

**Community Impact Potential Through Trunk-or-Treat Ministry**

Hope Baptist Church held its first trunk-or-treat event in October 2022, and Pastor Tim Murr says it was a “phenomenal” experience that gave his church a powerful inroad to the community. The fall event is popular among churches as a Halloween alternative where children and families dressed in costumes collect candy from decorated vehicles, and often includes food, games, and other themed activities. When inclement weather canceled other area churches’ events on the same night last year, Hope Baptist’s gymnasium ended up saving the day.

“We were able to move everything inside at the last minute. People still decorated tables and handed out candy so it worked well,” Murr explains, adding they could also do “extra activities like bowling that we couldn’t do in the parking lot.”

The church’s approach to planning and promotion was simple in its first year – they hung an informational banner facing the well-traveled Clemson Road side of its property, posted on social media, and made sure all the families that use the church’s daycare knew about the event. Church members volunteered to decorate trunks and donated candy. Murr wishes he could attribute the success to “fantastic planning. But the night was actually a God thing, which was even better.”

Because of heavy rain that day, other area churches canceled their outdoor events. So local families already dressed and ready for fun made their way to Hope Baptist. Murr says organizers originally hoped 100 people would attend. Instead, they estimate more than 700 actually showed up.

“We sent one member out to get more candy twice, and probably handed out more than 4,000 pieces of candy that night,” Murr reports.

Churches can turn a holiday event like Trunk-or-Treat into a missional opportunity when they incorporate evangelism and meaningful follow up. Because “personal interaction was the goal,” Murr says greeters intentionally interacted with community guests, talked about upcoming church events, and shared gospel tracts. As a result, several people visited worship the following Sunday and one individual attends the church to this day.

Some Hope Baptist members received unexpected blessings through the outreach event, too. The fun atmosphere gave them a chance to interact with children and bring joy to members of the community. Others were reminded of the simplicity of serving.

“I would encourage every church to find activities like this if, for no other reason, than to see the Family of God come together in unity to accomplish something totally unselfish. Sharing the gospel with people in our community was the primary goal, and I believe we were privileged to do that,” Murr says.

The second annual Hope Baptist Trunk-or-Treat is scheduled for Sunday, October 29. While it will remain a primarily outdoor event, last year’s success showed that there will likely always be an element of indoor access involved. To any church open to hosting a Fall event like Trunk-or-Treat, Murr says it’s a great opportunity to introduce people in your community to people in your church and opens the door to building relationships.

“We have a diverse congregation in a diverse neighborhood. Any time we can introduce people to who we are, where we are, and what we’re trying to do, it is a positive thing,” he says.