

How We Planned Our First Interest Meeting

By Jerry and Melanie Stone

In planting a new church, building a launch team is a primary objective. The launch team is the group of people who are with you before your launch. The launch is the service that kicks off your church in your community, a service that you have prepared for and advertised to your city or town.

There are several ways to build a launch team, such as, small groups, invite cards, social media ads, attending community events, outreaches, giveaways, and any other way you can meet people. An Interest Meeting is one way you can connect with people who are interested in a new church in their area.

An Interest Meeting is a casual meeting to introduce you as the pastor, your leadership team, and your current members. It is an opportunity to make a presentation about the new church, sharing vision and values with people who are searching. It is also a change to start relationships, answer questions, and gather contact information. In addition, you can share how they can connect before the launch, so friendships can begin to form and people can find out how they can fit in and serve.

We have written this article to share ideas with other church planters. We hope you can implement some of the suggestions and come up with some new and creative ideas of your own. May God bless you as you endeavor to reach people for Jesus!

Two Months Out

1. We prayed. It sounds obvious, but prayer should start everything we do. We see church planting as working with God to build Him a church. We want His instructions, His favor, and His power. We aren't doing this for ourselves and by ourselves. We are starting a new church for Him and with His help.
2. We included our launch team. We discussed the purpose of the meeting and described what it would look like. We also looked at possible dates when most people could be involved.
3. We found a public meeting space with two rooms, one for the meeting and one for childcare. For our first Interest Meeting we rented a public library that was on a main road with high traffic. Some other places to look into would be civic or community centers, hotel conference rooms, and restaurants with a separate room. The library had a conference room with all the equipment we needed. They also had a separate room set up for children. It was a community building, it was in a high traffic area, it was inexpensive for us just starting, there were also lots of neighborhoods in the area that we hit with postcards, and the rooms were fully furnished.

How We Planned Our First Interest Meeting

4. We planned on what we would need to facilitate the meeting – sound, screen or tv monitor, podium, tables, chairs, etc.
5. We worked with the facility and chose a date to meet.
6. We designed a postcard and had it printed.

We used a 4x6-inch postcard that included information on who we were, what we were doing, why we were doing it, and where and when we were meeting. We added that all children and youth were welcome to attend, and that childcare would be provided for kids five and under. We also let people know that refreshments would be served. The website was also on the card.

7. We began to recruit additional help for our launch team, people to serve and to help mingle.
8. We planned banners, signage, t-shirts, wristbands as a giveaway, and printed materials about the church.

One Month Out

1. We shot a video of us, as the pastors, sharing the vision.
2. We planned childcare activities and volunteers.
3. We planned our campaign on social media, the church website, and our monthly newsletter.
4. We created an Event page on Facebook and invited people to it.
5. We created a new cover photo for our church Facebook page.
6. We contacted friends that might know of someone looking for a church in our area.
7. We followed leads of people that might be interested in a new church plant.
8. We planned a way to connect people with us after the Interest Meeting. We have a launch small group that meets regularly for the purpose of vision casting, team building, and growing relationships.

Two Weeks Out

1. We passed out postcards.
2. We advertised on social media and online community groups.
3. We prepared refreshments.
4. We planned background filler music to set the atmosphere in the room.
5. We prepared an information table with materials on the church.

We had connection cards, our statement of faith, and a form on joining the team with a list of areas of ministry to serve in. We also had postcards on the church vision and one on the kids ministry. We also had wallet-sized cards as invite cards and a business card with contact information on the pastors.

6. We had a practice run to make sure the equipment was functioning.

At The Meeting

1. We activated a set-up team
2. We had greeters in church t-shirts welcoming people in.
3. We had music playing to help set the atmosphere.
4. We had childcare volunteers in t-shirts welcoming the kids.
5. We introduced ourselves as Lead Pastor and Co-Pastor, thanked people for coming, and then introduced the video clip on vision.
6. We communicated the launch date and described what we hoped to accomplish on Launch Sunday.
7. We shared the church values and spoke from our heart.
8. We shared our story as pastors. We shared why we were planting a new church and why we chose this city.
9. We communicated about our church services for adults, youth, and kids. We shared about our growth track, small groups, and outreach.

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10. We described the kind of church we wanted to be.

We wanted to be accepting and relational (we want to include men and women of all ages, races, and backgrounds). We wanted to see people restored and healed. We want to see people transform and growth. We want to see people equipped and activated in the kingdom.
11. We introduced our leaders and areas of ministry. We shared about our youth and children's ministries.
12. We passed out Connection Cards and invited people to fill them out so we could stay connected. We asked them to fill those out and return them before they left.
13. While they filled those out, we communicated about our launch small group and invited them to come. We also made ourselves available to meet with anyone over coffee that wanted to get to know us better.
14. Also, to give them time to fill out the Connection Card, we encouraged them to go to the website to learn more about the church. We also encouraged them to watch the Events page for any information on upcoming events. We also let them know they could contact us through the website at any time.
15. We publicly recognized the launch team and thanked them.
16. As people left, we gave them a wristband and thanked them for coming.
17. Photographs were taken of the event to communicate with supporters through the newsletter and to promote the church on social media.

After The Meeting

1. We had a clean-up crew to help tear down.
2. We met with the launch team and volunteers to discuss what was positive from the meeting, who we connected with, and how we can improve it for the next Interest Meeting.

In addition to other forms of connection, we plan to have two or three Interest Meetings before the launch. When we are meeting people in the community, inviting them to an Interest Meeting is a great next step. Jesus came to seek and save the lost; a big part of church planting is seeking people. We reach out because the heart of the God we serve is to bring people into His kingdom. May God bless you as you seek to connect with people and plant a church!