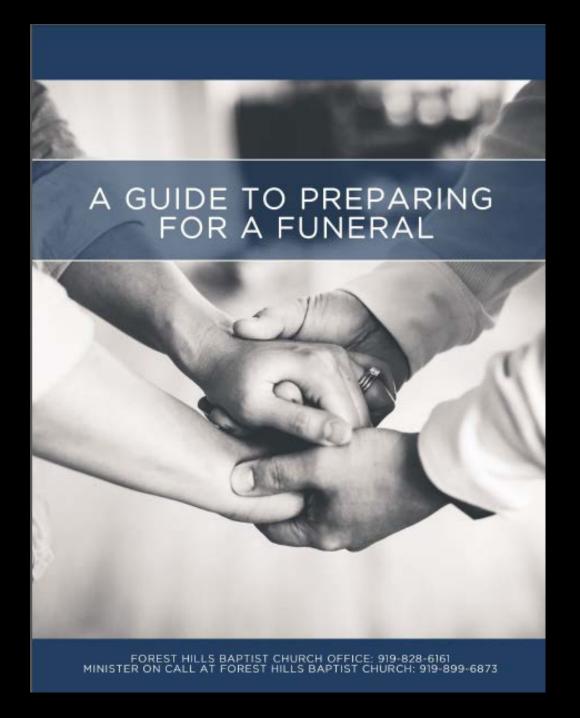
Physical form for volunteers who do not use a computer

InCrowd Member:	
Visited	Sent Card
Called	Pastor Visit
Date:	
Notes:	

Training guides for visitors.



Training guides for primary contacts.



Appreciation Events for Volunteers



What Works In Our System

- ♦ In-Crowd members get more contact than they otherwise would.
- ♦ Lay people are very involved in the work of pastoral care (as it should be!).
- ♦ No one has "too much work" to do with In-Crowd members.
- ♦ Lay people develop lasting relationships with older members.
- ♦ A lay leadership team knows the In-Crowd members better than staff ever will.
- ♦ We instantly know who to call if there's a problem/death.
- We instantly know how much contact a member has received.

Challenges We Still Face

- ♦ Volunteers don't always record contact.
- ♦ Some In-Crowd members get more contact than others due to the commitment (or lack of commitment) of their assigned volunteers.
- ♦ Even some In-Crowd members with wonderful volunteer visitors still do not feel they have enough contact with the church.
- Many In-Crowd members still long for more contact with the senior pastor.

Questions?

To get a copy of all the templates we use, email andrew@foresthills.org