

DEVELOPING

YOUR

WELCOME

MINISTRY

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DEVELOPING YOUR WELCOME MINISTRY

Years ago my wife and I moved to Fort Worth, Texas. As young adults we were excited about being in a new city. We had been members of a great church where I served on staff in San Antonio. We moved to Fort Worth so that I could attend Southwestern Seminary. There were a number of great Southern Baptist churches in both Fort Worth and Dallas. We hardly knew where to begin in choosing churches to visit.

We had been told about a wonderful church in the Fort Worth area while still in San Antonio. When we moved we decided to attend there first. I'll never forget the first Sunday we attended. As we approached the entrance of the church we were met by an older gentleman. He asked us where we were from. I enthusiastically told him that I was a new seminary student at Southwestern. I can still remember his reply over a quarter of a century later. He said "Oh, another seminary student" in a sarcastic way. We never returned to that church but I'll never forget that experience.

How is your welcome on Sunday morning? It is a somewhat frightening thought that a person's first impression can be a lasting impression. It is even more frightening to think that a person's impression of the church may come from the first person they meet.

Greeting people is biblical. Greeting is not just an extra program or ministry provided by the church. It is a part of who we are to be as a local church family in the process of fulfilling God's mission.

The New Testament speaks many times of the early church greeting one another "*Greet the friends by name*" was the instruction in III John 14 (KJV).

YOUR WELCOME SETS THE TONE AND CARING

ATMOSPHERE FOR EVERYTHING THAT IS EXPERIENCED

AT CHURCH. IT CAN MAKE AN ETERNAL DIFFERENCE

TO THOSE WHO NEED CHRIST. ARE YOU COMMITTED

TO PROVIDING THE VERY BEST WELCOME?

CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE OF CARING THROUGH YOUR SUNDAY MORNING WELCOME

Being prepared to greet on Sunday morning not only helps us to discover information about newcomers, but also helps them to connect with us. It does not take people long to determine their impressions about our church and whether they will return.

Don't assume that everyone knows where to go on Sunday morning. *MOST NEWCOMERS DON'T KNOW WHERE TO GO.*

SOME IDEAS

- Provide guest parking at the most convenient place to enter the buildings where newcomers will be greeted and provided with directions. Reserve parking for guests with clear directional signs. Consider having a friendly greeter at the parking area to welcome them.
- Provide a welcome center at a location strategic to worship and Sunday School. Provide an attractive sign that blends well with your buildings. At the welcome center ask guests to fill out an information card. You can have these printed with carbon copies. All family information should be completed on one card. Basic information should include name, address, and phone. Adults may circle age categories such as 25-30, 35-40, 45-50, etc. Ages and grades of the children should be included. Age designations will help find the proper classes. Keep a master copy at the welcome center for follow-up.
- Your friendliest greeters should work at the welcome center. Information about the church and a list of all Sunday School classes, locations and age groupings should be provided.
- Greeters should be available at the welcome center to take guests to their class. They will escort the family to children's classes first and introduce the children to their teachers. More information is usually needed in the preschool areas. Give teachers a copy of the guest information. Write down the room numbers of where the children are in class for the parents.
- Escort adults to their class. Introduce them to the teachers and others. Ask someone in the class to be their host and escort them back to the children's classes after Sunday School and then to the worship service. Make guests feel welcomed and at home.
- Provide greeters at all main entrances. Greet members, attendees and guests. Place your friendliest people at main entrances to greet everyone who enters. This will set a positive tone for the entire day.
- Train greeters and leaders to be friendly and helpful to guests.

CHECK LIST FOR AN EFFECTIVE WELCOME

- Are there adequate signs that direct guests to parking when people enter your campus?
- Is there guest parking at the most convenient places for people to enter your buildings, be greeted and assisted? Do your signs read “Visitor” or “Guest Parking?” Guest parking communicates that we want you to be one of us.
- Are there greeters at the entrance where guests will arrive? Do they greet and assist guests as they exit from their cars or at the main welcome entrance?
- Are there greeters at each of the main entrances? This sets a positive tone for everyone attending and communicates caring.
- Do you choose the most positive and friendly people to be your greeters? First impressions matter. Remember that many people determine whether they will return to a church even before they attend worship or Sunday School.
- Do you provide a welcome center?
- Is there a directional sign at the guest parking area that directs people to the welcome center?
- Is the welcome center easy to find as you enter the building? Are greeters trained to take guests to the welcome center?
- Do you provide the following at your welcome center?
 - Information desk
 - Sign indicating this is the welcome and information area
 - Greeters who are trained to take guests to Sunday School or worship
 - A Sunday School class directory with a map of the building
 - A family information form with carbon copies. One copy is kept at the welcome center; a copy is given to each teacher when family members are escorted to their Sunday School class. One copy is given to parents with the room numbers of where their children are during Sunday School
 - Basic welcome information about the church such as a brochure or guest packet with gifts.
- Are greeters trained? Do they know how to greet, escort guests and the location of Sunday School classrooms? Do they know to leave guests with the appropriate person in a Sunday School class who will take care of them?
- Are greeters easy to identify on your campus? Do they wear name tags?

- Are people in your adult Sunday School classes prepared to take care of guests after the class? Will they help them locate their children? Will they escort them to the worship service and perhaps sit with them? Will they seek to be a friend to guests after their visit to the church?
- Is there an effective welcome to guests during the worship service? Are guests made uncomfortable or embarrassed by having the members to stand while they remain seated and given a name tag to further point them out? Even worse, are guests asked to stand? Do we try to make guests comfortable and at ease during worship just as if they were a guest in our home?
- Is there a way to record information about those who attend worship such as a tear-off portion of the bulletin?

What is our evaluation of our welcome ministry?

How can we improve our welcome to guests and attendees?

