

Are Your Visitors Warmly Welcomed?

Each time a newcomer visits your church, inwardly they are asking themselves, "How does this church meet my needs?" It is our job to make visitors feel as welcome as possible so they will return and eventually get connected. Only then, will we be able to meet their deeper needs. If you haven't already, here are a few steps you can take to ensure visitors feel warmly welcomed.

1. Put Friendly, Outgoing People in Charge of Greeting.

The first real need people have upon visiting is the need to feel welcomed. That's why it's so crucial to have the right people in the right places at church. The ideal greeter has the ability to make others feel warm, accepted and at ease.

2. Remind Regular Attendees About the Importance of Connecting with Newcomers.

People often go an entire week without seeing friends, so weekend services are a time for catching up and chatting. Be aware that this can sometimes cause newcomers to feel excluded. You might even want to suggest they set aside a few minutes before and after the service to get to know any visitors.

3. Include a Greeting Time.

Set aside a special time where attendees can greet each other. Make sure it happens at least five to ten minutes into the service so those who are a few minutes late don't miss out. It's not only important to welcome people during your worship services but also in your children's, youth, and small group ministries. Consider ways you can help new comers feel welcome in those ministries as well.

4. Don't Alienate Your Visitors

People who visit feel very awkward and self-conscious because they often don't know anyone. Don't single them out more by slapping a "visitor" sticker on them, making them stand up when everyone else is sitting, or asking them to raise their hand while other members stay put. Include everyone in your greeting time.

5. Train Helpers on the Fine Art of Welcoming

Station designated helpers in strategic places - inside the front door, near the stairs, by doorways - to help people find the nursery, classrooms or other facilities. Teach greeters and ushers to look for people who might need additional help, those with strollers and small children and/or people who need physical assistance entering the building. Give helpers permission to talk with newcomers asking questions like, "Are you finding everything OK?" or making comments like, "It's really nice to have you." But caution them about talking too long to one particular person so others don't feel ignored.

It really is simple...smiling, looking people in the eye, giving a friendly handshake, can quickly convey compassion and care. Warm welcomes start with us, the church leaders. By setting the example, we show how hospitality should be modeled.