

# Meridian churches 'Love Out Loud' in their community

*By Tony Martin*  
*Associate Editor*



Lanier

"Nine years ago, one of our deacons asked a question: 'What would our city look like if our church wasn't here?' recalled Dan Lanier, pastor of Northcrest Church, Meridian. "From that, we began to talk about missions. We do missions all over the world, but we realized we needed to do missions here so we came up with Loving Out Loud, treating it like a local mission trip."

This is the ninth year the church has sponsored the city-wide event, which took place July 18 – 23. The event has grown from 43 participants the first year, all from Northcrest Church, to more than 800 people representing more than 30 churches.



Love Out Loud began as a way for Christians in Meridian to

show the love of Jesus to the community. “We developed the particulars of it from several sources,” said Wade Phillips, Northcrest Church’s executive pastor. “We looked at things done at M-Fuge and ideas from The Summit Church in Durham, N.C. We’ve developed things over the years, discovering what worked best and what didn’t.



Phillips

“Northcrest’s role is to equip people for this. We can send them out; we do a lot of planning and budgeting, but we feel like God has given us the responsibility as the large church in the city to help other churches do the missions that they want to do.”

We’ve tried to be really intentional about it not being a Northcrest thing. In our publicity, we don’t say anything about the church,” Lanier stressed. “It’s just Love Out Loud.”

The event kicked off on the evening of July 18 with a special worship service in Meridian’s historic Temple Theater. People then fanned out July 19-23 to do numerous acts of service in the community. Those acts included:



- Holding a multi-sports camp for kids at the Boys and Girls Club at Highland Park.
- Offering free car washes and prayer.
- Helping schools prepare for their upcoming year.
- Simply doing random acts of kindness throughout the city.

As they went, participants were able to share the hope of the Gospel with those with whom they came in contact.

Each day began with an 8 a.m. breakfast at Northcrest Church followed by worship, with participants determining ministry assignments before going out to serve throughout the day. Worship services were also held at Temple Theater on the evenings of July 21 and July 23.

The evening of July 20 included a "Touch a Truck" event for kids with fire trucks, police cars, and other heavy machinery for kids to see and touch.

"This is about the Kingdom," Lanier said. "That's what I'm trying to teach our people. We aren't trying to have the biggest church in the world. There'll be other churches, smaller churches, who come and partner with us. They'll see

people get saved. They'll baptize people. I know one church that hadn't baptized anyone in years, and they baptized six."



"It's not just a Northcrest or Meridian thing anymore," Phillips pointed out. "Neshoba County began a Love Out Loud last year, and this was their second year. It's been very successful. At the end of the day, we're just mobilizing people."

"This is the most exciting week for our church," Lanier added.

The guest speaker for the event was Marcus Hayes, senior pastor of Crossroads Church, Woodlands, Texas. Worship leaders were Jordan Grizzard, worship pastor at multi-campus Cross Church in northwest Arkansas, and his wife Kayla.

Hayes served on the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee with Lanier. "We found out we were kindred spirits," Hayes said. "He shared some of the mission things the church was doing and brought up Love Out Loud and asked me to speak. It's been an honor."