

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

HOW TO DEVELOP CONGREGATIONAL OUTREACH CULTURE: AN ANALYSIS OF
THE EVERYONE OUTREACH PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

The Everyone Outreach program is a resource developed by the WELS Commission on Evangelism to assist congregations in recognizing their own culture and developing an intentional outreach culture. This study examined the program, particularly its structure, goals, and methods, to research the program's effectiveness at initiating long-term impacts in a congregation's culture. The program relies upon specific psychological and theological principles concerning intentional outreach and the interaction between thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Rather than prescribing specific methods of evangelism, Everyone Outreach leads participants to realize their own thought habits before encouraging them to personally apply outreach principles in their unique settings. Following this analysis of the program, this study considers the long-term impacts through survey data and case studies from participating congregations. Survey responses suggest mostly moderate to strong perceived impact, especially in mindsets of change and intentionality. Case studies indicate that congregational commitment and repeated reinforcement after the workshop are needed to enact long-term change. The findings suggest that Everyone Outreach effectively initiates awareness and motivates initial change, especially by guiding participants towards self-reflection and personal application. However, cultural development requires ongoing effort beyond the workshop itself. Overall, the program serves as a valuable catalyst for change, while highlighting the importance of intentional implementation to achieve lasting results.

Introduction

Between his resurrection and his ascension, the Lord Jesus addressed his disciples and gave them the mission statement of his church: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19). In this mission statement, the primary directive of “making disciples” is to be carried out through the dual actions of “baptizing” and “teaching.” In other words, Christ’s church is commissioned to make disciples by reaching the lost and equipping the saints. Both of these actions are essential to carry out the work of the Church. If the lost are not reached, then none will hear the life-giving gospel that God uses to work faith in hearts and claim souls as his own. If the saints are not equipped, then believers will be unprepared to live their lives of faith in this world, and they will be in grave danger of falling away from their Savior. Throughout the earthly history of the Church, believers have sought to balance these two directives of reaching the lost and equipping the saints.

However, Christian churches in 21st century America have struggled to keep these two aspects of Christ’s Great Commission balanced in their ministries. Many churches will naturally gravitate towards the internal aspect of equipping saints to the detriment of the external work of reaching out to the lost.¹ This emphasis towards internal instead of external may not be an intentional choice, but rather the result of ingrained thought habits and the collective culture of a congregation. These thought habits may be difficult to see for those holding them, but through focused work and education, church members can come to recognize these thought habits and be equipped to begin shifting their congregational culture.

1. *Everyone Outreach Workshop Facilitator Guide*, 2.

In 2021, the Commission on Evangelism of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod released the Everyone Outreach program to address this need for cultural shift across the Synod's congregations. Composed of multiple integrated steps and resources, the Everyone Outreach program is an approach "designed to reveal the unconscious and invisible thought habits we hold and provide participants with unique insights to help begin the journey of transformation."² This means that the program is not designed to prescribe specific outreach methods or events to a given congregation during a one-day workshop. Instead, the program is intended to address the outreach culture of the congregation as a whole and present several biblical principles of outreach. Following the workshop, the members of the congregation are directed to think for themselves how best to apply the principles learned in the workshop to the unique circumstances and setting of their particular congregation.

It is the goal of this paper to review the Everyone Outreach program and analyze its effectiveness in producing its desired results. In order to achieve that goal, I will first present a detailed review of the Everyone Outreach program as it is intended to be presented and implemented in WELS congregations. I will make special note of the methods utilized throughout the program as they relate to addressing and shifting the culture of a congregation. The second major section of this paper will explore the actual impacts the Everyone Outreach program has had within the congregations which have implemented it. To do this, I will present findings from a general survey of many participating congregations, followed by specific feedback from three particular congregations at various points of time after participating in the program.

2. "Our Approach: It All Starts In Our Minds," *Everyone Outreach*, <https://everyoneoutreach.com/how-it-works/>.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The specific literature surrounding the Everyone Outreach program itself is difficult to review, since there has not been any official study or review of the program since its creation. However, the themes focused on within the program, such as scriptural principles for outreach and shifting collective culture, have been discussed in a rich and varied body of literature. The purpose of this literature review will be to present these themes and some resources which address them, and which have influenced this study.

The Introduction above presents that outreach is a crucial component of the Church's mission here on earth. As such, one must recognize the calling and need for outreach to be done by the entire congregation. Granted, a congregation's pastor will most likely assume the lead role in guiding his members to reflect the outreach personality and program of Jesus himself.³ A truly biblical consideration of outreach, though, will also emphasize each congregation member's responsibility of reaching the lost as each member functions within the universal priesthood of believers.⁴

The literature regarding development of congregational culture first insists upon the importance of a pastor's ability to accurately assess the cultural scene within his own

3. Earle Treptow, "Learning Evangelism from Jesus: Imitating His 'Outreach Personality' and His Outreach Program." (Mequon, WI: WLS Essay File, 1992).

4. August Pieper "Luther's Teaching of the Christian Priesthood." (Mequon, WI: WLS Essay File, 1917).

congregation before he can begin to shift it.⁵ Other literature highlights the personal application of the biblical principles of outreach to encourage simple steps towards individual evangelism.⁶

5. Aubrey Malphurs, *Look Before You Lead: How to Discern & Shape Your Church Culture*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013).

6. Kevin G. Harney, *Organic Outreach for Ordinary People: Sharing Good News Naturally*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

REVIEW OF THE EVERYONE OUTREACH PROGRAM

The Everyone Outreach program was developed over several years by the WELS Commission on Evangelism in a series of stages. In 2019, the initial director first “had looked around at WELS congregations that seemed to be blessed in evangelism, and a common denominator... was that they all had an outreach culture. It was just who they were.”⁷ After identifying several features of this common outreach culture, an early presentation was made which described these initial findings and encouraged congregational leaders to develop them. These positive features of an outreach culture remain within the program as the desired cultural shifts that make up the program’s goals, as presented below.

However, the format and structure of that early presentation were drastically and necessarily revised in 2020 with the help of the second developer of the program. These revisions especially included updating the methods used to not only present the information, but also to foster its retention and implementation.⁸ The developers of the program combined intimate understanding of scriptural principles for outreach with in-depth knowledge of psychological principles aimed at shifting collective thought habits. An initial season of “test-driving” in late 2020 was followed by “beta-testing”⁹ in early 2021. After continued development in response to valuable feedback, the program in its present form was fully launched in late 2021 and almost 200 congregations have participated in it since then. Therefore, the Everyone

7. Kurt Nitz and Eric Roecker, Zoom interview with author, September 24, 2025.

8. Nitz and Roecker, Zoom interview.

9. Nitz and Roecker, Zoom interview.

Outreach program in its current state combines unique and intentional structure, goals, and methods in order to increase the chances of achieving its desired outcomes.

Everyone Outreach Program Structure

While the Everyone Outreach program is centered around a one-day workshop experience, the program as a whole includes much more than one day for a participating congregation. The process of involvement with the program begins when a representative from a desiring congregation requests a facilitator through the Everyone Outreach website. This representative, or coordinator, will then receive multiple resources to utilize in preparing the congregation for the workshop.

This preparation includes continual advertising of the upcoming workshop within the congregation, as well as ensuring that as many members are able to attend as possible. Even in this preparatory stage, the Everyone Outreach program is intentionally designed towards substantial impact. In fact, the congregational representative is instructed, “You must ENSURE CRITICAL MASS with regard to the number of people initially involved in changing their thinking. That is why the EVERYONE OUTREACH workshop has minimum participation requirements. The idea that three or four people could travel to a workshop, pick up some insights plus a few thoughts on new ways to do things, and then go back and shift the culture in their congregation is a bit far-fetched.”¹⁰ Again, this principle is highlighted on the Everyone Outreach website: “WELS congregations will see the most benefit from our workshop and program if all members of the church council, church staff and a critical mass of congregants

10. *Everyone Outreach Post-Workshop Playbook*, 10, emphasis original.

attend the Everyone Outreach workshop.”¹¹ In this way the Everyone Outreach program recognizes the difficulty of developing lasting cultural change within a population without the support and involvement of the group’s key leaders. It stands to reason that to effectively change the thought habits of a group, the larger percentage of the group that actively participates and commits to change, the better.

Provided the coordinator is able to ensure that an adequate number of congregational members attend, the next major step in the Everyone Outreach program is to participate in the central workshop. This workshop can span one to two days and involves a carefully trained facilitator traveling to the requesting congregation to present. The actual structure of the workshop itself works through five modules, each centered upon one of the five specific desired cultural shifts of the program. Each of these targeted cultural shifts will be examined in further detail below. The conclusion of the workshop includes several points of reinforcement for participants, most of which are intended to extend far beyond the end of the workshop. For instance, attendees are encouraged to compose self-chosen commitments to personally apply the outreach principles highlighted within the presentation. Attendees also pair up with fellow participants as “Outreach Partners” to provide further encouragement and accountability.¹²

Participants in the Everyone Outreach program are also directed to numerous other resources for additional reinforcement; again, the program is not intended to conclude at the close of the workshop. These post-workshop resources include routinely scheduled reminders through email and text messages, multiple Bible study series that continue to expound upon the outreach principles discussed, and a “Playbook” which details a congregation’s next steps in

11. “Get Started: FAQs,” *Everyone Outreach*, <https://everyoneoutreach.com/contact-us/>.

12. *Facilitator Guide*, 78.

developing an outreach culture. The Playbook presents several suggestions in leading a congregation to truly consider how best to apply the lessons of the workshop for themselves in their unique circumstances.

Everyone Outreach Workshop Goals

As stated in the *Workshop Facilitator Guide*, “the goal of Everyone Outreach is to build an outreach culture in every participating congregation. For this to happen, congregational ministry and member mindsets must shift from what they are to what they need to be.”¹³ Though this is the overarching goal of the entire Everyone Outreach program, the directors of the program and the facilitators of the workshops understand that the desired culture shift will not, and cannot, fully take place during the course of a one-time workshop. This perspective is also clarified to the congregational representatives: “the workshop does NOT change your culture. Rather, it helps you see some aspects of it and gives you good a field position to start your drive to build an outreach culture.”¹⁴ Therefore, the more realistic goal of the initial workshop is to equip the attending congregation members to better understand and recognize their own cultural tendencies towards outreach. The workshop is designed to initiate the longer process of a congregational culture shift in part by providing terminology for certain aspects of culture and relating these aspects to outreach.

The overarching goal of the Everyone Outreach program, then, can be further broken down into five specifically targeted cultural shifts. The directors of the program have identified

13. *Facilitator Guide*, 2.

14. *Post-Workshop Playbook*, 5, emphasis original.

these specific ideals of congregational outreach culture from the beginning of the program's development. In its present form, the opening module presents these five aspects of an effective outreach culture as a series of "Froms" and "Tos" in a useful infographic chart.¹⁵ The "Froms" are the five preexistent cultural aspects regarding outreach that need to be addressed if congregational culture is to be developed. The "Tos" represent the desired goals that will result in richer congregational outreach culture. In this way the workshop informs its participants of the program's overarching goals early in the process, clearly presenting the roadmap for attendants' expectations. Each one of these targeted shifts is worthy of further examination in order to understand the multifaceted goal of the Everyone Outreach program.

The first listed target of the workshop is to shift the congregational culture from "'Over there' outreach (Mission fields are funded; evangelism team cheered on)" to "We/Me outreach (Each ministry area and member is actively working to reach out to the lost)."¹⁶ This primary cultural shift lies at the heart of the Everyone Outreach program's goals. Shifting towards this aspect would be seeking to properly apply the Great Commission which the risen Lord Jesus gave to his Church. The call to "make disciples" by being Christ's witnesses is given to every believer, not merely those called to the public ministry or those serving in a congregation's outreach team.

However, this does not mean that the public ministry or an outreach team ought to be disbanded. The program's preparatory resources describe the delicate balance sought with this goal: "While we certainly want support for missions and congregational outreach to continue, we also want every member and every ministry area to see it as their privilege and responsibility to

15. *Facilitator Guide*, 2.

16. *Facilitator Guide*, 2.

be involved in reaching the lost. Rather than simply cheering on the outreach efforts of others, we want God's people to get in the game."¹⁷ Therefore, the first aspect of a congregational outreach culture is simply for each member of the congregation to consider the call to outreach as applying to themselves personally. The central position of this goal to the program can be clearly seen in its name: *Everyone Outreach*.

The next goal that the workshop targets is the shift from being "Reluctant or resistant to change (Us first)" to "Joyfully embracing change as needed to reach the lost (Them first)."¹⁸ In pursuing this cultural shift, the congregation is invited to wrestle with not only their current mindset towards outreach but also with their attitude regarding ongoing traditions of the congregation. Participants may have an especially difficult time coming to terms with the importance of this shift. Indeed, the program's resources bluntly remind the workshop facilitators that "people are resistant to many changes; people like what they are used to. Church people, in particular, are famous for being allergic to change."¹⁹

However, the purpose of this shift is not to command a congregation to disregard all of its traditions and merely to change for the sake of change. On the contrary, "doing things the same way for a long period of time can be a blessing... and, certainly, Christians are conscience-bound not to change anything mandated by God's Word."²⁰ Instead, the focus of this shift is to encourage participants to consider the unique traditions of their congregation from the viewpoint of a new visitor. It may be that through this consideration members may discover changeable

17. *Facilitator Guide*, 2.

18. *Facilitator Guide*, 2.

19. *Facilitator Guide*, 2.

20. *Facilitator Guide*, 3.

aspects of their congregation's traditions which currently serve to hinder outreach rather than to help it. In those instances, "Christians are conscience-bound to change something in their lives or in the life of their congregation. If there are adiaphora in their ministry that can be shown to stand in the way of reaching the lost with the gospel, change is necessary."²¹ It is with this understanding of Christian freedom and consideration for unbelievers in mind that the workshop presents this shift.

Keeping with this mindset and the program's typical method of instructing participants, "EVERYONE OUTREACH helps members discover their own attitudes toward change and whether those attitudes need adjusting in order to joyfully embrace changes necessary to reaching the lost in their lives and communities."²² However, though this aspect of the workshop's goal aims to adjust the congregation members' attitudes toward change, the program refrains from commanding exactly what changes need to be made. This instance of leading participants to consider biblical principles in relation to outreach, yet leaving the specific application of such principles up to the individual congregation, is emblematic of the entire program's methodology. This method of carefully leading participants to their own applications will be presented in further detail below.

The third targeted culture shift is from being "Hesitant to reach out to the lost because of X" to being "Compelled to reach out to the lost despite X."²³ This aspect of the program's goal continues to focus on reframing the cultural perspective of a congregation in order to remove barriers for outreach. In particular, applying this shift would target personal and congregational

21. *Facilitator Guide*, 3.

22. *Facilitator Guide*, 3.

23. *Facilitator Guide*, 2.

excuses against engaging in outreach, whether these excuses are objectively valid or simply perceived.

As with the previous shift, this one also runs counter to natural human thought processes and tendencies. Put bluntly, “Excuses for not being involved in outreach are legion. This is true both for individual Christians as well as congregations... When members focus on these personal and congregational shortcomings, they are paralyzed and outreach does not happen.”²⁴ In presenting this shift, the facilitator of the workshop will seek to lead participants to a recognition and understanding of the unique excuses with which they struggle, both on the individual and congregational level.

After leading to that recognition, “EVERYONE OUTREACH helps participants see what a hindrance this attitude is to reaching the lost. And it encourages them to be so compelled to reach out that they will do so despite those challenges.”²⁵ Therefore initiating this shift would include recognizing the great importance of outreach regardless of any reasons not to engage in it. The congregation is encouraged to either dismiss any excuses to outreach or to reconsider any obstacles as potential blessings or motivating factors for outreach.

The fourth goal in developing an outreach culture is to shift from the mindset of “Outreach may happen” to considering “Outreach an intentional focus for all (prioritized, planned, funded, resourced & discussed all the time).”²⁶ This shift continues the recurring theme of working to reframe the congregation’s attitude towards outreach as a personal, important, joyful responsibility in response to the gospel. While the ministry of the church certainly

24. *Facilitator Guide*, 3.

25. *Facilitator Guide*, 3.

26. *Facilitator Guide*, 2.

includes more than merely engaging in outreach, it remains that a congregation must maintain outreach as an intentional focus of its ministry or risk neglecting this crucial aspect of Christ's Great Commission. This emphasis on intentionality is especially true because "all of this busyness [of non-outreach ministry] can create an accidental culture rather than an intentional culture. This means the squeakiest wheel tends to get the oil. And, let's face it, the unchurched tend not to be doing much squeaking."²⁷

To counter this seemingly inevitable "accidental culture," a congregation which seeks to develop a strong outreach culture must keep the need for outreach as an ever-present focus in its ministry. In order to initiate this invaluable cultural shift,

EVERYONE OUTREACH helps congregations intentionalize outreach so that it is not put on the ministerial back burner. Rather than aimlessly going about their business, every ministry area in the congregation will regularly be asking how it can contribute to the outreach efforts of that congregation. Rather than hoping that someday an outreach opportunity might arise, individual members will be looking for and creating those opportunities in their daily lives.²⁸

Therefore a congregation desiring to apply this shift in its outreach culture will seek to continually keep its membership aware of this need for outreach. This "intentionalized" outreach culture will mean more than the congregation simply placing regular outreach events on their church calendar. Instead, to truly initiate this switch and develop a congregational culture towards outreach, every member and every ministry team must make it a habit to consider how to reach the lost through personal efforts.

The fifth and final targeted culture shift which the Everyone Outreach program strives to effect is to change the congregation's general attitude regarding outreach from "All are

27. *Facilitator Guide*, 3.

28. *Facilitator Guide*, 4.

welcome' (No one is actively turned away)" to "'All are welcomed' (Members' actions give guests a sense of belonging)."²⁹ Though this shift only involves the addition of a single letter, the impact of this change is critical in developing a congregation's outreach culture. The initial mindset regarding outreach, and especially visitors, that naturally and subconsciously presents itself within a congregation is a largely passive one. The members of the congregation may desire guests to visit and consider themselves welcoming and friendly towards visitors due to the fact that the church doors remain unlocked every Sunday morning. Guests may be quickly greeted with a handshake and a smile from the greeter while the rest of the membership discusses amongst themselves how nice it is to see visitors in church.

However, as the Everyone Outreach program identifies, this is insufficient for an effective outreach culture: "It is not enough to say that everyone is welcome. Congregations need to do all they can to see to it that everyone is welcomed."³⁰ The difference between merely saying that everyone is welcome in a congregation and actually working at making everyone feel welcome is the difference between a passive, stated desire and an active, pursued effort. "What EVERYONE OUTREACH strives to do is shift the mindset of the congregation from passively wanting people to feel welcome to actively helping them feel welcomed."³¹ Again, implementing this shift would involve encouraging a congregation to develop beyond the natural and easy modes of thinking and acting. Developing a congregational culture geared towards outreach will of necessity require pursuing what is unfamiliar and difficult until these desired thought habits become the new norm within a congregation.

29. *Facilitator Guide*, 2.

30. *Facilitator Guide*, 4.

31. *Facilitator Guide*, 4.

One final note regarding this last desired cultural shift is needed for the sake of clarification, however. It is important to note that actively making a guest feel welcomed within a congregation does not equate to expressing full Christian fellowship before this guest has made that public declaration of faith. Again, program facilitators are prepared in addressing the proper balance in this desired change: “WELS congregations have historically communicated to new souls that, ‘Once you have completed steps 1 – 10 of our membership process you will be allowed to be part of us.’ While it is certainly still the case that we want new souls to be instructed and confess their agreement with our beliefs before they express Christian fellowship by joining as members and receiving the Lord’s Supper, we want them to feel welcomed long before this.”³² Though it is good and right for a congregation to desire to maintain a full and proper understanding of the biblical doctrine of fellowship, this does not prevent a congregation from sincerely welcoming a guest through loving words and actions.

Taken together, a congregation that learns and applies these five targeted cultural shifts will find itself developing a stronger outreach culture. Members will come to regard outreach as a blessed privilege for each individual believer, instead of an obligation performed dutifully by only the pastoral staff or a dedicated outreach team. The congregation’s members will also grow in considering outreach intentionally and joyfully as they seek to overcome former hesitations and doubts. The congregation will willingly consider what changes may or must be made in its traditions to help facilitate further outreach efforts. And once guests arrive at a worship service as the fruits of personal outreach efforts, each individual member will actively do all he or she can to help these newcomers feel truly welcomed, without overstepping a proper application of church fellowship principles.

32. *Facilitator Guide*, 4.

However, simply informing a congregation's leaders and members of these targeted cultural shifts is not sufficient to ensure that these goals are pursued and attained. Instead, the Everyone Outreach program is designed to intentionally yet indirectly lead participants to discovering the importance of these changes for themselves. This unique method of presenting the goals and information of the program is a major key in the program's overall success and its long-term impact on a congregation's culture.

Everyone Outreach Workshop Methods

While the five targeted culture shifts that make up the goal of the Everyone Outreach program have been identified and presented from the earliest stages of the program's development, the methods utilized in presenting these goals have changed drastically throughout development. In its initial form, the presentation which would become the Everyone Outreach program simply portrayed these culture shifts as ideal goals for congregational leaders to pursue. However, this preliminary presentation was purely informative as opposed to transformative.³³ Over the period of the program's development, the two directors sought to reshape and reframe this presentation to better fit the goal of helping congregations to develop a strong outreach culture instead of merely informing congregational leaders of what makes a strong congregational outreach culture.

The Everyone Outreach program in its present state, particularly the workshop central to the program, seeks to apply theological and psychological principles towards its goal of helping a congregation develop a stronger outreach culture. However, the program's directors are careful to avoid separating the two categories of principles applied; indeed, throughout the program's

33. Nitz and Roecker, Zoom interview.

development they found that “the same God that revealed himself in Scripture is the God who created how our brains work.”³⁴ With this in mind, there is no need to strive for balance between theological and psychological principles at play in developing a cultural shift. The program, and its developers, operate under the unified and rich worldview of understanding humans as the complexly created psychological beings that God’s Word has revealed them to be.

One particular Bible passage that informed the methods utilized throughout the Everyone Outreach program was Proverbs 4:23, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” This verse from Scripture reveals one of the psychological principles that formed the basis for the program’s methods in developing a congregation’s culture. As one of the directors explained the underpinning of the whole program, “What we think about affects what we do... the whole thinking behind the program is if we can change the way we think when it comes to outreach our behaviors will change as well, both individually and as groups.”³⁵ This understanding of the direct impact of thoughts on behavior, both singularly and collectively, led the program to focus its attention on underlying thoughts and attitudes instead of specific behaviors.

This means that the workshop itself may not address the same issues or teach the same content that participants would expect. This workshop is not designed to teach a congregation how to do outreach. It will intentionally refrain from offering an in-depth presentation of prescribed outreach methods to implement or scripts to follow for maximum effectiveness in any and every situation. Instead, the workshop, along with the rest of the Everyone Outreach

34. Nitz and Roecker, Zoom interview.

35. Nitz and Roecker, Zoom interview.

program, addresses the heart of a congregation's weak outreach culture by addressing the heart of its members.

Throughout the workshop, facilitators will seek to lead participants towards discovering their own answers, seeing problems from a new perspective, and understanding outreach principles that God clearly teaches in his Word. However, the facilitators will not directly tell the participants how to apply these principles in their own congregation. As the facilitators are trained to introduce the program's intentions, "we're not focusing on stuff like giving you a better way to identify prospects or a new technique for personal witnessing. Instead, we'll explore your congregation's culture as it relates to outreach."³⁶ As part of the intentional process of addressing the thought habits behind behaviors related to outreach, the program is designed to purposefully utilize questions, discussion, and paired work to guide participants to their own discoveries.

To ensure that each occurring workshop adheres to these carefully developed means and methods, facilitators of these workshops are meticulously trained to present the information in the specific way described within the *Workshop Facilitator Guide*. Through carefully curated exercises and intentionally worded questions, facilitators seek to lead the attending congregation members to make discoveries on their own. "That means mastering 8 hours of presentation materials, being able to lead discussions and exercises, and doing all of this in a such manner that ***you create a safe environment where participants can discover their own insights.***"³⁷ Again, instead of prescribing specific applications of the outreach principles examined in the workshop,

36. *Facilitator Guide*, 12.

37. *Facilitator Guide*, 5, emphasis added.

facilitators will simply present and encourage the attendees in applying the workshop principles to themselves personally, and within their unique congregation's setting.

The atmosphere created and maintained in each workshop by its facilitator is crucial to the proper realization of the program's goals among the congregational attendees. In the detailed directions for leading the workshop's introductory module, the *Facilitator Guide* reminds the workshop leader that "building psychological safety for participants to share with others and discover their own insights in subsequent modules is the key outcome for this module."³⁸ However, because the workshop so greatly encourages participants to think for themselves and develop personal insights and application, much of the presentation of information within the workshop centers around the facilitator asking questions as opposed to merely lecturing or presenting the given information. Due to the fact that workshop facilitators will be asking numerous questions throughout the experience and will receive a wide variety of answers, the *Facilitator Guide* also stresses "Do not make anybody wrong. Thought habits that may get in the way of some results don't change because you declare them wrong—present alternatives and let the participants choose."³⁹

The workshop presents these various alternative thought habits through a series of modules, each of which focuses on one of the five desired culture shifts from the stated goals of the program as a whole. Though the particular details of each module can vary somewhat, most generally follow the same order, which is based on the psychological and theological principles at play in the methods of this program. To conclude the introductory module, the *Facilitator Guide* offers this summary of the typical module format, as well as insight into the stated

38. *Facilitator Guide*, 11.

39. *Facilitator Guide*, 8.

premise and purpose of the workshop: “Our premise is that a congregation’s shared thought habits can be invisible, like water to a fish. Thus, the workshop is designed to give participants insights that help them see those thought habits. You’ve already seen our basic approach in this section. We’ll experience an exercise, reflect on it, and share our thoughts, examine what we saw in the light of God’s Word, relate it to outreach, and then consider possible actions that we can take.”⁴⁰

It is worth noting that the “possible actions” considered by participants at the conclusion of each module are actions chosen by the participants themselves. This crucial step in each module highlights another way in which the Everyone Outreach program is intentionally designed to produce the greatest chance of effectively initiating change. The final exercise in every module throughout the workshop involves the facilitator allowing the participants a few minutes of personal reflection on the specific outreach principles addressed in the directly preceding module. The facilitator then directs the participants to individually compose statements beginning with the words “I will” as a way to personally commit to possible applications of such a principle in their lives. This part of the module is another example of the applied understanding at work throughout the entire module and program at large: that the Everyone Outreach program intentionally does not seek to command its participants in what to do. Instead, the act of considering possible applications and working to determine personal “I will” statements helps participants dwell more richly and personally on the content of each module.

However, simply considering possible applications of biblical outreach principles on the personal scale will not automatically and immediately result in the desired culture shift of the

40. *Facilitator Guide*, 20.

entire congregation. This is the case even when a participant understands the self-composed “I will” statements as personal commitments to application of scriptural outreach principles. Indeed, facilitators are reminded of the connection between individual commitments and the development of the group’s culture: “participants’ **I Wills** are not the full extent of what needs to happen to shift the culture, but they are the start. Once people see the shift beginning to occur, it will snowball, and other new behaviors will be adopted and lead to additional new thought habits.”⁴¹ In order to truly develop a congregational outreach culture, the biblical principles addressed and the personal commitments expressed in the workshop must be reinforced regularly through multiple means.

It is for this reason of reinforcement that the Everyone Outreach program also includes a number of resources to be utilized following the initial workshop. These resources all serve to further reinforce the initiated shifts in thought habits after the workshop and to encourage participants to continue personally pursuing their chosen “I will” statements. The *Post-Workshop Playbook* either contains these various resources for reinforcement or directs the congregation’s leaders towards them.

Post-Workshop Program Resources

The first system that the Everyone Outreach program puts into place for the reinforcement of outreach principles among participants has already been addressed briefly. Near the conclusion of the workshop, participants are paired up with “Outreach Partners,” a fellow member of the congregation and attendee of the workshop. The *Facilitator Guide* provides further description

41. *Facilitator Guide*, 74.

of the role outreach partners are expected to perform, as well as the value of such a role in reinforcement of principles from the workshop: “Your outreach partner will be the person whom you will periodically meet with on an ongoing basis after we’ve concluded the workshop. When you meet, you’ll discuss outreach & progress on each other’s I wills and pretty much all things outreach here at [congregation]. As you progress on your I wills, you’ll undoubtedly have both success and failures, so it helps if your outreach partner is someone you’re comfortable speaking with.”⁴² In keeping with the general methodology of the program, participants are expected to choose their own outreach partners and set their own schedule for meeting and discussing personal progress.

Immediately following the workshop, the member of the congregation responsible for initiating participation in the Everyone Outreach program receives access to the *Post-Workshop Playbook*. This *Playbook* provides several other beneficial resources for a congregation’s membership to utilize as it seeks to develop the outreach culture desired throughout the program. In its introduction, the *Playbook* is quick to remind its readers of the difficulty of the task before them even after participating in the workshop: “Culture change isn’t easy—not only are you changing thought habits, but you’re changing shared thought habits. And culture is self-perpetuating and, therefore, resistant to change. Furthermore, the workshop does NOT change your culture. Rather, it helps you see some aspects of it and gives you a good field position to start your drive to build an outreach culture.”⁴³ Though the *Playbook* offers multiple useful suggestions for a congregation that seeks to implement principles from the workshop, it also recognizes the individual nature of how applying such principles will look in specific settings:

42. *Facilitator Guide*, 52.

43. *Post-Workshop Playbook*, 2.

“since each congregation is starting from a different current outreach culture and has different gifts and talents present, the answer to ‘What’s next?’... will also be different for each congregation.”⁴⁴ Therefore there is no uniform prescription of specific steps for every congregation to follow after participating in the initial workshop, though there is a general guide for suggested procedures for a congregation to consider.

It bears repeating that the goal of the Everyone Outreach program is to “help your congregation build a culture of outreach so that every ministry and every member is thinking about and participating in outreach.”⁴⁵ It is beyond the scope and ability of the workshop experience to completely accomplish this goal in one day. Therefore, the effectiveness of the Everyone Outreach program ultimately depends on the extent to which a participating congregation intentionally applies the principles learned during the workshop. To this end, the Everyone Outreach program provides several resources for congregations to utilize that will keep the desired goals in shifting culture ever before the congregation.

44. *Post-Workshop Playbook*, 2.

45. “Home Page,” *Everyone Outreach*, <https://everyoneoutreach.com/>.

IMPACT OF THE EVERYONE OUTREACH PROGRAM

As has been presented, the Everyone Outreach program is a multifaceted approach to initiate the difficult and complicated process of developing the outreach culture of a congregation. Despite the careful planning that goes into developing a program such as this one, the true mark of its effectiveness can only be measured by examining the long-term impact of the program on the outreach cultures of congregations after they have participated in the workshop. After the workshop concludes and the facilitator leaves the participating congregation, the members and leaders of that congregation are the ones primarily responsible for the continued pursuit of development in regard to an outreach culture.

To begin the investigation of the long-term impact of the Everyone Outreach program, first a brief survey will be examined which will provide a general overview of the initial reactions from former participating congregations. Following this examination of the survey, three case studies will be presented which will explore the implementation and impact of the Everyone Outreach program on three specific congregations at various points in time following the workshop.

Survey Responses

In the four years since the WELS Commission on Evangelism publicly launched the Everyone Outreach program in its current state, nearly 200 congregations have participated in at least the initial workshop.⁴⁶ Though it is beyond the scope of this particular paper's research to investigate

46. Nitz and Roecker, Zoom interview.

the program's concrete impact in each of these congregations, a brief survey to obtain a broad overview of the program's general impact among its past participants will provide valuable insight. For this survey, representatives from participating congregations were asked to simply rate on a scale of one to five the change they had noticed in their congregation's outreach culture according to the five targeted culture shifts of the program. Following the simple sliding scale self-assessment, participants were given the optional opportunity to provide any further comment or reaction on their experience with the Everyone Outreach program as a whole. In considering the data from this simple survey, multiple patterns emerge which provide a framework for understanding how participating congregations are receiving the Everyone Outreach program and how effectively the program is achieving its desired outcomes.

Altogether, this survey received 144 responses from a variety of called workers and lay leaders within these participating congregations.⁴⁷ This means that it is possible, and indeed likely, that many congregations represented in the survey responses are represented by more than one response. This aim at seeking multiple responses from single congregations was done intentionally, because multiple members of the same congregation may perceive different aspects of the congregational outreach culture. In this way the survey could collect a broader range of data and present a greater encompassing view of the impact of the Everyone Outreach program across congregations.

Due to the simple nature of this survey, and due to the fact that its simple intention was to re-present the five directly stated goals of the Everyone Outreach program to participating congregations, the results of the survey offer a general overview of the perception congregations have as to the program's effectiveness following their participation within it. While most

47. "Everyone Outreach Impact Survey," Google Forms, 2025.

responses to the initial five questions fall within the expected ranges of standard array, the extent of the outlying data suggests participants have a high degree of perceived impact from the program.

In the first question, responders were asked to evaluate their agreement with “Since going through Everyone Outreach, our congregation has seen a cultural shift from... ‘Over There’ outreach (mission fields are funded and evangelism teams are cheered on) *to* ‘We/Me’ outreach (each ministry area and member is actively working to reach out to the lost).”⁴⁸ Though 61 responders, or 42.4% of total responders, selected the middle option between “Strongly Disagree” and “Strongly Agree,” the next highest percentage selected the option closer to the “Strongly Agree” side. This amount was 43 responders, or 29.9% of total respondents.⁴⁹ However, only 5 respondents, or 3.5%, selected “Strongly Agree,” while 9 respondents, or 6.3%, “Strongly Disagreed” with the statement.⁵⁰ Thus only a rough third of survey respondents would agree in some way that the Everyone Outreach program led to a cultural shift in everyone doing outreach.

The second question asked the participants to respond to “Since going through Everyone Outreach, our congregation has seen a cultural shift from...being reluctant or resistant to change (us first) *to* joyfully embracing change as needed to reach the lost (them first).”⁵¹ Surprisingly, the largest grouping under this question chose the response labeled “4,” between the option of “1

48. Impact Survey, 2025.

49. Impact Survey, 2025.

50. Impact Survey, 2025.

51. Impact Survey, 2025.

(Strongly Disagree)” and “5 (Strongly Agree).”⁵² Option 4 received 55 responses, or 38.2% of total respondents, while option 3 in the middle received only slightly less at 53 responses, or 36.8% of total respondents.⁵³ This is especially surprising and yet encouraging when considering the general resistance to change held by most Christian churches, especially within WELS congregations.⁵⁴ While this response does not provide definitive results for what specific changes are being implemented in WELS congregations, it does suggest the beginnings of a noticeable shift across these congregations regarding the general attitude toward change for the sake of outreach. The other options received the following responses: Option 1 (Strongly Disagree) received 12 responses, 8.3% of the total; Option 2 received 17 responses (11.8%); and Option 5 (Strongly Agree) received 7 responses (4.9%).

The next question addressed the third goal of the Everyone Outreach program, “Since going through Everyone Outreach, our congregation has seen a cultural shift from... being hesitant to reach out to the lost because of X *to* being compelled to reach out to the lost despite X.”⁵⁵ The responses to this question follow the same pattern as the first questions, with the majority of respondents selecting the middle option, followed by the next largest group of respondents selecting option 4. The specific results were as follows: 11 responders, or 7.6% of the total, selected Option 1 “Strongly Disagree;” 26 responders (18.1%) chose Option 2; 53 responders (36.8%) selected Option 3; 45 responders (31.3%) chose Option 4; 9 responders

52. Impact Survey, 2025.

53. Impact Survey, 2025.

54. See footnote 19 on page 12 under **Everyone Outreach Workshop Goals**.

55. Impact Survey, 2025.

(6.3%) chose Option 5, “Strongly Agree.”⁵⁶ The fact that another rough third of respondents selected one of the positive options suggests some effectiveness on the part of the program to encourage congregations to pursue outreach despite potential hinderances which previously prevented outreach.

The following question asked respondents to evaluate: “Since going through Everyone Outreach, our congregation has seen a cultural shift from... thinking that outreach may happen *to* considering outreach an intentional focus for all (it’s prioritized, planned, funded, resourced, and discussed all the time).”⁵⁷ The responses show a similar trend to the questions so far: 9 respondents, or 6.3% of the total, selected Option 1, “Strongly Disagree;” 22 respondents (15.3%) selected Option 2; 36 respondents (25%) selected Option 3; 60 respondents (41.7%) selected Option 4; and 17 respondents (11.8%) selected Option 5, “Strongly Agree.”⁵⁸ Clearly, again, the majority selected options on the Agree side, with 53.5% of responses being at least somewhat positive. This would indicate that at the very least the Everyone Outreach program is helping a majority of participating congregations to consider outreach as an intentional part of their ministry.

The last question addressed the final goal of the Everyone Outreach program, asking for an evaluation of, “Since going through Everyone Outreach, our congregation has seen a cultural shift from... saying ‘All are welcome’ (No one is actively turned away) *to* saying ‘All are welcomed’ (Members’ actions give guests a sense of belonging).”⁵⁹ The specific responses were

56. Impact Survey, 2025.

57. Impact Survey, 2025.

58. Impact Survey, 2025.

59. Impact Survey, 2025.

as follows: 8 respondents, or 5.6%, selected Option 1, “Strongly Disagree;” 11 respondents (7.6%) selected Option 2; 34 respondents (23.6%) selected Option 3; 58 respondents (40.3%) selected Option 4; and 33 respondents (22.9%) selected Option 5, “Strongly Agree.”⁶⁰ The majority in agreement is even most pronounced here, with 63.2% either Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing with this statement. This suggests that participating congregations are likely to become more intentional about considering guests in their decisions and actively seeking to welcome them on a typical Sunday morning.

In addition to the evaluation questions, the open-ended feedback opportunity at the end of the survey yielded valuable insights as well into how respondents are perceiving the program. Of the 144 responses to the survey, 91 respondents opted to leave additional comments about the Everyone Outreach program’s long-term impact on their congregation. Most of these comments convey similar reactions to the program, and so can be sorted according to their recurring themes.

Many comments expressed that the program, or at least the workshop, was a valuable resource in the moment but had no lasting impact. Some could not identify a reason for the program’s perceived failure: “Initial reaction (the first six months) were really good and we saw a cultural change, but it didn’t have sticking power and people quickly reverted to their traditional behaviors.”⁶¹ Other comments followed a similar theme but suggested a reason or reasons for a lack of long-term impact: “Unfortunately there was no follow up or further interest

60. Impact Survey, 2025.

61. Impact Survey, 2025.

in developing strategies for outreach by our pastor or church leadership. Leaving me to feel it was a waste of our time.”⁶²

It must be noted here that respondents to the survey belonged to congregations that participated in the program at various points within its development. Thus, not every participating congregation in the history of Everyone Outreach received the same follow-up resources or encouragements, such as the *Playbook* or the suggested Bible studies, as these have changed in the program’s development. Additionally, this means that some respondents belonged to congregations in which enough time had passed after the workshop to observe the “sticking power,” or lack thereof, of the program on the overall culture. Other respondents, however, belonged to congregations which may still be in the initial surge of interest following the workshop, as described by the first comment above, and thus would be unable to identify any long-term impact from the program as a whole.

Others also evaluated that the program was not as successful as could be desired, and provided the rationale for such an assessment: “I don’t really feel like it changed much as our congregation has not added many members since completing outreach.”⁶³ In response, it must be noted that the effectiveness of the Everyone Outreach program would not necessarily be measured in the number of new members added in the congregation following the workshop. Instead, the goal of the program is to begin shifting the intangible outreach culture of a congregation, which is much less easily measured. Though one would expect that this culture shift would naturally result in a growing number of members as each member engages in outreach, a lack of new members would not automatically indicate a failed culture shift. It may

62. Impact Survey, 2025.

63. Impact Survey, 2025.

be that the Holy Spirit is blessing the members' outreach efforts by leading the lost to faith without that including membership in the local WELS church. In such a case, praise and thanks would still be in order to the God who wants all to be saved.

Lastly, another large section of comments revealed that respondents recognized the difficulty and extended period of time needed to change a congregation's culture, but they identified the Everyone Outreach workshop as an integral part of that longer process. For instance, "I think it's just another great opportunity for God's people to be reminded that—oh ya, I should be doing personal evangelism. And then to help them consider—what are my opportunities to share/invite/etc. For that, it was certainly worthwhile to go through."⁶⁴ Additionally, "Congregation culture is very hard to measure since you are talking about the collective 'thought patterns' of a group... I think doing it helped raise awareness to the need for an Outreach Focus. I'm sure it moved the needle some but cultural shift happens over years, not over a weekend."⁶⁵ Some respondents admitted initial disappointment in the workshop's results, but also recognized unforeseen long-term benefits to the program: "It did not have the planned effect that I had hoped, but the change was planted in several key members and we have benefitted from it since then."⁶⁶ Lastly, others simply reported evidences of a growing outreach culture within their congregation, whether those evidences can be measured or not: "We have seen more members inviting friends. We have seen a huge uptick in our welcoming atmosphere."⁶⁷

64. Impact Survey, 2025.

65. Impact Survey, 2025.

66. Impact Survey, 2025.

67. Impact Survey, 2025.

Overall, the results from the initial survey were largely positive. Every scaling question received a majority of responses in the neutral or positive options. However, the additional comments provided indicate that many congregations struggled with implementing the principles discussed in the workshop. A lack of follow-through and commitment on the side of the congregation or its leaders was the most frequently stated obstruction to the program's long-term effectiveness. This pattern of the program's effectiveness hinging on the congregation's ability to implement the insights gained in the workshop will also be seen in the presentations of specific congregations below.

Case Study #1: Church A

The first congregation which this paper will investigate individually to analyze the long-term impacts of the Everyone Outreach program is Church A, a medium sized congregation in the Midwest. At the time of its initial workshop, Church A had 177 communicant members with 95 regularly attending weekend worship.⁶⁸ Church A hosted the program's workshop in late 2025, after the Chairman of Evangelism in the congregation pursued participation in the program. Thus, at the time of this paper's writing, this congregation participated in the Everyone Outreach program too recently to properly assess the full impact of the program on the overall outreach culture. However, the initial reaction by the participants can serve as valuable feedback for how the program is generally received by congregations. Additionally, since the program does not prescribe specific applications of its principles, Church A also serves as a valuable test case to see how a congregation would plan to apply the program's principles in its ministry.

68. *Everyone Outreach Schedule*, 10.

Of its 177 current communicant members, 30 were in attendance for the initial workshop. Though the workshop attendants only represented 16.9% of the total communicant members, the attendants also represented about one-third of the congregation's regular worshipers. Seen from that perspective, the number of attendants at the workshop certainly constitutes a significant enough percentage to ensure a critical mass of key congregational members. Additionally, almost every member of Church A's leadership teams was present for the workshop, meaning that influential members in leadership positions would be equally and aptly prepared to apply the program's principles in the congregation.⁶⁹ As the program analysis and survey responses indicated above, a leadership team that is involved in and heavily committed to developing a congregation's outreach culture is a majorly influential factor in the overall effectiveness of the program.

The members of Church A present for the workshop expressed a generally positive reaction to this initial push for congregational culture shift. One member appreciated how the workshop gave her terminology to describe aspects of outreach she was already aware of, but now she finally had the language to talk about it.⁷⁰ Another member, shortly after participation in the workshop, admitted to being more intentional about his actions on the following Sunday morning to better help guests feel welcomed. He said, "What stuck with me was [the facilitator's] talk about 'holy huddles,' when you get bunched up with everyone you know after the service. It's hard to avoid, but it really closes you off from talking with anyone new. I'm really trying to watch out for that now."⁷¹

69. Church A's Chairman of Evangelism, phone interview with author, November 24, 2025.

70. Church A member 1, in-person interview with author, November 15, 2025.

71. Chairman of Evangelism, phone interview, 2025.

However, many of the attending members were left unsure of how exactly to proceed in applying these principles as a congregation. This was because of some initial disappointment over the exact content of the workshop: “I was hoping for more ‘nuts-and-bolts’ advice about how exactly I’m supposed to reach the lost. And I’m still a little confused, who exactly is the lost we’re supposed to be reaching?”⁷² Additionally, the provided resources to reinforce the concepts of the workshop were not immediately helpful either. Of the two recommended Bible studies for the congregation to engage in following the workshop, Church A had already done one of them within the previous year, and there was no room in the congregation’s Bible study curriculum to add the second one for another six months.⁷³

However, the months prior to participation in the workshop had already seen shifts in Church A’s outreach culture, though it was prompted by a shift in the congregation’s inreach culture first. One member stated, “We’ve been a lot better about getting together as a church lately, people are starting different groups to socialize and get to know each other better. I think that’s just naturally making it easier for people to invite friends to church, since they already have friends at church.”⁷⁴ Only time will tell, though, if Church A will see a targeted culture shift based specifically on the principles given in the Everyone Outreach program. It seems that leaders within the congregation are already off to a good start in intentionalizing a mindset of welcoming guests.

72. Church A member 2, in-person interview with author, November 15, 2025.

73. Chairman of Evangelism, phone interview, 2025.

74. Church A member 3, in-person interview, November 16, 2025.

Case Study #2: Church B

The next congregation under consideration is Church B, a larger sized church also in the Midwest. Church B participated in the Everyone Outreach workshop in late 2024. At the time of hosting the workshop, Church B had 313 total communicant members, with an average of 162 attending weekly worship.⁷⁵ Of these, 30 were in attendance at the workshop. While this means that Church B had a similar number of attendants to the workshop as did Church A, the difference between the two is that this represented only 18.5% of the average weekly worshipers at Church B. Positively, though, the pastor stated that “we had pretty much every group represented, we had at least half of building and grounds, youth, everyone.”⁷⁶

The workshop was initially received very positively by the congregation: “everyone was very thrilled, they really enjoyed it, especially all the interactive things they did.”⁷⁷ Here it is important to note how the methods of the workshop, including drawing participants in with question and activities instead of simply lecturing on the information, had a notably positive reception by the congregation. Two additional features of the workshop which especially stood out as blessings to the pastor was that “the focus wasn’t on guilting over how we’ve missed opportunities to witness, but to just keep it front and center,” and the fact that “the people were hearing someone other than me talking.”⁷⁸

Following the initial workshop, the congregation pursued some of the steps suggested in the *Playbook*, such as intentional evangelism discussions in every group’s meeting and engaging

75. *Everyone Outreach Schedule*, 6.

76. Church B Pastor, Zoom interview, November 20, 2025.

77. Pastor, Zoom interview, 2025.

78. Pastor, Zoom interview, 2025.

in outreach-focused Bible studies. Another way in which the pastor intentionally focused the congregation on outreach was by starting a group he called “Sowers of [Church B].” In this group, “members will come and talk about prospects they have, and if they’ve been able to talk with them, witness to them, and pray for them. There’s also things like we roleplay talking with a stranger. We’ve had a few more people that have attended that that I don’t think would have if they hadn’t come to the Everyone Outreach event.”⁷⁹ This is a clear example of a congregation seeking and creating specific ways to apply the principles given in the workshop, which is precisely the hope of the program.

One year after initially participating in the workshop, the current outreach culture of the congregation could be described as “good, but it still needs a lot of work. It’s still a little bit of the apathy culture, they still fall into the thought of going to church and letting the pastor do it. It’s definitely better than before, but not tremendously better. We’re still a work in progress.”⁸⁰ Pastor could point to current friendship evangelism efforts by the members to highlight the congregation’s growth in keeping a guest focus.

Case Study #3: Church C

The last congregation in this study was one of the first to go through the Everyone Outreach program. Church C, another mid-size congregation in the Midwest, hosted the Everyone Outreach workshop in early 2022. At the time of the workshop, the congregation had 300 communicant members with an estimated 180 in weekly worship. The congregation undertook

79. Pastor, Zoom interview, 2025.

80. Pastor, Zoom interview, 2025.

participation in the program because its members had noticed a concerning decrease in the congregation's membership. In 2021, the year before participating in the Everyone Outreach program, the congregation had 506 communicant members with an average of 245 attending weekly worship.⁸¹ This means that from 2021 to 2022, the number of communicant members at Church C dropped by 40.7%, while the number of average weekly worshippers dropped by 26.5%.

Of the membership at the time, 26 were in attendance on the day of the workshop.⁸² This amount met the minimum attendance requirements of the program but perhaps fell short of the ideal number desired for achieving full critical mass. Although, the congregation's current head of evangelism noted positively that "most of the congregation's leaders were there, and many of them are still our leaders today."⁸³ Given the importance of ensuring that a congregation's leaders are present at the workshop in order to enact real change in the congregation afterwards, this smaller percentage of attendants would not necessarily render the program ineffective of initiating a culture shift.

However, looking back three and a half years after participating in the workshop, the congregation's head of evangelism states, "the information we got was great, but it wasn't absorbed and applied very well. There was no follow up from the leaders."⁸⁴ As with most congregations, the membership at Church C appreciated the information gathered at the workshop and briefly put some minor adjustments of an outreach mindset in place soon

81. *Schedule*, 2.

82. *Schedule*, 2.

83. Church C Head of Evangelism, phone interview with author, October 31, 2025.

84. Head of Evangelism, phone interview, 2025.

afterwards. But, without consistent and intentional reinforcement by the congregation's leaders, the former thought patterns quickly return and retain dominance in the congregation's mindset regarding outreach. This trend is so common across WELS congregations, as has been noted above, and it is so prevalent at Church C in particular that the head of evangelism could note, "Our culture is not an outreach culture. We just don't have a good handle on doing outreach."⁸⁵

Instead of the shift towards personal outreach that the workshop seeks to initiate, the general attitude regarding outreach in the congregation is that it is done through the church's school. Additionally, "the school is our outreach plan. But we have to learn the difference between public relations and outreach."⁸⁶ While the school functions as a useful tool for the church to utilize in engaging with the community, the goal of the Everyone Outreach program is that everyone would be doing outreach, not only those connected with the school. Currently, the Head of Evangelism is pursuing the chance for Church C to host the Everyone Outreach workshop again so that it may reawaken the development of an outreach culture within the membership.

Conclusions

The Everyone Outreach program is a thoughtfully designed resource that seeks to equip congregations with the tools necessary to begin the process of developing a stronger outreach culture. The major component of the program itself is the on-site workshop which will guide a congregation to recognize its own outreach culture and realize areas of needed growth. The

85. Head of Evangelism, phone interview, 2025.

86. Head of Evangelism, phone interview, 2025.

strength of the workshop lies in its emphasis on leading participants to their own conclusions instead of dictating what every application ought to be. The challenge, however, lies in the likelihood that the participants will follow through with their commitments and begin the long, complex process of shifting the congregation's outreach culture.

The deciding factor in the effectiveness of the Everyone Outreach program is the effort of the congregation's leaders to continually place the principles of the program before the congregation's members. While the workshop and the recommended reinforcement resources can initiate the process of shifting culture, ultimately the program is only as impactful as a congregation's leaders led it impact the congregation's operations. Very rarely can the actions and mindsets of one or a few individuals shift the culture of a collective. However, where there are as many leaders as possible, leading the way in intentionally applying outreach principles in their lives, this situation allows for the greatest amount of impact.

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