

Successful Postcards

By Jerry and Melanie Stone

You can use a postcard to introduce a new church to the community, invite people to an established church (especially around Easter, Christmas, and Mother's Day), or advertise a series or special event. The postcard is one effective way to get into the homes of people who are looking for a church. How can your postcard effectively influence people to come in the doors of your building? There are dynamic principles that you can apply to your postcard that will produce amazing results.

1. **Have the postcard professionally designed and printed.**

A postcard is giving an impression of your church to the community. To persuade people to give you a try, the postcard must be done with quality design and excellent printing. You want the postcard to reflect that your church is worth a visit.

The postcard should be full color so that it is attractive and catches the eye. You want the postcard to be a good size (approximately 6" x 9") so that it stands out when people are going through their mail. The postcard should be printed on quality paper with a nice finish. If you don't use a graphic designer and printer for your custom design, there are companies that publish postcards for churches.

2. **Get attention through headlines.**

Know your purpose for the mailer and convey it in a headline. When people are sorting through their mail, you have about 3 seconds for them to get your message. Their eye will be drawn to a headline. Make your headline something that will perk their interest or convey your main message. If you are announcing a new church, express it in your headline. For example, "A new, life-giving church in your city."

3. **Communicate through illustrations and images.**

Photographs give a visual communication. Even if it is subconscious, people will notice and relate to the images you use. Use stock photography that gives a good blend of ages, races, and gender. Make sure that the people are smiling and look friendly.

4. **Promote an offer that will get people in the door.**

To be a good communicator, you have to understand how people think. People want to know what's in it for them. Offer them something when they come. Use the postcard to inform them of a special event that they will enjoy, free food that you will be serving, or great giveaways to the people who join you on your special day. Promote a teaching series that will show them how to have a better life, a better marriage, and a better family.

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5. **Give them brief descriptive information that answers anticipated questions.** Remember that people sorting through mail usually do not take time to read lengthy paragraphs. Use short paragraphs and bullet points for your text. Keep it short and simple.

Some thoughts to communicate:

What type of service to expect, what you have prepared for their children and youth, who is invited, how do you want them to come, and how easy are you to find.

6. **Include elements that help you to accomplish your purpose for the postcard.**

- **A good logo**

The logo should represent your corporate identity - communicate who you are to the community. It should be professionally designed and presented to you in several file formats for a variety of applications. It should be clean, crisp, and recognizable.

- **Information on the starting date and meeting time**

Target one date for an opening or a special event. Give specific dates for the advertisement of a series.

- **Information on the location with a map and directions**

Hopefully you have chosen a location that is in a well-populated area and easy to get to. Make your directions and map as simple and concise as possible.

- **Contact information**

Your meeting location could be different than your church mailing address. Make sure you include your correct return address and include your phone number. You may want to include an email address as well.

- **A website address**

You should already have a website up that is well-designed and easily navigated. Include your website on the postcard so people can find out more about you and what ministries you offer for children, youth, relationships, outreach, etc.

7. **Plan the location and timing of your postcard**

Target the area around your location. You want the postcard to arrive in mailboxes about a week and a half before your first service. If it arrives earlier than that, people may forget about it. If you mail it later than that, people may not have the time to plan to go. Give yourself plenty of time to prepare your postcard, at least two months in advance.

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- When mailing bulk rate, keep in mind that the post office has the right to hold onto your mailing for up to two weeks. They usually get it out on time, but with a larger order they give themselves that provision.
- When using a mailing house, account for the time it takes to prepare the mailing with purchasing and applying the current mail list. Most printers offer this service or can refer you to someone. You normally want to purchase at least 60,000 addresses in the area of your location.
- When choosing a printer, keep in mind that production businesses usually take projects in the order they receive them. Check on their printing schedule as well as quality and price.
- When hiring a graphic designer for a custom designed postcard, find out what kind of schedule they have. Before you hire them, make sure that you have the following information ready.
 1. Your church name
 2. A logo in a workable format
 3. Pastor and spouse's name with a high resolution photo
 4. Complete text
 5. Starting date and meeting times
 6. Location address, directions, and sketch of a map
 7. Return address, phone number, email and website address
 8. Non-profit bulk mail permit number
 9. Title and brief description of your first series
 10. Information about nursery and children's ministry
 11. Information about special giveaways, food, etc.

8. Get the best rates for postage.

Make sure you get your nonprofit bulk rate permit in advance; it takes approximately two to three weeks to establish your status and secure your number. Go to www.usps.com and search for form 3602-N. In section C, under DSCF, line c-15, it shows you the rate for mailing with a nonprofit bulk rate permit and mailing to saturate carrier routes. If you drop the postcards at their individual post offices, the rate goes down. If you hire a mailing service, be sure to ask them if they will charge you the same rate of postage for their services. Make sure the address section meets postal requirements.

9. Send out a large quantity.

As a minister, your heart is to reach people. The postcard is one tool that has proven to be successful in communicating awareness of a church to a community. Depending on your area, you can normally expect to see .25 percent of the number of postcards that you sent out. If you send out 60,000 postcards, you can expect to see about 150 people attend your event.

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10. **Use repetition to increase the effectiveness of your postcard.**

Advertisers understand that most busy Americans will only notice you if they see or hear your name at least three times. You are putting a lot of money into the design, printing, and distribution of your postcard. To help your postcard be productive, strategize other forms of advertisement to reinforce your mailing. At about the time your mailing goes out, you want people to also see and hear about the church through TV, radio, posters, newspaper ads, signs, door hangers, outreach giveaways, etc. If the community hears about your church at least three times, they are more likely to remember you and come to your event.