

***CHRISTMAS
DECLARATION CROSS
BUILDING OUTREACH***



GREETINGS!

Welcome to a great 'in-reach' and outreach ministry opportunity. I know, every time you hear the word 'opportunity', that typically means time, effort, money, and extending one beyond 'one's self'. And you are exactly right! But isn't that what the Lord asks us to do?

We all struggle with coming close to our Lord Jesus, wanting that and seeking that, but we are held back by many things not of Him. That's the struggle. We constantly try to find ways to get one without doing the other; we want Jesus, but we want Him without cost to us. Scripture says that we can't have a close relationship with Him without 'suffering'. But we try.

The other thing we struggle with is how best to serve Him, meaning that what we do for Christ without the Holy Spirit is a good work from our vantage but He says it is 'nothing without me'. This church in-reach and outreach sound really good, I mean lighting the December night with lighted crosses symbolizing our risen Lord and Savior, and 'declaring Jesus Christ' at Christmas, but if He is not in it, don't do it. So the first and always most important thing is to pray as a church about the ministry. Pray if He wants you to do it, pray how to do it, pray when to do it, and pray while you are doing it. Our hope is that as you pray as a church, you are one with Christ, and as you disciple your church members and seekers in this ministry (cross production), you are one with Christ, and as you prepare to distribute crosses door-to-door and pray that salvation will come with an introduction to Christ by a glimpse of a solitary, shining cross this December, you are one with Christ, and when you meet together in prayer during the Christmas celebration as a church thanking Him for allowing you to serve Him in this way and proclaim Him, you are one with Christ. So pray. Start praying about the ministry and ask the Holy Spirit to raise up those responsible for the many parts of the ministry. Perhaps for the first time in your church body, many members will be 'touched' by Jesus through the Holy Spirit and their God-given talents will be used in a mighty way by the Lord for His purpose in this time and for His kingdom.

This in-reach has literally something for everyone. The talents needed span from lumber and materials purchase (shopping for the Lord), lumber preparation (woodworking for the Lord), organization of prayer times and work parties (praying for and administering to the body for the Lord), cross fabrication (cutting, drilling, assembly, and painting for the Lord), taking a

tract and a cross and going to your neighbor (evangelizing for the Lord). This ministry is 'whole family' oriented and many of the tasks are especially well suited for men (construction and woodworking) and kids, who excel at painting and assembly. Discipling happens naturally as, in particular, kids and women, ask for guidance in construction related activities and learning how to use hand tools and power tools. But don't worry, since there is something for everyone, it's truly a 'whole church body' ministry. We even had a work party where one of our pastors, who makes no bones about proclaiming his lack of 'handy man' skills, recognized that his one great talent of making root beer floats, was how he could be best used by the Lord. He snuck out to the store, and before long, as about 40 folks worked away, he came around with that sweet semi-frozen manna, and gave everyone sweet refreshment as we ALL served the Lord. I can go on for pages with heartwarming stories about great things that happened during our many work parties, but we would rather have you get on with the ministry and let you send your stories back to us, so that we can share them with all those churches, the universal church of Jesus Christ, involved in this ministry.

We hope that everything you need regarding instruction for the ministry is here in this manual, and that you seek guidance from the Holy Spirit in all things.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This guidance manual is intended to walk you through the preparation, execution, and completion of the ‘Cross Declaration Outreach’ ministry. The goal is to draw closer to Christ in serving Him, and witness to our neighborhoods the great love we have for our Lord and Savior. A brief description of each chapter is given below.

Schedule Information – We think this ministry takes about four months to complete, starting in September and ending at Christmas. You can start earlier, especially regarding acquiring the supplies you need. The big ticket items that require some lead time is the lumber and the exterior light strands. Depending on what color of lights you use (we recommend clear) and how many crosses you intend to build, ordering the lights from a hardware store or supplier will take at least a month (don’t count on them sitting on a shelf at a local retail store). It’s also great to have the church pray on this beforehand and organize teams of folks early so they can schedule the tasks and fit the service into their schedules. This section helps you to plan out the calendar of events.

Materials, Tools, and Workplace Needs – All your building supplies, tools, and workplace needs are identified in this section. It’s probably best to get the Men’s ministry involved early so that table saws, drill presses, and hand tools can be identified in the congregation, not to mention skilled craftsmen (AKA anyone that can use a table saw and drill press), and a place to work. We find it’s best to prepare the lumber at one of the men’s workshops, and do all the drilling of the wood stock, painting, and assembly at the church. You can do any of this anywhere; you decide what’s best for your church.

Cross Construction – A detailed description of each of the many steps in the cross production process is provided. There are about 12 steps or ‘stations in the assembly line’, which can be staggered into groups and run simultaneously. You will produce batches of crosses from different stages of work, which is good because you can only have so many people working at each task. You get real efficient as you go along. By the way, don’t worry if you don’t have the tools or skills to produce the cross that is described in the manual, which includes table saw cuts called datto cuts for a ‘flush fit’ cross, or even wooden crosses with holed drilled in that have the lights facing out and the electrical cords trimmed and hidden behind the cross. We have ‘lower tech’ alternatives that will produce a great

‘declaration for Christ’ without all that. It’s your prayers and hearts that will count to our Lord, not the material symbol. Step by step instruction plus photos of what this looks like is provided (we like photos!).

Outreach and Handout Tracts – After the crosses are made, then the real work begins- outreach! We describe a simple approach that doesn’t take much time but does require evangelism; going door-to-door in your neighborhood with a cross or two and tracts, asking your neighbors if they would like to declare Christ by hanging a lighted cross on their house this Christmas. Suggestion- hang and light yours first; they will have seen it and as the Holy Spirit speaks to them, your ‘outreach’ will be in His hands. We have starter tracts as handouts and instructions to outreach leaders providing training, all of which you are welcome to use or do it as you feel lead. These guides are to be helps to you and not to take the place of spirit lead missionary work.

‘Count the Cost’ Summary – Then finally, a summary section on ‘counting the cost’ as our Lord directs us prior to following Him. There are many things to discuss here that range from the practical, to the physical, to the spiritual. We will touch on all of them, because we want you to be fully prepared for the tasks (each cross costs about \$20 to make and takes about 2 man-person hours of labor) and fully armored for the spiritual battle that this declaration invites.

Very good! Let’s get at it!

One note- we have a super deluxe design that takes a pretty high level of construction, but fear not. If you can’t do these activities because you don’t have the tools or skill, there are suggestions for substitute designs. Our first crosses were old tomato stakes wired together, painted, and had the lights just wrapped around the wood cross, and you know what....that worked too.

2.0 SCHEDULE INFORMATION

The ministry has several stages and the initial ones include prayer, planning, and purchasing of the longer lead-time items. It takes about four months to complete a batch of crosses. Starting in October or November (at the latest!) you will complete the effort with time to hit the streets with the outreach when everyone is preparing for Christmas.

The earlier you start, the better off you are, and especially regarding acquiring the supplies you need namely the exterior lights and the lumber. Everything else can be obtained off the shelf at retail department and hardware stores. Depending on what color of lights you use (we recommend clear) and how many crosses you intend to build, ordering the lights from a hardware store or supplier will take at least a month (don't count on them sitting on a shelf at a local retail store).

It's also great to have the church pray on this beforehand and organize teams of folks early so they can schedule the tasks and fit the service into their schedules. This section helps you to plan out the calendar of events.

Week #1- Present the ministry opportunity to the congregation and pray that the Holy Spirit will speak to the hearts of members of the church, and volunteers will come forward to lead the various tasks. At least four leaders are needed: Purchasing Agent, Woodshop Leader, Assembly Director, Outreach Minister. Decide if you want to build this design of lighted cross, and make the changes needed to the project as is appropriate.

Week #2- Pray about how many of each size cross you will make. When you have a direction, go shopping. Seek the best deals on lumber and exterior light sets. You should be able to order the color and size of lights you desire as well as wood product. Plan out your schedule once you have the delivery dates of supplies from the dealers.

Week #3- Pray and start preparing the evangelists for the upcoming outreach. Review, revise, rewrite, and produce the handout tracts. Ask the congregation to start praying for those hearts that are hardened, that they might become soft and receive the words from our Lord. Pray for salvation to come with Christmas Advent. Pray for the boldness to declare Christ.

Week #4- Start the work parties. Plan times when groups of men can prepare the wood stock, groups can scribe and drill holes (lots of holes), paint crosses, prep the lights, install the lights, and produce a finished, tested cross product.

Week #5 and **Week #6-** Meet, pray, drill, assemble, paint... you get the idea.

Week #7 and **Week #8-** Outreach! First distribute crosses to members of the congregation to install early on their houses- this prepares the way in each members neighborhood for the many neighborhood outreaches. These are typically done by families and cover houses on each side of members' house. Then plan bigger outreach efforts, and take full advantage of teaming up with other Christmas activities such as choral productions, live nativity scenes, partnering with other churches that perhaps couldn't make crosses but can participate in door-to-door outreach.

3.0 MATERIALS, TOOLS, AND WORKPLACE NEEDS

There are lots of ways to make a cross with lights; this guidance is just how we do it. Now you can do whatever you like of course regarding designing, purchasing of materials, and making lighted crosses, but we have invested a significant amount of time and, by trial and error, have learned a few things along the way. For instance, we tried different sizes and types of materials, different construction designs, and even different colors of light bulbs. And this design and recommendation of size, materials, and colors have simply worked the best for us. The cross designs we recommend are made very well, are well constructed, and offer a great value for the recommended donation price. At current prices, and with ordering of lights at near wholesale costs, the large crosses can be produced for about \$20 each, and the smaller crosses for about \$15 each. This is mainly because the large cross takes a full light set of 25 lights, and the small cross takes only 11 lights and one strand, with additional hardware, makes two crosses. The other thing you need to know is that this design is made from materials that are common and readily available, and require less time and prep work than other materials. We like using Hem Fur trim wood stock that is milled on three sides (rough face board for texture) and primed white. This wood stock is perfect for the job!

Here is the list of materials recommended, a list of tools needed for the different tasks, and workplace needs.

Materials Needed for the Cross Production

8' of Fur Trim 4" wide per large cross, $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick, specifications:

One set of exterior lights, C9 size, 25 bulbs per strand- recommend clear
White latex paint

Four $\frac{3}{4}$ inch wood screws per cross

Construction staples (about 20 per cross), specifications:

8' of Fur Trim 3" wide per large cross, $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick, specifications:

One set of exterior lights, C7 size, 25 bulbs per strand and one strand makes two small crosses- recommend clear

Tools Needed for the Cross Production

Table saw with a cross-cut blade for cutting to length

Datto saw blades for flush-fit cross

Drill press or hand drill

One (1) inch flat wood bit or one (1) inch Fosner bit for large cross

7/8 Inch flat wood bit or 7/8 inch Fosner bit for small cross

Paint brushes

Paint rollers

Screw gun or drill for assembly

Construction staple gun for trimming electrical wires

Screw drivers, pliers, hammer, assorted hand tools

Workplace Needs for the Cross Production

Shop with table saw

Assembly room, like garage or church basement

Cross storage area, like the church entrance way or along the walls in the sanctuary

4.0 CROSS CONSTRUCTION

Step #1- Pray as a congregation.

It's really important to pray as a congregation about this ministry. First of all, making an announcement without praying is very ineffective. You want the ministry blessed by Jesus and lead by the Holy Spirit. Provide the information, set meeting times and work days well in advance, then pray that God will take you where He leads you with this. Also, many will not be able to actually partake in the cross building and distribution, but any one, young or old can be prayer warriors for Christ supporting the ministry with the most important ingredient, prayer!



Step #2- Identify task leaders.

You may have some idea, knowing the active members of the congregation, who might be good at what part of the ministry. Typically the guys will really take to the hardcore woodworking and assembly aspects, the administrator types will take the organization role, and the evangelists will lead the outreach portion of the ministry. BUT, don't miss the opportunity to pray to the Holy Spirit to put it on those hearts of who HE wants for these leadership roles. Ask God to touch the hearts of those He will call to service in this ministry in your prayer times, and ask for those whom He calls to volunteer while in prayer. We can do a fair job of selecting leaders based on what we see as fruit of the spirit in our people, but I guarantee that God can do a perfect job at it.



Step #3- Shop for and acquire lumber, lights, and other materials.

This is a fun step in the process. Going to supply houses and getting the best deals on the materials. The big ticket items like the lumber and lights need some research and wheeling and dealing with vendors, but the other stuff like paint, staples, electrical plugs, etc. can be obtained most anywhere and at anytime, plus they are not a big part of the cost of the ministry. But the lumber and the lights are another story. The lumber can be obtained from any full service lumber yard, and the best stock lumber is the fur window trim stock that is milled on three sides and prime painted. The stock material comes in various widths and lengths, depending what is in stock or what is ordered. The recommended width stock is 1" by 4" for the large crosses and 1" by 3" for the small crosses. Don't be bashful About asking the lumber yard for a discount, or if someone in the congregation is a contractor, purchasing the lumber at a contractor discount. This ministry isn't about making money, but the lower the cost, the better the opportunity to place a cross in a home.

The lights are also a long-lead item, and will probably require ordering them from a hardware store well in advance. The recommendation is for using clear C7 bulbs, 25 bulbs per strand for the large crosses and clear C9 bulbs for two smaller crosses (both exterior grade lights). You need to cut and splice-in plugs for the smaller crosses because you get two, 11 bulb strands of lights from one light stand, so don't forget to buy the right number of male and female plugs for the job. It's a good idea to have a male and female plug in each cross so that folks can wire the cross 'in line' with other exterior or interior lights.

Step #4- Cut lumber to length and datto cut for flush fit.

Now we call on the men, those guys with experience in working with wood. It's an excellent opportunity for the adult men to mentor the younger men through

This aspect of the ministry. The lumber needs to be taken to the 'shop' with preferably a table saw, cut to length following the patterns for the large cross uprights and cross pieces as well as the small cross uprights and cross pieces. Following the exact length in the patter is sort of important so that the cross 'looks right' and the center hole of the two pieces will line-up on assembly. Realistically, the center hole will need to be re-drilled after assembly given that the pattern scribing and drilling typically isn't done with great precision.

The cutting of the wood to length is greatly facilitated by using the fence on the table saw, cut to marks on the table saw (properly placed masking tape on the table), or cross cut saw with cut marks on the support table. You can scribe each piece if you like, that works fine, but you can also automate this step a bit.



After the cross pieces are cut, one of the two tough tasks are executed- datto cutting the cross pieces. It's not complicated, just dangerous and tedious. You can set the datto blade depth of cut to one-half the thickness of the stock wood (or slightly less) given that the cuts are identical in both pieces. Set the fence on the table saw to a length that puts the side of the blades (an inch of blade works fine with the shallow cuts in this soft wood) on the far side of the cut and mark the table with masking tape on the near side. That way, you will be cutting between the fence and the table saw mark and you won't need to measure the job but once per cross size. The cut starts at the table saw mark datto cutting the cross piece and ends at the fence covering the width of the datto cut, which is equal to the width of the wood (approx. 3 3/4" for the large crosses and 2 3/4 " for the small crosses). Take every safety precaution while making the datto cuts given that the saw does not really care what it cuts! When you lay out the job, remember that the datto cut is located in the center of the horizontal cross piece and placed at the pattern mark of the vertical piece. The markings on the pattern indicate the locations of these cuts for reference purposes.



A close cut and tight fit is the goal, but it is certainly not required. The assemble will be straight forward with snug fitting pieces, but if they are too tight, there will be delays when re-cutting is needed. There isn't really any need for tight fitting pieces because the crosses are screwed and or glued and screwed together. In fact, if you don't have the advantage of skilled wood workers or a table saw, omit the datto step and simply overlap the cross pieces and screw them together. The no-datto cut cross works just fine.

Step #5- Drill holes for lights.

Here it is; the other tough task in this job. Drilling the holes. That's 25 holes in the large crosses and 11 holes small crosses with a common hole in the center slot. This task requires two crews: the scribes that transfer the pattern for the hole cutting to the cross blanks; and the drilling crew. Working with power tools always requires safety considerations and draining, and using drill presses and bits is no exception.

There are several ways to drill holes, and using table top or floor stand drill presses is highly recommended. The best performing bit is a Fosner bit that mills the wood rather than saw hole bit cuts or spade bit chips the wood. The problem is that all bit types (Fosner, key hole, or spade bit) dull pretty quickly. The best in performance have been the Fosner bits, but they are not cheap and are not always locally available. We order ours ahead of time from tool companies through the Internet or catalogs. Regardless, it's wise to make a simple jig assembly that consists of a backstop and base that can be clamped to the drill press table centering and holding the cross piece in place. Also, the base catches the bit preventing contact with the metal drill press table which really doesn't help the dulling of the bit issue.

Drilling this soft wood works best with sharp bits and high speed setting on the drill.



Step #6- Assemble crosses.

Use wood screws just under length, about 7/8" or so. Glue is not necessary but can be used. Two screws on the small crosses and three on the large should do.



Step #7- Paint crosses.

After assembling the crosses, they are ready for painting. Paint them on all edges and sides. The paint fills the 'break-out' on the back and weather-proofs the wood. Also painting needs to be done in advance of following activities so plan ahead. Painting can be done by everyone or anyone. Exterior latex, semi-gloss works real well.



Step #8- Prepare lights.

The lights need lots of prep that, again, any one can do. Each strand of wires must come out of the box, the bulbs unscrewed and stored so they don't break, and those darn little green clips must come off. The clips come off easy with a brisk 'snap'. If you don't do this right, you have to clip them off with wire cutters. Keep the large and small lights separate.

The small cross lights need to be cut to two strand of 11 C-7 light strands. The best way to do this is to count '11' from each end and cut the three middle sockets out. Cut the wire to give you maximum wire on the ends, where you need to wire in a male plug or a female plug, depending on what fixture is on the half-strand of wire and sockets. Now one strand will have the fuse, the other not. If this is a problem for you, wire in an additional fuse, or simply use one-half of the strand.



Step #9- Install lights in crosses.

Installing the lights is fun but there are things to note. With the bulbs out, start at the bottom of the cross with the male end of the strand. Fit the sockets in the holes (they will stay in with the bulbs installed) running up the cross to the cross piece. Skip the center hole and fit every other one to the end of the cross piece- you have enough wire length. Then come back across the cross piece to the other end, skipping the center hole, skip out to the end, then fill back to the center and install the center. Then, fill every socket out to the top ending up with the female plug at the top. This is the same for small and large crosses. With the sockets in place, staple the sockets in place with a staple gun one on each side. Don't press down hard or you will break wires and short the strand. After stapling each side of each socket, go back and loop the extra wire and secure with staples to the cross. A swirly pattern around the sockets works well and it helps keep the wires in place. Note- staple the wires flat and not on end- less chance of damaging a wire that way.

After the wires are stapled down, inspect for wire breaks and repair accordingly. Then, install the bulbs.



Step #10- Quality Control- Inspect the Crosses and Test the Lights

The final step is QC. Each cross must be checked to insure that it is not wired wrong. Note that if the stapling breaks the wires which are fragile, the staple can make a dead short, which is not good. Check the staples, plug it in, and trouble shoot as needed.



5.0 OUTREACH AND HANDOUT TRACTS

See attached materials! Feel free to use these or make your own.

6.0 'COUNT THE COST' SUMMARY

Each large cross costs about \$15 in parts and a man hour of labor; the little crosses are about the same, perhaps a few dollars cheaper. You can take them door to door and give out the tracts and ask if folks want them for a donation to cover the costs. But the real cost is heart. Does your congregation have the heart to serve, sacrifice time and talent, and then go door to door in an outreach to reclaim Christmas for Christ? This is where the prayer comes in and listening to God. He will know if you, as a church are ready. If you are, He will see you through! If not, then you have a year to pray about it.

SUMMARY

Here is the bottom line:

- 1) Meet and pray. Get your instructions from the Holy Spirit.
- 2) Decide if this cross design is for your Church. If it is order the materials. If no, order what you need. Allow for about 10% extra for mistakes.
- 3) Get the guys together and prep the wood and set up the assembly areas.
- 4) Get the Church together and start the wood stick drilling, disassembling the lights, and preparing for the wiring job.
- 5) Make the cross bodies and get them painted.
- 6) Install the lights and QC check the final product.
- 7) Outreach!

This activity is a wonderful 'in-reach' and 'out reach'. You will have a great testimony for Christ, and your neighborhood, especially your house, will have declared Christ this Christmas. We know that He will like that!

Please call if you have questions.

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