

“Unlocking the Front Door...”

Church Hospitality Checklist

The following checklist is provided to help you prepare for visitors who may attend your church on any given Sunday in the church year. Many of these checklist items are gleaned from the workshops provided by Presbyterian Media Mission in preparation for “Come in Out of the Cold...” the Regional Media Campaign.

- ✓ Help your congregation understand and accept the fact that evangelism is an all-church activity! Help them to know that how they live says as much about what they believe about Jesus Christ as what they say. Your congregation’s awareness of their importance in embodying Christ to others will go a long way in helping them to respond positively to visitors who come to worship.
- ✓ If you don’t have a plan for specifically greeting visitor and following up on them after church, develop one! Have some way for recording visitors’ presence and a plan to follow up on them. Follow-up is a crucial component to effective hospitality in church.
- ✓ Make sure the burden of greeting and hospitality falls on you, not on your visitor(s)! You always take the lead when someone is a guest in your own home. Why should hospitality be any different in your church? The church is God’s house and you are God’s servants, take the lead in greeting visitors, in getting to know their names, in connecting them to others, in leading them to the coffee hour, in seeing to all their needs. They should not have to be the first ones to break the ice – ever.
- ✓ Where does your hospitality start? At the front door? In the pew? Or in the parking lot? Do members park in the best spots?
- ✓ Have your warmest members greeting visitors on Sunday morning! Many people choose this time of year to think about attending church. Let it be a friendly and engaging presence that greets them. All ushers are not the same. Who in your church family are the best at making new people feel welcome in a strange place?
- ✓ Make sure your church building is easy to get around in. Are there proper signs that are informative, clear to read and easy to follow? Are all the doors unlocked? Maybe you and your members use the side or back entrance, but new people may not know any better and try the front door (the one *nobody* uses) – is it open and well lighted? Is there someone there to greet people who enter by that door?
- ✓ Are you prepared to handle visitors with children in tow? What condition is your nursery in? Is it clean, fresh-smelling, warm, friendly and safe? Do you have children’s bulletins or worship support packs?
- ✓ Are you prepared to meet physical and health needs? Is your church fully accessible? If not, do you have an alternative plan of accessibility?
- ✓ Make sure the empty pews for latecomers are not the ones down front! Your own folks don’t like sitting there, so why make visitors do it? Have your members sit there and leave the “comfortable” spots for others. When you invite guests to your home do you make them sit in the uncomfortable chairs? No! They get the nicest seats in the room.
- ✓ Will your visitors be able to follow the service easily? What are you assuming they will know about what you do in worship (e.g. “Gloria Patri,” “Apostles’ Creed” How communion is received)? How can you assist newcomers to feel at home in the sanctuary? Sanctuary is defined both as a “holy place” and a “place of refuge or protection.” How can it serve both purposes for those visiting your church?
- ✓ Christian hospitality is a habit of the heart – it is an everyday way of being. Either it is there or it isn’t. How is your church striving to express the warmth of God’s love to all who come near?
- ✓ Finally, assume nothing about your visitors except that God loves them as much as God loves you.

Often our hospitality is based on the standard of the golden rule: “Do unto others as we would have them do unto us.” The problem with this standard is that it often stems from our own creature comforts, not necessarily someone else’s needs. The platinum standard of hospitality is a servant-model of ministry offered in Jesus’ name that asks of others, simply, “How may I serve you?”