

Steps to BUMC having a successful SERVE Ministry

In 2022, our church had the opportunity to reorganize its mission activities and efforts. We had a history of emphasis on missions, but it needed a jump start. Various ministries were being supported, but not in an organized manner. The budget was not what we wanted or needed to accomplish what we wanted to do. Here is what we did and are doing.

1. **Cast a vision--** We envisioned moving our church towards missions (SERVE) becoming the beating heart of our church's desire to preach and demonstrate Christ to the nations. We desired to be more like Jesus- out in our community, connecting with people through acts of amazing love while connecting them to a God of amazing grace. While studying the book "What is an Externally Focused Church" we learned about four characteristics of such a church.
 1. Good deeds and good news can't and shouldn't be separated.
 2. They see themselves as vital to the health and well-being of their communities
 3. They believe that ministering and serving are the normal expressions of Christian living
 4. Externally focused churches are evangelistically effective.

2. **Found a single "point person" to lead as SERVE Coordinator-** After much prayer, Dick Arnold, volunteered for this role feeling that his personal life would now permit him to do this, and he had extensive experience and a passion for missions. Note: such a person in another church would need to be someone who has been involved in missions in the past. This person should be self-motivated and organized. And, at the same time, they should have a sense of calling—a sense of the worthiness of the mission to faithfully advance the gospel of Christ to every nation. Dick spent about six months learning about all the ministries BUMC was involved with (30+). Then he grouped them into tiers based on Jesus' last words to his disciples, just before ascending into heaven in Act 1:8, he said "*you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.*"
 1. Jerusalem (Blacksburg & the New River Valley communities)
 2. Judea & Samaria- (VA & US)
 3. Ends of the earth -(International)Sadly, he also had to make the hard decision to drop several ministries for various reasons.

3. **Formed a SERVE Ministry team-**Dick knew that whether BUMC was supporting a partner church in Ukraine, or a variety of local non-profits, our church had abundant opportunities to partner in God's work locally and across the globe. He and Pastor Dulaney felt such a team could be the heartbeat of a renewed effort to achieve our vision. Dick began to pray that God would start getting people excited about missions work, and that would result in the right opportunities coming to our church that could serve as a starting point for deeper missions work. Such a team needed to be action oriented rather than the old committee model (previously

eliminated) of just reporting and planning. We were careful to remember that building a SERVE (missions) ministry team wasn't something *we did* without any help. We prayed for God's guidance, and He answered our prayers. Seven other people with an interest and passion for mission ministry agreed to volunteer to join. While we haven't held many formal meetings (2-3/year), we have accomplished some good things.

- Agreed on a purpose statement: ***"To engage Blacksburg UMC with our community and educate them about opportunities to live out our ministry and make disciples for Christ through missions that address needs at home and abroad"***.
- Organized ourselves with; the SERVE Coordinator as the leader, one person as the Assistant Coordinator, and another person who serves as our Communications point person. Each of the eight team members have agreed to oversee 3-4 ministries of BUMC. This does not mean they supervise (more about that later) but that they will:
 - a. Be in touch with the people who lead their ministries.
 - b. Keep abreast of current or new things they are doing. Report these to the SERVE Coordinator in a few sentences (by the last week of each month) to be included in the SERVE monthly updates
 - c. Be a "cheerleader" for them. Provide encouragement and perhaps suggestions.
 - d. Periodically ask how can we (the SERVE Ministry Team) be of help to their ministry?
 - e. Obtain names of BUMC volunteers for each ministry annually

4. Communications are very important

Previously there had been very little communication with the congregation about missions/outreach.

So, this is what we do now.

- Issue a monthly update report which is emailed to a long list of volunteers & others plus also featured in our weekly e-news
- The Pastor highlights one ministry in **every weekly worship service**, usually at the time of passing the collection plates.
- A staff person mentions current "Connection points" (upcoming events/opportunities to serve) in every weekly worship service, and these and more are printed in the worship bulletin.
- Have a SERVE section on the BUMC web page.
- Produced a SERVE brochure.
- Regularly post pictures and stories of events/successes on the church Facebook page
- The SERVE Coordinator and usually the Assistant hold a monthly meeting with the Pastor
- Included two people sharing their personal mission testimony and one person on video during a stewardship Sunday worship service.

5. Enable missions ministries to accomplish meaningful work.

- **Involve the congregation in prayer for this ministry**
- **Volunteers** 1.) there is at least one person who leads each ministry, although many have teams 2) offer hands on or entry level opportunities to encourage volunteerism. (example of Rise Against Hunger event) 3.) Volunteers are given annual certificates of appreciation, 4.) Refrain from micromanaging.
- **Budget-** try to set a healthy budget, with a combination of annual budget, Christmas offering, 30%+ portion of VAC apportionments & other specific donations (endowment funds). We also seek grants for a few needs (Global Ministries, VA UMC Conference, Foundations).
- **Partners-** We look for ways to partner with others in many of our ministries, including other churches, but also businesses, non-profits, Universities, civic organizations, etc.
- **Network-** A goal for the future is to meet with missions persons from other churches. We don't want to reinvent the wheel, perhaps we can get a sense of how others function.
- **A few specific ministry successes-**
 - Built a new interfaith community garden- food goes next door to our interfaith food pantry.
 - FUN 143 – Mobile home park ministry to elementary and middle and high school children, plus ESL
 - Twenty-four years In Mission Together partnership with UMC in Kyiv, Ukraine including sending \$155,000 since the war began
 - Home To Stay – a new joint partner effort to assist those below poverty to stay in their homes.
 - Rise Against Hunger events- 100 people involved in half day event to produce food packages for children in 3rd. world nations. 25,000 packages were produced in two annual events.
 - Hosted Home to Stay – homeless shelter during winter months.
 - Emphasis and growth in children & youth mission activities + nearby VT Wesley Foundation
 - Organized two UMCOR flood bucket assembly events-62 buckets
 - Started Together Tuesday monthly dinners for the community based on Fresh Expression