



GCI CHURCH HACKS

LOVE AVENUE PRACTICES

The ministry of the Love Avenue is to WITNESS—to witness is a relational, incarnational, active, missional proclamation and demonstration of the good news of Jesus. Getting to know our neighbors—mapping our neighborhood—is a critical function of the Love Avenue. After all, how can we love those we do not know or be neighbors to those we do not spend time with?

How do we start getting to know our neighbors and neighborhood? There are many ways! The key is to just get started. Be present. Be interested. Be engaged. Be consistent. Be invested.

Consider inviting your Love Avenue team to be actively present in your neighborhood for one month. If you do not have an established Love Avenue team yet, gather a group of people with a heart for the neighborhood to commit to this together.



BUILDING CORPORATE LOVE AVENUE PRACTICES OF PRESENCE

As a team, choose **one** way to participate in your neighborhood for a month. The activity should be something where you can be present with your neighbors, get to know your neighbors, be engaged, interested, and consistent.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. Have Fun in your Neighborhood.

Gather in your neighborhood. Once a week, get your group together to participate in something that *already* happens in the neighborhood— trivia, game night, dance lessons, parents' night out, book club, knitting club, the farmers market, etc. Simply go, be present, and participate in the life and existing rhythms of your neighborhood.

2. Volunteer in Your Neighborhood.

Gather your group and choose a nonprofit in your neighborhood to serve this month. It is best if the nonprofit's services have strategic overlap with your congregation's healthy church focus.

- **Example:** If you are focusing on growing your youth ministry, consider volunteering with an afterschool program.

- **Example:** If you are focusing on connecting with the young adults in your neighborhood, consider volunteering with an organization that either works with young professionals or attracts young adults as fellow volunteers.



BUILDING CORPORATE LOVE AVENUE PRACTICES OF PRESENCE

3. Prayer Walk your Neighborhood.

Gather your group and do a prayer walk around your neighborhood once a week during the month. Consider the following during your prayer walk:

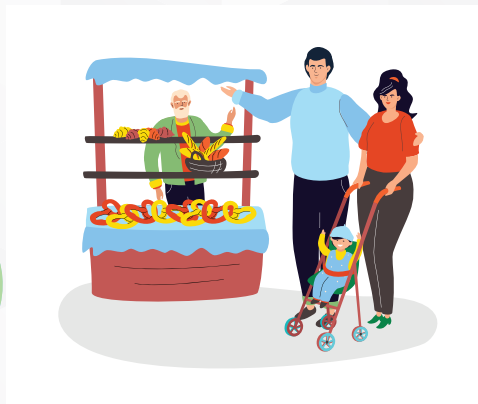
- What do you notice about your neighborhood?
- Where does God reveal himself at work?
- What opportunities is God revealing?

4. Do Business in your Neighborhood!

Gather your group to have a meal or coffee at a chosen neighborhood restaurant once a week or be a patron of a neighborhood business (bookstore, grocer, craft store, art studio, cooking class, bakery, etc.). Be intentional about getting to know the staff and neighborhood business owners there.

5. Meet with neighborhood leaders.

- Create a list of key leaders who are actively engaged with the neighborhood. Include leaders of nonprofit organizations, influential businesses, social services, education, public service programs, etc.
- Set the intention for each team/group member to have coffee with one key leader per week. Ask them about their life, the neighborhood, the work they are doing in the neighborhood, what they love about the neighborhood, what they see as the greatest needs in the neighborhood, etc.



DEVELOPING CORPORATE RHYTHMS OF PRESENCE

The most important part is building a RHYTHM. Consistency is key in building any relationship. Getting to know your neighbors is no different. Whichever missional practice you choose, gather your group to do it at least once a week for the month.

At the end of the month get together to debrief your experience. Reflect on questions such as:

- » What did you notice about yourself as you practiced this missional rhythm?
- » Who did you connect with?
- » What did you learn about your neighborhood?
- » Where did you see God at work?
- » What opportunities did you see God opening?
- » What questions do you want to explore next about your neighborhood?
- » How will you continue developing connections you made with neighbors?

As a team/group—discern what comes next.

- » Is this a Love Avenue rhythm that is fruitful to continue?
- » What other missional neighborhood rhythms are worth exploring?
- » How will what you have learned about your neighbors shape the future ministry activities of the Love Avenue?
- » How can your local congregation, with its particular makeup of giftings, skills, passions, etc., love your neighbors well?

THE ESSENTIALS:

Being present in our church neighborhood is foundational to developing healthy Love Avenue rhythms. Gather a group of people committed to developing missional rhythms in the church neighborhood. Jump into your neighborhood, and get to know the people, the rhythms, the culture, the strengths, the needs, the places where God is inviting you to participate in his movements. This will build a relational foundation upon which Love Avenue activities can be built. Know your neighborhood to love your neighborhood.