



# Door Hanger Canvasses

Door hanger canvasses are a great way to get members involved in your congregational outreach program. They are also effective at disseminating a large amount of information quickly. The following is an explanation of the two types of door hangers your congregation could utilize, as well as the two types of door hanger canvasses.

## Two types of door hangers

There are two types of door hangers—cards and bags.

### Door Hanger Cards

Most printers can produce door hanger cards—a postcard-like ad with a hole cut in it, allowing one to hang it on a doorknob. (You need to design the card accordingly.) If you are not comfortable with designing it yourself, you can work with a local printer.



### Door Hanger Bags

Door hanger bags are clear plastic bags that have a hole/handle that can be used to hang the bag on a door. Congregations can put an invitation to a worship service into the bag. There is also room to include additional information: a church brochure, preschool information, etc. The materials are all well-protected from the elements.



The bags are very inexpensive. You can order them [HERE](#). Distributing materials by door hanger bags is cheaper than mailing, but there is a time commitment.

So, which is better—door hanger cards or bags? It depends on your goals and how much information you want to share. A door hanger bag with multiple pieces of information is better than a door hanger card packed with 1,000 tiny words.

## Two types of canvasses

Once you have decided whether to use door hanger cards or bags, you will need to decide what type of canvass you are going to use to distribute your material. Again, there are two options: *traditional* and *walking*.

## Traditional Canvass

A traditional canvass is when members go door-to-door, ring the bell, and actually speak to people. This is what most people think of when they hear the word *canvassing*. The canvasser will invite the person to a special service or event, such as Christmas Eve. If the person is interested, the canvasser will leave information. If the person already has a Christian church home, the canvasser thanks the person for their time and moves on. If no one is home, the canvasser leaves the door hanger.

## Walking Canvass

With a walking canvass (sometimes called a *silent* canvass), members simply go door-to-door and hang the information on as many doorknobs as possible. They do not ring any bells. They do not knock. The goal is simply to reach as many homes as possible. If they encounter a resident while walking to the door (shoveling snow or working in the yard, for example) they can hand the person the information and say something simple like, “I’m from *such and so* church and wonder if I could leave this with you.”

So, which is better?

A walking canvass will reach many more homes since your canvassers are not knocking on any doors. Generally, it is easier to recruit volunteers for this type of canvass, since it is not too scary. Members are just going for a walk through the neighborhood. With fifty volunteers, you can easily hang 5,000 door hangers in one Saturday morning. The downside is that you inevitably end up hanging information on the homes of people who already attend a Christian church.

A traditional canvass distributes the information *only* into the hands of your main target—people who do not have a Christian church home. However, it takes longer to get those invitations out. Instead of being in a front yard for 30 seconds, one spends 90 seconds on average: knocking, waiting, and talking.

Both have their upsides and downsides. However, **as a general rule, a walking canvass is better.** It will reach more people more quickly. Also, each year the number of Americans who go to church regularly declines. Therefore, the number of bags that are “wasted” on individuals who already have a church home is minimal.

## What should go into the door hanger bag?

Your congregation has decided to go with door hanger bags rather than cards. You like the ability to distribute a lot of information all at once. However, you should not put too much in that bag!

A good rule of thumb is to limit the bag to three pieces of information. You might include an invite of an upcoming event, a brochure about your church, and preschool information. You

might think, “But there’s so much more we could share! We could include a recent sermon. We could talk about the WELS.” Don’t. Adding that much information makes it likely people will see *none* of it. They will see an overstuffed bag and toss it without a glance. So, follow the rule of three!

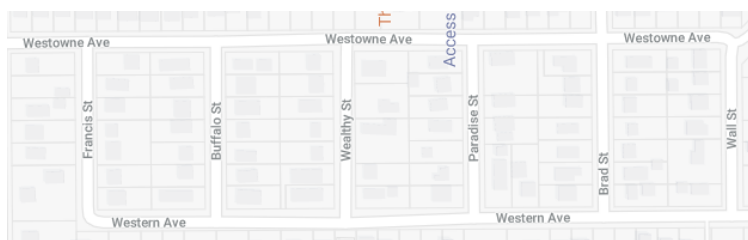
When you fill your bags (a great job for the youth group) put the full-color postcard invitation on the outside. This is what you want to be visible when hanging the bags.

## Planning the canvassing routes

One of the most important tasks in a good canvass is planning the routes. Where do you want to reach? You might choose neighborhoods that are close to your church. You might choose neighborhoods that are newly developed. A good rule of thumb is the twelve-minute rule. It is not likely that an unchurched person will drive more than twelve minutes to visit a church. (The exception is if they know someone who attends that church.) Therefore, it makes sense to canvass homes within a twelve-minute drive of your church.

Someone on the evangelism team might want to map out the routes. Google Maps is great for this. When you zoom in enough, it shows how many homes are on a street. Your planner could produce a list. For example:

Francis St.— 28  
Buffalo St.— 27  
Wealthy St.— 31  
Paradise St.— 17  
Wall St.— 9  
Western Ave.— 44  
Westowne Ave.— 58



That is 214 homes. The canvassers would know how many bags they need. (You do *not* need exact numbers. You just want a rough estimate to help with planning.) The route planner might use Google Maps to print out a screenshot of those streets, providing the canvassers with a helpful tool.

This is another fine job for your youth group or some interested young members. They are tech-savvy and could create maps fairly quickly.

## Sending out canvassing teams

It is best to canvass in teams of two. If you are doing a traditional canvass (knocking on doors and talking to the homeowners), you want to have two people on each porch. If you are doing a walking canvass (hanging door hangers only), the pair can divide up and walk down opposite sides of the street across from one another.

## Where to hang the door hanger

One place is strictly off-limits—inside the mailbox. Federal law states you can be fined *for each piece* of literature you stick in a mailbox. *So do not put anything inside a mailbox, ever!*

So, where do you put the door hanger? If you have time and enough volunteers, placing door hangers on the front doorknob is your best option. This way, your door hanger is somewhat out of the elements.

In many communities, people have boxes *below* the mailbox that are intended for newspapers. However, it is legal for others to use that box. You can put door hangers in there. Likewise, some mailboxes are designed with newspaper hooks. It is legal to hang your bags there.

In many communities, mailboxes are not located on a post by the street. An option, in this case, is to leave the door hanger on the flag of the mailbox. (If the flag is down, make sure you return it to the down-position after you slide the door hanger onto it.)

If you have any concerns about the legality of leaving door hangers or door hanger bags on mailbox hooks or flags, contact your local United States Post Office.



## What about the “no solicitation” laws?

In some parts of our country, it is common to have people live in large subdivisions that are off a major street. There are subdivision entrances, and sometimes they even have gates. These subdivisions will often have “no solicitation” signs posted. Or you might see such a sign in a front yard. What does this mean?



Almost all soliciting laws are intended to discourage the *selling* of goods and services. Thus, inviting someone to a Christmas Eve service would not qualify as soliciting. You are not selling anything. The broadest definition of soliciting is “to endeavor to obtain by asking.” Inviting someone to church does not fit even that broad definition.

However, it is wise to acknowledge what most people believe their “no solicitation” sign means. They believe it means no stranger should come to their door. Thus, if you show up with an invitation to a Christmas Eve service, they might not like it, not necessarily because their hearts are hard, but simply because they think their privacy has been invaded. So, while you probably have the right to do a traditional canvass (knocking on doors) in a “no solicitation” subdivision, you need to ask if it is a good idea. In such communities, it might be wiser to go with a walking canvass. Even then, some may object. Church leadership needs to apply careful reasoning. On the one hand, if you stop doing this type of outreach every time someone becomes upset, it is

unlikely you will be able to do canvassing at all. That might adversely affect your congregation as you attempt to carry out Christ's mission. However, three dozen neighbors badmouthing your congregation for waking them up too early on a Saturday morning does not help your mission efforts either. Some wise advice... Do not be afraid to try canvassing in *any* neighborhood. Correspondingly, do not be afraid to call it off if you get numerous protests.

When dealing with a "no solicitation" neighborhood, it is never a bad idea to contact your local police department and explain your canvassing plan. They can give you good advice, not only about what is legal but also about what is generally accepted by the people within that community.

## **My God bless your mission effort!**

Door hangers are just one of many ways to create community awareness about your congregation, to disseminate large amounts of information, and to invite people to an upcoming event.

They are also a great way for members of your church to work together in an effort to create opportunities to share the gospel. It is quite likely that on the day of your event, a visitor will show up. And when one of your members asks them what brought them, he will say, "Someone from your church left an invitation on my door." That's good for the visitor, who will get to hear the gospel. It is also good for the members, who have learned another way they can play a part in kingdom work.

# INVITATIONAL CANVASS TALKING TRACK

