

undercurrent **Primer**



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Introduction

Welcome

If you are reading this primer resource, you are someone who is excited to mobilize and empower the next generation to share and live the Gospel of Jesus. It is a privilege to be able to support, journey with, and care for the younger generations. *We are excited to be on this journey with you.*

How to Use this Resource

This Primer Resource is meant to give you an overview of Undercurrent and steps to support your planning of the weekend event and the development of your students. Following this section you will see suggested timelines, available resources, and additional supports available from the CBAC.

Our hope is that you use this primer in the way that you need to use it. We (CBAC) want to partner with you in this initiative. You know your context and your students, and we are excited to partner with you to help develop meaningful relationships, both within the church and outside your community.

What is Undercurrent?

Undercurrent is a locally focused, regionally supported event. We are hoping to support your church as you have an impact in your home community to support your youth in feeling connected to a larger group.

Utilizing the historical model of Tidal Impact, Undercurrent is structured as a four day event, situated over Thursday evening to Sunday afternoon. Local churches will engage in Neighbouring activities.

Sample Schedule

Thu.

Supper

Dinner & Registration

Evening

Team-Building Activity
Devotional Content (provided by CBAC YF)
Introduction to Community Partners and Schedule

Fri.

Morning

Neighbouring Plans

Lunch

Devotional Content (provided by CBAC YF)

Afternoon

Neighbouring Plans

Supper

Evening

Fun Event
Debrief

Sat.

Morning

Neighbouring Plans

Lunch

Devotional Content (provided by CBAC YF)

Afternoon

Neighbouring Plans

Supper

Evening

Fun Event
Debrief

Sun.

Morning

Attend Local Church Service

Lunch

Local Church Lunch

Afternoon

Final Debrief
Looking Ahead to Next Steps with Partners

Foundation

Mission Statement

In the face of many ongoing challenges, we believe it is more important than ever for the Church to engage with our neighbours, joining God as he works to bring life and wholeness to the world. More than that, we believe that our youth can lead the way.

The ultimate goal for this initiative is to inspire and enable churches and individuals to demonstrate Jesus's heart for the world, bringing wholeness and life through acts of service and caring relationships.

"Our love for others is our grateful response to the love God first demonstrated to us."

1 John 4:19

We are hoping to support your church as you have an impact in your home community while helping youth feel connected to a larger group, **Undercurrent strives to achieve it through:**

Student Leaders

Engaged, empowered, and confident young missional leaders

(1 Timothy 4:12)

Intergenerational Connection

Reciprocal and intentional connections between all people of the church

(Romans 12:9-13)

Ongoing Partnerships

Authentic relational partnership between churches and community organizations

(Acts 20:35)



Values

Relational Leadership by Students

- Undercurrent's top value is relationships (youth and God, leaders and youth, church and youth, youth and youth, church and community partners, youth and themselves). We believe that youth can lead us into a variety of meaningful relationships, and we value intergenerational connections.

Mobilization of all Participants

- Undercurrent values equipping students, leaders, and other participants with needed skills to mobilize them as initiators of 'neighbouring culture' where they work, study, live, and play, and as participants in God's activity in their community.
- Undercurrent values training churches to be missional, and modelling how to join God's activity in their community.
- Undercurrent values ensuring diverse hands-on opportunities to serve as a primary source of learning and growth.
- Undercurrent values opportunities for ongoing community engagement.

Sustainable Engagement

- Undercurrent values partnerships between the local church and organizations in their neighbourhoods and networks. Youth ministries represent their local churches, and their partnerships are established through the local church, and not circumventing the local church.

Authenticity and Excellence

- Undercurrent values safety for all participants, meaningful relationships between participants and partners, and strives to pursue excellence at every opportunity.
- Undercurrent values having people of a variety of ages, genders, backgrounds, and ethnicities engage across all activities.
- Undercurrent values safety for all participants, meaningful relationships between participants and partners, and strives to pursue excellence at every opportunity.

Assets/Strengths-Based Approach

Undercurrent operates out of the principle that your local congregation is already equipped with many assets and strengths. Undercurrent encourages churches to take note of these assets and strengths and consider how they may be employed to serve your neighbourhood and community.

Community Partnership

When entering into this type of work, there are some important characteristics to adopt!

Flexibility

— Be open-handed with your planning.

Humility

Instead of coming in with a predetermined expectation, consider what will actually serve your partner. Ask the question: how can we serve you?

You are Enough

Sometimes our partner organizations need support through manual labour and financial support, but often what they really need is encouragement. Relationship and encouragement are significant assets that we as the Church can offer.

Look to the Long-Term

What are the long-term goals of organizations, and where do they overlap with your own? What would long-term partnerships look like? Is it possible?

Working Towards Wholeness

The Hebrew concept of *shalom* runs throughout the Old Testament. While it's sometimes translated into English as "peace", the Hebrew meaning goes much deeper than simply an absence of conflict. *Shalom* means wholeness and right relationships in all aspects of life, both individually and collectively:

with God
with ourselves
with others—in our families, in our communities, and in our world
with the Land

When Jesus was on Earth, everything he said and did was guided by *shalom*.

He worked to restore people's spiritual, mental, physical and emotional health (Mk. 5:1-20; Mk. 5:25-34).
He challenged economic injustice (Lk. 19:1-10).
He spoke with people who were on the outside of society (Jn. 4:1-42).
He cared for the rest of Creation (Col. 1:20).
He gave people a different vision for the world (Lk. 4:16-21; Mt. 5:1-12).

He made people whole, and then he sent them out to make the world whole.

As followers of Jesus, this is our calling too: **to join God in the neighbourhood as he makes everything whole again.** Undercurrent is designed to help youth, leaders, and churches to do this together.

What are the different types of organizations that we can partner with?

Depending on your neighbourhood, there may be many organizations to choose from, or there may only be a few. Regardless of this, there are lots of opportunities to think creatively about how to partner and support your community or the surrounding area. Perhaps there is an opportunity to partner with another congregation, either Baptist or otherwise, to increase your potential impact. Your community may have many groups of people your team can serve:

Artists

Indigenous communities

Tourists

Health workers and first responders

Service industries

Businesses/business organizations

Municipalities

Public housing communities

Community centres

Environmental organizations

Multi-cultural groups

Non-profit organizations serving seniors or youth

Schools (all levels, from daycares to post-secondary institutions)

Farms and community gardens

Non-profit organizations working in food security, housing, health, etc.

Note: If you are hoping to work within Indigenous communities or other racialized environments, be aware that there may be specific cultural protocols to follow.

Likewise, if you are hoping to serve a public housing community, it is essential to get permission from the community itself and/or provincial public housing before entering their community. Contact the Youth and Family Department for advice in this area.

It might seem tempting to organize an event that takes place solely within your church building, or to partner only with Christian organizations, but this is not recommended.

Instead, we want to maximize students' contact with their greater community. Any community organization working to bring about wholeness and right relationships is a potential partner. You may not be able to partner 'as completely' with some non-Christian organizations. However, it is important for us and our students to be exposed to multiple spaces, and to see how we can serve God in different contexts outside of church walls.

Humble service is also an important witness to non-Christians, particularly to those who may have had negative experiences with Christians or churches in the past.

Meaningful partnerships are built on a foundation of relationship and relationship takes time, intention, and effort. Think prayerfully about the organizations in your area and where potential ongoing partnerships could grow.

How much time should we commit to each community partner?

The number of community partners you have will depend somewhat on the size of your group and on the projects they have available. Whenever possible, partner with community organizations instead of doing a project on your own. **Start with one or two organizations that appear to fit your group well.** If and when those partnerships have been confirmed, and depending on scheduling, seek out one or two more complementary partnerships (if needed).

Remember that one of Undercurrent's goals is to help churches develop long-term partnerships with their community partners. It's better to have fewer partnerships that are of higher quality, rather than many partnerships that cannot be sustained.

On the other hand, keep in mind that potential partners, especially non-profits, may have tight constraints on their budgets, staff, time, and confidentiality. You are there to make things easier for them, not to overwhelm them with many volunteers who require their valuable resources.

What kinds of Neighbouring opportunities should we look for?

Most Neighbouring opportunities will fall into at least one of six overlapping categories:

- A work project in the community*
- Serving food*
- Intentionally helping a business, farm or municipality*
- Serving alongside another non-profit*
- Intentionally serving either seniors or kids and families*
- A give-away (pooling group resources to make, buy, or do something that others would appreciate, and giving it away freely)*

To ensure a range of experiences for your students, each Neighbouring session should fill a different category. If an organization requests a larger project, it is usually possible to use it to fill multiple categories. For example, a school painting project could count as both a work project and intentional service to kids and families.

TIP: If you are hoping to deliver food to a fire station or other similar organization, call ahead of time to confirm. Some organizations may already have an established schedule for deliveries, and you can also check on food sensitivities and/or preferences at this time.

How should we reach out to and communicate with potential community partners?

Relevant Church Members

Are church members already active in different community organizations? If so, they may be able to suggest opportunities and put you in touch with the appropriate people.

Phone Call

A phone call can help potential partners understand what Undercurrent is all about, giving space for asking questions and brainstorming together.

Email

Email is a helpful way of making sure community partners have all the applicable information in a written form that can be shared with staff members.

Onsite Visit

Once a partnership is established, an onsite visit can help you get a better sense of the work being done by an organization, of the scope of the project, and of constraints or challenges faced by the organization.

What should we say to potential community partners?

Begin by simply giving your name, position, and church. Particularly in larger communities, don't assume that potential partners know which church is which. Mentioning the physical address of the church building, or the names of relevant people who belong to your church, can help to establish a new relationship.

TIP: Recognize that some organizations may have had negative experiences with churches in the past, while others may have large numbers of Christians working within their organization and/or have received a great deal of support from churches in the past.

Slowly and clearly, explain what Undercurrent is: a four-day event, happening in your neighbourhood, where students will be serving by volunteering.

Give them the dates and approximate times of the Neighbouring sessions. They will also need to know the approximate ages and number of students, and how many adults are likely to be accompanying the students. Let them know that it is supported regionally by Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada - Youth and Family Department.

Explain that you are familiar with the work their organization is doing, and express to them how valuable it is in bringing wholeness to your community. Let them know that you would love to find a way to serve them during Undercurrent if there is a way to do so.

TIP: Be prepared to give ideas. Many community organizations are not used to having churches offer to serve them with no strings attached and they may have trouble imagining what things could look like. If you are partnering with a school, for instance, you could paint (indoors or outdoors), work in the school garden, assist with landscaping, or help with a Home and School project that's on their list. When suggesting ideas, remember the full range of strengths you identified in your group.

Let them know that there will be leaders supervising and volunteering alongside the students, and that the event will not be a drain on staff resources, which may be spread thin. When appropriate, offer to provide supplies, such as garden tools or paint. Also, let them know that they are not expected to provide any transportation.

Be aware that many organizations will underestimate the work that your students will be able to accomplish in a given time period. In our experience with Tidal Impact, our student volunteers have typically surpassed even adult volunteers in the amount of work done.

Be as flexible as possible for the community partners. Whenever possible, accommodate times and days, number and age of youth, gender (eg., vulnerable groups may require women and girls to serve). We are here to serve. If you have a larger group, this may mean splitting up for part of the time, but that's not necessarily a bad thing.

Some organizations may be able to commit right away, while others may need to think about it or check with a committee or other staff. Coordinate a date for follow-up, and close by reaffirming the importance of their work.

We know this can be intimidating if your church does not have a history of partnering with other organizations. **Remember, you are not alone!** Undercurrent coaches are available to walk alongside you, so let us know if you need extra help or support.



What should we say if community partners ask why we're doing this?

Many community partners will be curious why students and leaders would be willing to give up their vacation to serve others.

If they ask why you are doing this, you can respond by sharing that we believe Jesus came to bring wholeness to the world, both personally and structurally. This includes building right relationships with ourselves, with each other — in our families, in our communities, and in our world — with the Land, and with God. As his followers, he calls us to join this work, so that's what we're doing.

Especially for folks who have had negative experiences with Christians and church, or who have no experience at all with Christianity, this type of explanation tends to be accessible and easily understood. When the opportunity presents itself, ask community partners why they have chosen this work as well. You may be surprised by what you hear.

What should we do if a community organization says no?

Be gracious. Some non-profits are unable to take large numbers of volunteers without stretching their staff too thin. You can still express thanks for the work they are doing to be good neighbours and to restore your community to wholeness. **Let them know they are welcome to contact you if anything changes,** express your support for them in the future, and continue to tell others about their work.



Planning for Undercurrent

Phase 1

Connect with CBAC

Join our Undercurrent Community Facebook page

- Stay in the loop about all resources and churches connected to Undercurrent.

Conversation with CBAC YF staff

- Set up a meeting to explore Undercurrent as an option for your church
-

Church Engagement Plan

Meet with lead pastor and deacons

- Share the vision for Undercurrent with your leadership and explain how this initiative can help your church join God in your neighbourhood.

Announce Undercurrent to congregation

- Inform your church early so they become familiar with Undercurrent!
-

Develop Your Champion Team

Develop a planning team of students and congregants

- Have an initial meeting with Champion Team to begin collecting ideas for community partnership ideas.
- Choose ideal dates for Undercurrent plans in your church.

Develop a community engagement plan

- Initiate meetings with potential community partners, sharing with them the vision and heart of Undercurrent.
-

Community Partnership Plan

Start Compiling a list of potential community partners and contact info

Contact potential community partners in person or by phone, and follow up with an email.

- Both are needed to ensure partners fully understand the project and have a record of it that they can share with staff members. In every conversation, emphasize flexibility and accommodation, and follow the lead of the organization. We are here to serve. Co-ordinate date for follow-up.
-



Phase 2

Develop Your Undercurrent Team

Begin promoting Undercurrent with youth and wider congregation.

- Invite people to express interest.

Develop a communication plan

- How will you let people know what is happening?
- What assets and strengths (resources) will you need from your church?

Develop a training plan

- How will your Champion Team equip all participants?
-

Make Plans for Undercurrent

Build on your Community Partnership Plan

- Confirm intentions with partners.
 - Develop a schedule.
 - Develop a budget – what will your group need?
-

Church Engagement Plan

Fundraising Event

Ask for prayer

- Put out a call to pray for the projects that the church will be doing for its Undercurrent event. 1 month before the event, put out calls to pray for each of the leaders who will be involved.
-

Community Partnership Plan

As applicable, identify key municipal by-laws

- Be familiar with the laws concerning food drives, events serving food, and gatherings in public places. As soon as possible, submit any necessary paperwork to appropriate municipal departments.

Follow up with other churches in your neighbourhood which you could potentially partner with.



Phase 3

Develop Your Undercurrent Team

Confirm participation

- Have students and other participants commit to the ministry plan and schedule

Begin team-building and leadership plan

Continue planning for Undercurrent

Stay in contact with partners

- What are you expected to bring for projects?
-

Church Engagement Plan

Champion Team led service

- Guide your Champion Team to plan and lead a Sunday morning worship service.

Family Saturday

- Many families may have more time to support a project on a Saturday. Create an opportunity for families to serve together.
-

Community Partnership Plan

Arrange onsite visit with community partners and youth group

- Depending on the context, it may not be possible for the entire youth group to visit, especially if you have a large youth group and/or multiple partners. That's okay! If an in-person visit is not possible, consider engaging in a different way:

- Hosting a representative from your partner organization at your youth group*
- Showing a video tour of your partner organization*
- Looking through your partner organization's website with your students*

Help youth and Champion team members identify people within their congregation who may have project-specific resources to contribute.

- Do you have a carpenter who could help students build a community picnic table? Maybe you have a gardener who could help landscape at a school, or someone who excels in making conversation with people they don't know. The more congregation members involved, the better. This is also an excellent opportunity to involve adults who are on the fringes of church life but who are passionate about particular issues.

Continue to fill in the blanks with partnerships

- Make a list of mini-projects that can be completed in spare moments. These could include:
 - Texting unchurched friends to encourage them*
 - Hiding painted rocks in a playground for children to find*
 - Writing brief words of encouragement on sticky notes and putting them up in public places*
 - If COVID-19 restrictions allow, delivering coffee and doughnuts to construction workers*
 - If COVID-19 restrictions allow, handing out freezies in a public place*
 - Starting a pay-it-forward line at a local coffee or shop*
 - Handing out coupons for free ice cream at a local ice cream stand (with your group picking up the tab, of course!)*
 - Putting coins into parking meters that are about to expire*
 - Picking up litter at the local playground or park*
 - Depending on the projects you have lined up and the size of your group, you may also wish to have a "wish list" project lined up with one of your community partners in case your group finishes much earlier than expected (eg., extra trail clean-up with a municipality, or extra weeding at a community garden). It is important to have contingency plans in place.*

Share contact info

- Confirm that all youth leaders and community partners have each others' contact info if they have not already met in person.

Confirm neighbouring schedule and all details

- Confirm schedule (morning/afternoon activities, which days), leaving room for contingency plans. Projects which are weather-dependent or more involved (eg., large painting projects) should be started early in the weekend to allow enough time to finish.



After Undercurrent

From Community Partnership plan

Have youth write thank you notes to all supporters from your congregation and community partners.

— Thank community partners and tell them what the experience has meant to them.

Thank youth leaders for their hard work

Share stories and photos with the congregation

Continue supporting

— Identify opportunities for church to continue to support community partners around the year (eg., promo, special projects, financial support). Remember to take a strengths-based approach. Again, ask what will be most helpful for your partner and take their lead. We are here to serve.



Final Checklist

- Confirm Neighbouring activities and times
 - Communicate final details with all youth leaders and community partners.
- Confirm potential church partnership
 - Communicate final details
- Complete final registration of participants
- Confirm schedule for Undercurrent weekend
 - Confirm meal times
 - Schedule and confirm volunteers
 - Transportation, food preparation, prayer, etc.
 - Make sure respective checks have been done
 - List back-up projects
 - Confirm technology for evening rallies (screen, internet)
 - Confirm sleeping arrangements (will people go home, will they stay at the church, etc.)
 - Confirm details for fun event
- Confirm Saturday 'Church Neighbouring Activities'
 - Identify location
 - Gather tools if needed
 - Communicate with general church population
 - Ensure that activities are kid-friendly
- Plan Sunday service

Additional Resources

Template

Introductory Email Searching for Volunteer Opportunities

Hello,

I'm writing today on behalf of ****insert name of church here****. We know that COVID-19 has affected everyone in our community, so this summer, we are participating in a regional event called Undercurrent (supported by the Canadian Baptist of Atlantic Canada). Undercurrent is all about finding ways to serve and support our communities, and will be taking place on July 8th-11th. Students and groups across Atlantic Canada will be offering volunteer help to businesses, schools, farms, and non-profits. The volunteer sessions will take place Friday and Saturday mornings, as well as on Friday afternoon and potentially Saturday afternoon.

That's where you come in. We are in search of organizations with volunteer opportunities to fill during the four days of Undercurrent. The possibilities are endless, but the work done by groups falls into six overlapping areas:

- 1) A work project in the community
- 2) Serving food
- 3) Intentionally helping a business, farm or municipality
- 4) Serving alongside another non-profit
- 5) Intentionally serving either seniors or kids and families
- 6) A give-away (pooling group resources to make, buy, or do something others would appreciate, and giving it away freely).

If your organization is interested in hosting volunteers, or if you would like more details, please contact me by email (youremail@yahoo.com), phone (**), or text (**). There are no strings attached.

Thanks for all the work you do to make ****insert name of your neighbourhood here**** a better place to live, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best regards,

your name

Include as much of your contact information as you are comfortable giving (phone, email).

Sample Thank You Note

For Youth Leaders and Community Partners (Hospice Fredericton)

Hi everyone,

Thanks again for your willingness to make this week a success. The teams who went to the clothing boutique had a blast, and the ones who stuffed envelopes did well, too. The work you do was unfamiliar to most of them when they started, but it is so valuable.

To everyone at Hospice Fredericton, thank you for your compassion and faithfulness in caring for the vulnerable and giving them dignity in the last days of their lives. We are privileged to be a part of that.

Susan, please feel free to reach out if there are any other ways we can be of service. Thanks again for being neighbours!

Yours,
Katie

