

Snowbird Ministry

Our congregation has a large number of retired people who escape to the south every winter, for periods from one month to six. After we spent a winter up north in a building project and snowbirds returned feeling left out of the process, I decided to e-mail snowbirds each winter. As people get ready to leave, they leave their email addresses with me or our secretary, and I add them to my list. Even though they may access the church website and receive the newsletter, my e-mails add a slice of daily (or weekly) congregational life. I send on prayer requests and follow-ups, tidbits of good news, and an occasional weather update or comments on community happenings. Gossip is not allowed. Prayers are with the permission of those prayed for, same as our prayer chain policy. In return, I get their news, including prayer request from the south, and often keep them in touch with each other as well. Feedback tells me this helps people feel very much a part of Lakeside even though they are away, and minimizes “culture shock” when they return.

Recently, for example, I asked for prayers for a member undergoing knee surgery and another who just had a mastectomy and will need continued prayer support during chemo. The grandson of members is dying from leukemia, so I asked for prayer support for him and his family through these last difficult days/weeks. I sent good news of answered prayer, and passed on a request from a snowbird for prayers for her grandson’s brain tumor to be successfully removed. I sent a church-related joke another day, and a sub-zero cold report.

Snowbirds always enjoy hearing that we are cold! Response has been so favorable that I am now in my third year of writing.