



## **How to Make Your Church “People Friendly”**

Some of the material for this presentation was adapted from “Twelve Keys to an Effective Church” by Kennon L. Callahan. Other material was adapted from presentations made by Dr. Lou Jander of the Texas District LCMS.

God’s Church is always a welcoming place—our congregations are not always so welcoming. This presentation will help you focus on some of the little things we can do to help people feel more welcomed in our congregations. In many ways, the following suggestions amount to removing the obstacles that sometimes get in the way of those who want to find a warm, welcoming place to worship and grow.



## It Starts With An Attitude

- **“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness....He humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross!”**

• **Philippians 2:5-8**

Welcoming the “unchurched” and “dechurched” begins with an attitude. We must first of all help our members recognize that they have been welcomed freely and wonderfully into God’s Church because of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Apart from Christ, we are no better than the worst sinner that might walk into the door of our church. Our theme song is “Chief of Sinners Though I Be, Jesus Shed His Blood for Me.” Recognizing that we have been served, we can become the servants that Jesus calls us to be.



# Jesus and the “Sinful” Woman

**John 8:1-11**

Using this slide is optional. If time allows, you might want to study the story of Jesus and the sinful woman (John 8:1-11). Some points to note about this story include:

The story does not appear in the oldest manuscripts, though it certainly is in character for Jesus.

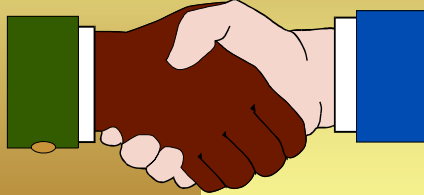
How does one catch some one “in the act” of committing adultery? Just this simple phrase reduces the Scribes and Pharisees to peeping Toms. Where is the man who must have also been caught? Many scholars think this was a set-up.

What is Jesus writing in the dirt? An interesting suggestion: He was writing the names of the mistresses of the Scribes and Pharisees present. While wildly speculative, that would certainly explain why they walked away one at a time without further comment.

The point of the story in the context of this presentation is that Jesus welcomed this sinful woman into his presence. Jesus came for sinners. As Luther once said, “We are all beggars telling other beggars where to find food.” This attitude among your members will go a long way toward making your church a welcoming place.



## Three Aspects of a “People Friendly” Church



- **Inviting**
- **Welcoming**
- **Assimilating**

These three aspects of a “people friendly” church will be discussed in upcoming slides.



## **Inviting People to Visit**

Are you intentional?

This slide introduces the first of the previous three aspects: Inviting



## Identify the Entry Points

- **Worship**
- **School**
- **Small Groups**
- **Sports**
- **Children's Ministry**
- **Service Activities**

Many churches think only of inviting people to worship. Often, people find other programs of the congregation to be easier points of entry. Discuss the ones listed here and allow the group to add more.



## Inviting

- **Always keep the “customer” in mind.**
- **Use your local print media liberally.**  
**Weekly papers are especially cooperative.**
- **Produce quality brochures and place at city hall, realtors, day care centers, etc.**
- **Include worship times and a map in your Yellow Pages ad.**
- **Be visible in community activities and events--giving not taking!**

This slide gives you just a few ideas of how to be an inviting church. Keep in mind that a personal invitation from a member is still the best way to invite. However, the ideas listed here will also keep your congregation before the eyes of those you wish to invite.



## Inviting

- **Include features of interest to the community on your web page.**
- **Submit newsworthy stories to the local media. Look for the “hook.”**
- **Address people’s felt needs.**
- **Make sure your witness to the community is always winsome, not mean-spirited.**

More and more, people are checking on the Internet before they choose a church. Make sure that your presence there illustrates your desire to reach out to the community.

You can use local weekly newspapers liberally. They will usually print almost anything you send them. Include pictures. The “hook” is the interest-grabbing aspect of a particular news story.

“Address people’s felt need”—This means that you’ll need to know your community very well. What can you do that will touch them where they hurt or need help and put you in a position to be able to share the Gospel with them? For example, many churches located in urban and suburban settings have found that church operated day care centers provide them with many more contacts with people in their communities.

With regard to the last point on this slide, congregations frequently speak out loudly about what they oppose and are very quiet about what they support.



This slide introduces the second of the three aspects of a “people friendly” church.



## Be Prepared for Visitors

- **Plan for visitors.**
- **Minimize the number of “dissatisfied customers.”**
- **Treat visitors as a guest in your home.**

Plan for Visitors: Many congregations hope for visitors but fail to plan for them. How will you greet visitors when they enter the building? How will they participate in worship? Will you give them any gifts as mementos of their visit?

Minimize “dissatisfied customers.” In the retail world, the average satisfied customer tells five other people he had a good experience. The average dissatisfied customer tells 12 other people about his bad experience. Discuss with the group the factors that can lead to creating dissatisfied customers in the church. For example, if everyone ignores the visitor, he will probably become a dissatisfied customer. If the visitor can't find his way through the worship service, he will probably become a dissatisfied customer.

How would you treat a guest in your home? How do those concepts relate to the way you would treat a visitor at your church?



## **Eleven Moments of Truth for Visitors**

- #1 - Receiving an invitation to church**
- #2 - Driving by the church building**
- #3 - Walking to the front door**
- #4 - Entering the front door**
- #5 - Meeting people**
- #6 - Experiencing ministries and service**

This slide and the next one describe eleven key points at which visitors will get a good or a bad impression of your church.

#1 – How were they invited to attend in the first place? Do your members like being at your church? If not, they are probably not inviting their friends and may, in fact, be discouraging them from visiting your church.

#2 – How does your church look from the road? Is the landscaping neat and inviting? Can you tell where the entries are? Does the sign give enough information to be inviting?

#3 – Can visitors find the proper door? Are the sidewalk and steps in good repair? Do people smile and greet them as they approach the church building?

#4 – Are they greeted warmly when they enter the church? Do you have someone ready to help those who need to find the Sunday school rooms, nursery or other facilities?

#5 – Does the greeter introduce them to at least one other person or couple?

#6 – Are they given a brochure describing the various ministries and services available at your church? If not, are they told of these ministries and services?



## Eleven Moments (Cont.)

**#7 - Entering the sanctuary**

**#8 - Participating in the worship service**

**#9 - Exiting the worship service**

**#10 - Contacting people the first week**

**#11 - Contacts in the months ahead**

#7 – Can they find a place to sit in the sanctuary? Does the usher help them find adequate seating. Is the sanctuary a warm, inviting place to worship?

#8 – Can they find their way through the worship service? If order of worship is in the hymnal, is there adequate direction given for the visitor to follow along at all times? Is the order of worship printed out in its entirety?

#9 – Are visitors invited to any fellowship time that might exist after the service? Do members take time to greet the visitors after the service?

#10 – Do visitors receive a card/phone call/visit during the first week?

#11 – How do you follow up on your visitors after the first week?



## **Think Like a Visitor**

- **Would you be impressed by the facility and landscaping?**
- **Would you be able to find the rest rooms without asking?**
- **Would you feel comfortable leaving your child in the nursery?**
- **Would you understand what takes place during the worship service?**

The questions on this slide and the next slide are self-explanatory and expand on the previous two slides.

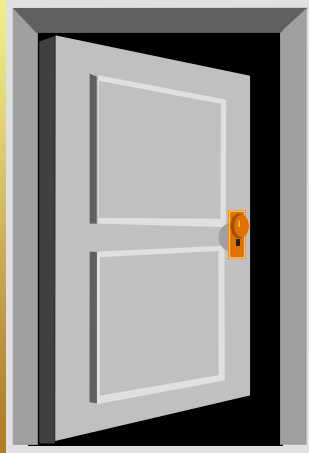


## **Think Like a Visitor (Cont.)**

- **Would you be embarrassed or pressured during your visit?**
- **Would you be greeted and accepted as you are?**
- **Would you come back next week?**



## Facility Issues



- **Parking**
- **Landscaping**
- **Décor**
- **Clean Rest Rooms**
- **Directional Signs**

No one will come to your building because you have adequate parking, attractive landscaping, inviting décor, clean restrooms and clear directional signs. But they might not come back if you don't. Inadequacy in these areas can become barriers to the unchurched.



**Greeting and Identifying Visitors**

- **Greeters**
- **Badges, Stickers, Ribbons, Etc.**
- **Public Acknowledgement**
- **Guest Book or Card (remember e-mail addresses)**

How do you treat visitors when they come to your church? Do your greeters welcome them?

Have you tried asking them to wear a subtle but obvious indicator that they are visitors—a sticky backed cross or dove, a ribbon?

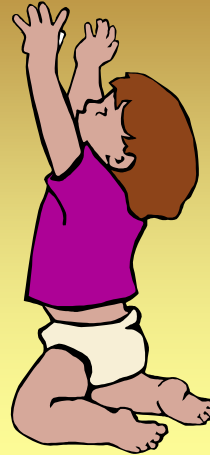
Do you greet them publicly in the service? There are differing schools of thought on this one and public acknowledgement of your visitors may well work better in a smaller church.

How do you get the names, addresses and e-mail addresses of your visitors? Have you thought of sending out a brief e-mail greeting to visitors right away on Sunday afternoon?



## Child Care

- **During Worship?**
- **Clean and Safe?**
- **Competent Supervision?**
- **Clear Policies and Emergency Procedures?**
- **Training for Child Care Workers?**



If visitors to your church include parents with children, the above questions will be important.



## Worship

- **Do people participate?**
- **Can visitors follow the service?**
- **Announcements and/or worship on PowerPoint?**
- **Is it characterized by excellence?**
- **Does it flow well?**
- **Do people bring friends?**
- **Do children feel included?**

These questions about worship will have a bearing on whether or not your worship service is visitor friendly.



## What do you give your visitors?

- **Visitor Information Packet**

Do you give any gifts for mementos to your visitors? A minimum gift would be some sort of visitor information packet. There is a sample on the next slide.



- WOMEN & MEN
- WORSHIP/MUSIC
- COUNSELING
- CHURCH STAFF
- WELCOME

- YOUTH
- SMALL GROUPS
- CHILDREN
- ADULT ED
- SCHOOL

Immanuel Lutheran Church welcomes you! We feel our special ministry is to reach out to families—like yours—with the love of Christ and to help them...

Founded in 1879, Immanuel Lutheran School offers excellence in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, elementary and junior high education in a Christian environment. Immanuel Lutheran School is accredited by...

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## What do you give your visitors?

- **Visitor Information Packet**
- **Coffee Mug**
- **Pen**
- **Grape Jelly**
- **Loaf of Bread**
- **Refrigerator Magnet**



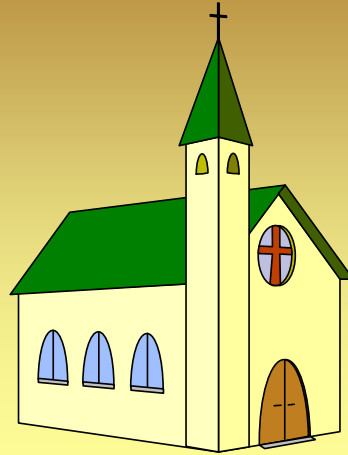
Special food items are popular gifts. Many churches drop by later in the day to bring the visitor a loaf of bread. One church with a vineyard on its grounds gives visitors a jar of grape jelly.

There is some obvious merit to giving visitors something with your church name, address, e-mail and web site address on it—preferable something that is difficult to throw away, like a mug, pen or magnet.



## What Other Information is Available for Visitors?

- **Information Kiosk or Visitors' Center**
- **Informational Video**
- **Interactive Computer in Lobby**
- **Map of Facilities**
- **Other Brochures on Parish Ministry**
- **Electronic Brochure on CD**



This slide adds additional ways that you can communicate with your visitors.



# **Assimilating the Visitor**



## **Immediate Follow-up**

- **Gather e-mail addresses of visitors.**
- **E-mail visitors after their first visit.**
- **Send personalized letters/post card.**
- **Make a short personal visit within the first week.**
- **Extend a special invitation to future events of particular interest.**
- **Gather information from visitors.**

How you contact that visitor in the week after his visit may have a great impact on your ability to minister to that person in the future. The points on this slide are thought-starters for your group.



# Visitors' Information Card

Christ Lutheran Church in Little Rock, Arkansas mails out this questionnaire to all first time visitors. Because it is on a self-addressed postage paid postcard, they get a very good return and, consequently, have a good idea about how visitors view their congregation. The questions they ask are:

- I attended Christ Lutheran Church on:
- How did you find out about Christ Lutheran Church?
- What did you notice first?
- What did you like the best?
- What did you like the least?
- What can we offer to further serve your needs?

They then give the visitor the option of furnishing name and address or remaining anonymous.



## **Longer Term Follow-up**

- **Maintain a “Friends” e-mail and mail list--send weekly or monthly e-mail and a quarterly “Friends” newsletter.**
- **Maintain web page content for visitors.**
- **Help returning visitors find their “niche”--give them a job where they can use their gifts.**
- **Incorporate them into small groups.**

This slide puts forth ideas for longer term outreach to those who have come into contact with your ministry.



## For Discussion

- **What can your church do to invite more people to meet Jesus?**
- **What can your church do to be more welcoming to visitors?**
- **What can your church do to follow up on visitors?**

These questions can serve as discussion starters for congregational groups.



**Because of Jesus, God is  
“People Friendly”**

**The Proof is in the Cross!**