

## How to Incorporate Halloween into Your HTM Community Outreach

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### Go Trick-or-Treating at a Nursing Home

*"Double, double toil and trouble; fire burn and cauldron bubble..."*

Halloween is an iconic American holiday, complete with its own set of traditions. Every year, children and adults alike experience the thrill of sorting a new stash of candy as doorbells ring throughout the neighborhood and Charles M. Schulz's *It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown* plays in the background.

Historically, pastors and ministers have viewed the day of ghouls and ghosts with disdain because of its emphasis on all things wicked; but you don't have to! Here are three ideas for connecting with the community and growing your tribe as you promote a heavenly twist on the festivities.

In today's society, parents may feel hesitant about taking their kids door-to-door to collect candy. Things certainly aren't the way they used to be a generation ago, when unaccompanied youth could walk safely around their neighborhoods in the dark. A nursing home offers a new spin on the traditional practice. Residents will be delighted to see the young faces coming by to freshen up what is often a lonely environment, and kids will get the chance to connect intergenerationally. You can arrange to meet up with your congregation at a local [senior center](#). Just make sure you call ahead to find out if the center is planning to welcome in little witches and wizards that day.

## Invite the Neighborhood over for a Screening of Coco

[Coco](#) is a 2017 Disney and Pixar film about a family celebrating El Día De Los Muertos (The Day of the Dead), a Mexican holiday which coincides with Halloween. Most films about the afterlife make the spiritual realm a scary and dangerous place, but Coco is different. This tear-jerking and family-friendly film teaches children to celebrate and honor their deceased ancestors.

In a culture that is often reluctant to discuss death and dying, you may find that Coco provides a natural transition for conversations about spiritual matters. Consider inviting young families in your neighborhood who might enjoy this alternative to traditional Halloween films. After the movie, ask your guests about their own cultural practices surrounding the afterlife.



## Host a Haunted House Party

What better way to embrace the holiday than with a haunted house? If you're feeling overwhelmed, don't worry—this can be a group effort. Enlist the help of teens and young adults who will gladly transform your church basement into a room that's sure to scare even the bravest of souls. (What's great about a church haunted house is that it will draw in teens who might otherwise end up at a high school party where they will face peer pressure).

Feeling stuck? Check out this [easy guide](#) and you'll be well on your way to creating the eerie ambience that you desire. Bonus if you decide to turn the party into a [fundraiser](#) to support a [local charity](#).