

Ministry with Year-Round Residents

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Many of the resort areas in this country are often isolated from large population centers. The basic purpose of these resorts is to provide recreation and relaxation for the visitor. It is to these resort areas that I will address myself.

Most resort areas have one basic industry and that is to provide service to the visitors. Service can come in many forms—from meeting simple needs like providing a grocery store to the more complex services like teaching advanced ski lessons. The whole idea is for the local population to separate the visitor from his or her money.

To provide these services to the tourist, the local residents are placed under a variety of pressures:

1. Locals have to work when the tourists are there. This means working weekends and holidays, such as Christmas and Easter. Most locals have weekdays off. Their schedules are so varied that it breaks down relationships.
2. Locals have to deal with great population fluctuations. Resort areas can go from 10,000 locals to 100,000 tourists in one day. One-third of the local housing may be occupied by year-round residents; others are vacation homes or rentals.
3. It is difficult to hire year-round employees because of these fluctuations.
4. Locals have to face empty months of no income. It is feast or famine.
5. The financial risk is great because the locals order products such as ski gear, food, et cetera, long before the tourists or the snow arrive. Hence, bad weather or no snow can be disastrous.
6. Housing is just as expensive for locals as for the tourists.
7. Resort areas are usually high maintenance areas. (Example: hours of shoveling to get your car out of the driveway.) There is also the problem of long hours and low pay.
8. Problems of transportation due to weather and crowds are there for the local as well as the tourist.

Emotional or Psychological Pressures

1. Isolation.
2. Transient population breaks down relationships.
3. High volume of people contact versus low personal involvement results in shallow relationships.
4. The relaxed, playful attitude of resort areas creates psychological pressures on locals because they are called to work long hours while others are playing.

5. The tourists may have come here initially to play, but because of economics they find themselves working harder than ever.
6. The rule of “when you play you pay” applies to locals as well as tourists.

Ministry to Local Populations in Resort Areas

To minister to the year-round resident, the church must provide a stability that the local does not find in this world. This means spiritual stability, consistency, and longevity of ministry. These attributes must be reflected in the individuals who make up the church and in the ministries they provide. It is to this stability that locals are attracted.

Resort areas are usually small, and local Christian churches need to work together in peace and harmony, without compromising their traditional values. This creates an atmosphere throughout the community of acceptance and love, despite denominational differences.

Specific Ways to Minister to Local Populations

1. Churches need to be sensitive to the seasons of the year if they are going to do an effective job of ministering to the local population.
2. Churches must be sensitive to the fact that their members must work weekends and holidays throughout the year.
3. Churches in resort settings are usually small and poor. Outside resources of personnel, programs, and money can help the local church minister in ways far beyond what it can do alone.
4. Churches in resort areas need to examine the needs of their local people and create programs that work for them. Examples: Big A Clubs, Parent's Night Out, church dinners, ski ministry, casino ministry, home Bible studies. All of these should be people-oriented programs.
5. Longevity, not only of the minister/missionary, but also of key figures in the church is a crucial factor.
6. Churches should work with community organizational systems to provide assistance. Examples: hospital ministry, ski patrol, search and rescue, voucher systems, sheriff's department.
7. Churches need to provide a variety of worship experiences at a variety of times so they can minister to the local population as well as to the tourists.
8. Church staff members are professionals. They participate in the community as professionals when performing weddings, graduations, funerals, or any public event.

Adapted from an article by Dan Holzer in the *1993 National Resort Ministries Conference Notebook*. Used by permission.