

Keeping Those You Reach

Level 1: Guest-Readiness

1. Signs

- Identify what signs are needed.
 - Consider asking someone who has never been to the church before to come to the property and make observations about where signs are needed.
 - Key areas include restrooms, nursery, auditorium/sanctuary, fellowship hall, children's church, church office, classrooms, etc.
 - Plan where each sign will be hung and the direction the arrows will point.
- Order and hang the signs.

2. Sunday Morning Greeters

- Recruit a Guest-Ministries Coordinator or Team.
- Recruit church members who are friendly and helpful.
- Conduct a "Moments of Truth" evaluation (*see Appendix A: Moments of Truth*).
- Train them to serve.
 - Share the purpose of the ministry.
 - Explain the role of a greeter.
 - Warm greeting.
 - Give a church bulletin/program if available.
 - Offer of assistance including description and location of church ministries and willingness to accompany guests to their desired location.

2A. Welcome Center (especially applicable if there is a primary entry point into the church facility)

- Develop plans in consultation with the Guest-Ministries Coordinator or Team.
 - What information will be displayed?
 - How will the Welcome Center be staffed?
 - What are the responsibilities of the Welcome Center volunteers?
- Purchase/construct the Welcome Center.
- Implement Welcome Center plans.

3. Follow-Up

- Develop a plan to determine how guests will be contacted following their visit.
 - How will guest information be gathered?
 - How will guest information be made available to those following up?

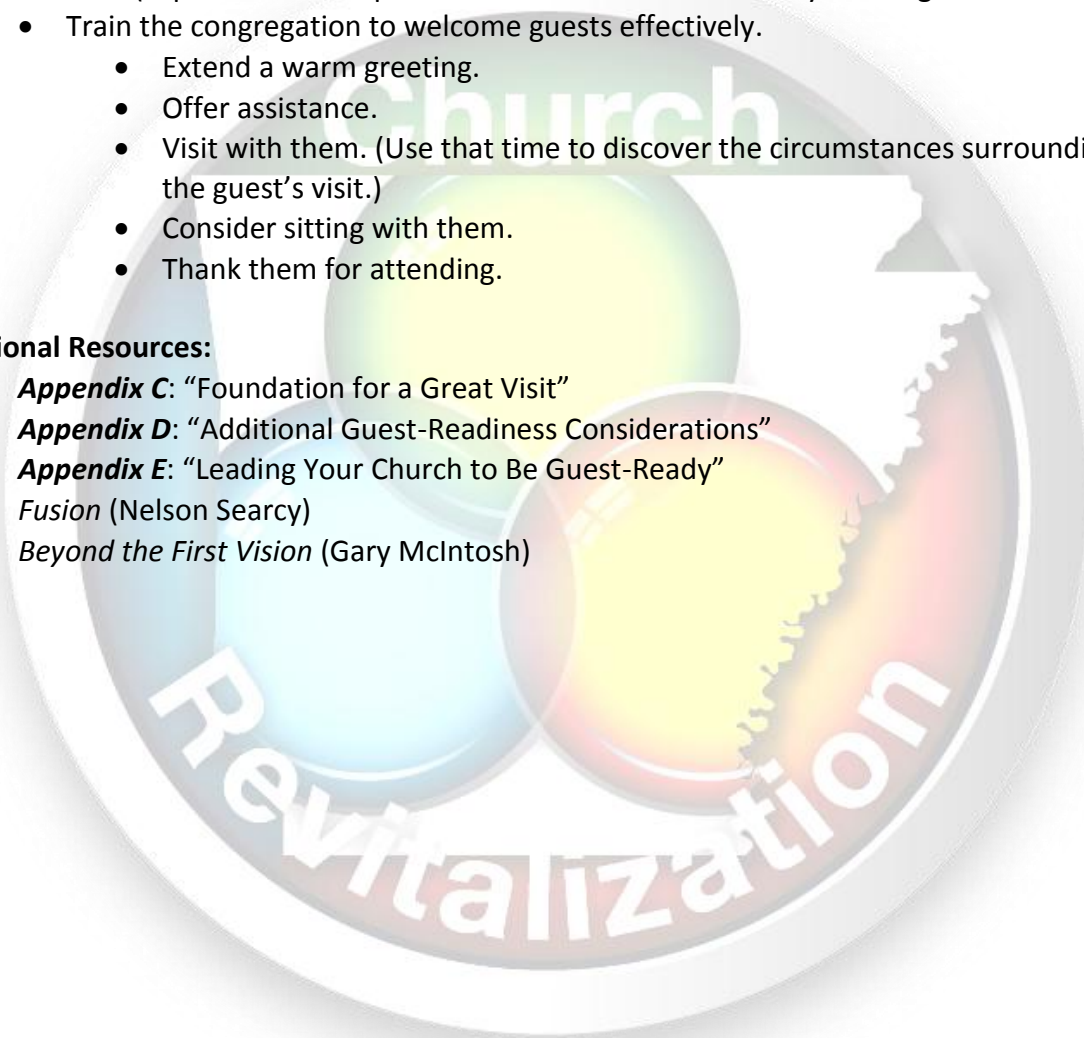
- How will follow-up occur (phone, visit, letter, email, etc.)?
- How will follow-up contact be reported?
- Identify who will follow up, and train those volunteers on the procedure to be used.
- **See Appendix B: “Guest Follow-Up.”**

4. Every Member a Greeter

- Pray that God would give the members of the church a genuine love for those who visit. (Explain that their presence means God is most likely working in their lives.)
- Train the congregation to welcome guests effectively.
 - Extend a warm greeting.
 - Offer assistance.
 - Visit with them. (Use that time to discover the circumstances surrounding the guest’s visit.)
 - Consider sitting with them.
 - Thank them for attending.

Additional Resources:

- **Appendix C:** “Foundation for a Great Visit”
- **Appendix D:** “Additional Guest-Readiness Considerations”
- **Appendix E:** “Leading Your Church to Be Guest-Ready”
- *Fusion* (Nelson Searcy)
- *Beyond the First Vision* (Gary McIntosh)



Level 2: New/Prospective Member Orientation

1. Define Church Membership

Saying church membership matters is one thing. Describing why it matters is another. The question is, “What distinction is drawn between a member and a non-member?” The assumption is that anyone is free to attend, give, and grow in your church. What changes when individuals join? Being able to answer this question effectively will determine whether or not membership truly matters in your church.

Take time to define the importance of membership. You may wish to consider answering the question, “What are the characteristics of a church member?” Those include:

- Attendance
- Stewardship
- Unity
- Service
- Spiritual Growth
- Accountability

A church also needs to consider how these expectations are measured in members’ lives. What, if any, ramifications are there if these characteristics are absent? While holding members accountable for what is expected of a church member can lead to conflict, not holding members accountable causes membership to lose its significance.

2. Determine the Process of Becoming a Church Member

A church should never assume that prospective members know how to join the church. The church needs to explain clearly and frequently how a person becomes a member and why membership is important. This requires a church to spend time determining the process by which a person joins.

- Will the church *require* prospective members to attend a pre-membership class or will new members be *encouraged* to attend instead?
- What will mark the completion of the membership process?
 - Membership class attendance?
 - Formal presentation before the church?
- How is the membership process communicated to prospective members?

3. Create a New/Prospective Membership Class or Interview

Once the process is determined, the church should create a strategy for helping new/prospective members understand the church’s beliefs, vision, and methodology. Depending on how many potential new members your church has, options include:

- A one-on-one interview with prospective members
- A one-time, one or two-hour prospective members' class
- A multi-week prospective members' class
- ***See Appendix F: "Pre-Membership Class Outline."***

4. Celebrate Membership

We celebrate what we value. If a church truly values church membership then they should celebrate it. Celebrate a person joining the church through baptism. Ideas include:

- Baptizing on special days
- Encouraging saved family members or close friends or fellow small group members to stand in the baptistery with the one being baptized
- Showing a video testimony of the person being baptized
- Applauding after the baptism
- Giving the one baptized a framed certificate of baptism and an 8 x 10 picture of the baptism
- Throwing a party for those who were recently baptized

Churches can also celebrate when individuals join by letter or statement of faith. Ideas for celebration include:

- Giving new members a certificate of membership and an 8 x 10 picture of them with the pastor
- Creating a "Celebrating Our New Members" bulletin board where pictures and names of new members are displayed
- Planning a meal with the pastor and his family for new members who have joined recently

Additional Resources:

- ***Appendix F: "Pre-Membership Class Outline"***
- ***Appendix G: "New Members Matter"***
- *Membership Matters* (Chuck Lawless)
 - Also see <http://www.realtimeleaders.e-quip.net/presentations/show/2825> for a *Membership Matters* training presentation
- *I Am a Church Member* (Thom Rainer)

Level 3: Personal Ministry Discovery

The Goals:

- Assist members in identifying potential places of service within the church.
- Help members identify ministry opportunities that are enjoyable and beneficial.

1. Identify the Tools/Assessments to Use.

- Option 1: Spiritual gift assessment
- Option 2: Informal assessment based on past experience, likes & dislikes, ministry opportunities, etc. (*See Appendix H and I*)
- Option 3: P.L.A.C.E. (www.placeministries.org)

2. Identify Ministry Opportunities within Your Church.

- Make a list of every ministry opportunity that currently exists in your church.
- Brainstorm other potential ministry opportunities.
- Classify those ministries according to perceived spiritual maturity.

3. Create a Plan for How the Process Will Work.

- Training Option 1: Sunday evening or Wednesday evening training series in fellowship hall
- Training Option 2: Train Sunday School teachers and/or small group leaders to lead their groups through the discovery process.
- Training Option 3: One-day retreat
- Finalize a plan for how to connect church members with ministry opportunities.

4. Clearly Communicate the Purpose and Plan.

- Explain the purpose of leading the church toward personal ministry discovery. Attempt to anticipate the questions the congregation will have and answer them in the presentation.
- Clearly explain the process that will be used (costs, timeline, commitment level of participants).

5. Plan and Lead a Dream Session.

- Lead members to envision enjoyable/fulfilling ministry.
- The dream session could be the first meeting of the series or the first session of a retreat.
- Members envision and discuss various aspects of ministry.
- Members are encouraged to prayerfully identify a ministry in which they would consider serving.

6. Lead the Church through the Assessment.

7. Using the Results, Recruit and Equip Members to Serve in Ministry Positions.

- The invitation to serve must be personal. (Extending a public invitation to serve is rarely successful.)
- Take the time necessary to train those willing to serve, and also encourage them to meet with others who serve in that ministry in other churches.
 - Ask – “What will success in this ministry look like?”
 - Ask – “What will keep them from succeeding in this ministry?”
- Allow those trying new ministry opportunities the freedom to say “no” to that ministry after a trial period.

- Allow those trying new ministry opportunities the freedom to fail. Instead of saying, “I knew I should have just done that myself,” affirm those who failed, restore and coach them, and free them to try again.

Additional Resources:

- *PLACE* (www.placeministries.org)
- *SHAPE* (Erik Rees)
- *The Big Book of Job Descriptions* (Gospel Light)
- ***Appendix H “Your Ministry Experiences”***
- ***Appendix I “Finding Your Niche”***
- *Volunteer Revolution* (Bill Hybels)
- Free spiritual gift assessment from Lifeway Resources at http://www.lifeway.com/lwc/files/lwcF_MYCS_030526_Spiritual_Gifts_Survey.pdf



Level 4: A Healthy Sunday School

Research indicates that participation in a Sunday School class or small group is essential to keeping people active in your church. The church that minimizes the Sunday School/small group ministry will struggle to successfully retain new members. Sunday School is the most common form of small group ministry. A healthy Sunday School enjoys transformational Bible study, ministry to class members and prospects, an intentional outreach plan, and a desire to start new classes.

Healthy Sunday School is such a vital part of church revitalization that it has its own design guides. See “Foundational Sunday School Strategy” or “Advanced Sunday School Strategy” for information about revitalizing Sunday School.



Level 5: Member Connections Team

The Member Connections Team oversees the implementation of the church's assimilation process. The formation of this team is the highest intensity level change in this design guide because it requires intentional, persistent focus on the congregation's assimilation process by a specific group within the church.

8-STEP PROCESS:

1) Determine the team's specific duties.

- Ask – “What goals should this team accomplish?”
 - Short-term goal example: 10% increase in member involvement in ministry
 - Long-term goal example: Every member with *one* “job” or ministry within the congregation (which fosters excellence)
- Ask – “What do this team's duties need to be in order to accomplish the stated goals?”
- Ask – “Does our church already have other ministries/committees/teams that address some assimilation issues? If so, can these ministries be consolidated, or do they need to be separate?”
- Two options for the team based on how you answer those questions:
 1. A small team (3-5) that simply oversees the responsibility of connecting members to ministry positions within the church's overall ministry plan.
 2. A large team (8-15) that collectively oversees the church's comprehensive assimilation plan. This team divides into sub-groups with specific responsibilities such as guest-readiness, follow-up, new/prospective member orientation, and connecting members to ministry opportunities.

2) Guide the church in seeing the need for and potential of this ministry.

- Provide the biblical rationale for each element of the team's function.
- Share the need for each element of the team's function.
- Describe the future you desire for the church related to this ministry.
- If necessary in your ministry setting, formally lead church to approve formation of this team (members to be named later).

3) Recruit members of this team.

- Pray for guidance in identifying and recruiting team members.
- Identify team members based on their desire and ability to serve effectively in this ministry.
- Personally recruit.

4) Present team to the church and affirm the importance of this ministry (cast vision).

5) Meet with the team.

- Cast vision.
- Select a team leader.
- Divide into subgroups and select group leaders (if utilizing option two).
- Set goals.
- Plan a course of action to meet goals.
 - Gather resources, visit other churches who excel in this area, etc.
 - Determine the best starting point.

6) Launch the ministry.

7) Evaluate effectiveness and make necessary improvements.

8) Celebrate.

- Baptisms
- New members
- Long-tenured members
- Long-serving members
- Recent members (one to five years)
- Specific members serving in particular ministries
- Members beginning to serve in ministry

OPTION 1: The Small Team

- **Team Goal:** To assist members in finding their place of ministry within the church.
- **Team Duties:**
 - Identify all current ministry opportunities within the church and who ministers in each.
 - Brainstorm additional potential ministry opportunities. (See *The Big Book of Job Descriptions* for ideas and ministry descriptions.)
 - Determine the level of training and spiritual maturity needed for each opportunity.
 - Identify new and uninvolved members.
 - Prayerfully extend personal invitations to new and uninvolved members to participate in specific ministry opportunities.
 - Plan and oversee the training necessary for each member to be effective in the ministry.
 - Oversee background checks as needed.
 - Following a preset period, evaluate the ministry with the member in the areas of effectiveness and personal satisfaction. Encourage and guide as needed. (If the member enjoys no satisfaction from that ministry, attempt to match him/her with a different ministry opportunity to try.)

- Help maturing members move to tasks of greater responsibility and impact.

OPTION 2: The Large Team

- **Team Goal:** Oversee the implementation of the church's comprehensive assimilation process including guest-readiness and follow-up, new/prospective member orientation, and connecting members to ministry opportunities.
- **Team Duties:**
 - Envision the process in which a person must participate in order to move from being a first-time guest to a fully-engaged church member (first visit, follow-up, second visit, follow-up, third visit, follow-up, connecting with a small group/Sunday School class, getting to know people, developing friendships, entering the church membership process, finding a meaningful place of service).
 - How does this team help a person through this process?
 - Guests Sub-Group – See "Guest-Readiness" portion of this document.
 - Member Orientation Sub-Group – See "New/Prospective Member Orientation" portion of this document.
 - Members to Ministry Sub-Group – See "team duties" under Option 1 above.

Additional Points to Consider:

- Consider inviting members to commit to serve in a ministry for three to six months, with the opportunity to continue or resign following that period.
- Consider what would need to change in the church to move toward the goal of every member having *one* role/ministry within the church. (The one ministry does not include lifestyle ministry that is every Christian's responsibility such as evangelism, mentoring, giving, etc.)
- Consider what to do when no one is willing or eager to serve in a particular ministry, especially a ministry on which the church has placed high value.
- If there is a shortage of ministry volunteers, contemplate why that is the case. Is it because the members are not committed to Christ, or is it because they are not committed to the vision/direction of the church?

Additional Resources:

- **Appendix J: "10 Ways to Get New Members Connected"**
- PLACE (www.placeministries.org)
- *The Big Book of Job Descriptions* (Gospel Light)
- **Appendix H "Your Ministry Experiences"**
- **Appendix I "Finding Your Niche"**
- *Volunteer Revolution* (Bill Hybels)
- *Volunteer Leadership Series* (Group Publishing)
- *The Christian Life Profile Workbook* (Randy Frazee)

Appendix A: Moments of Truth (MOT)

(Adapted from pages 32-38 in *Beyond the First Visit* by Gary McIntosh)

MOT 1: Viewing the Website

MOT 2: Driving by the Church Building

MOT 3: Walking to the Front Door

MOT 4: Entering the Front Door

MOT 5: Meeting People

MOT 6: Experiencing Ministries and Services (includes childcare)

MOT 7: Entering the Sanctuary

MOT 8: Participating in the Worship Service

MOT 9: Leaving the Worship Service

MOT 10: Being Contacted during the Week

Assignment 1:

- 1) Along with the rest of your welcome team, take an 'awareness tour' of your church.
- 2) In the most objective way possible, make observations about your church on these "moments of truth" elements. Attempt to draw honest conclusions based on what you have seen and heard, not on what you hope is true.
- 3) Record your findings, good and bad, and begin working toward finding realistic solutions.

Assignment 2:

- 1) Visit another church where you know no one (on vacation, intentional visit, etc.).
- 2) Evaluate the church's guest-friendliness based on your personal experience.
- 3) Record your findings, good and bad, and report back to the welcome team at your church.

Appendix B: Guest Follow-Up

The Goal: To do everything possible to make certain guests believe that your congregation genuinely wants them to return.

Gathering Guest Information: Carefully consider how best to gather information from guests. There are a few options to consider:

- *Everyone* in the service fills out and submits a registration card which can include prayer requests (guests will not want to be singled out by *not* filling out the card).
- Place a clipboard on each pew for everyone sitting on that pew to sign (have a place for name and contact information).
- Provide guest information cards in the pews which guests fill out and leave.
- Additional Considerations:
 - It may be best to avoid saying “Fill out the card so that we can have a record of your visit.” Truth is, guests probably do not care if we have record of it.
 - Assuring guests that you will not make an unannounced visit to their home may increase the likelihood that they will fill out their contact information. However, only promise that if no one in your church is going to break that promise by placing an unannounced visit.

Three Proposed Follow-Up Strategies (depends on your community and experiences):

- Strategy 1: *Non-Visit Follow-Up*
 - Within 36 hours of a guest’s visit, either email or call, thanking the guest for visiting and inviting him/her back.
 - Within 72 hours of a guest’s visit, mail a hand-written note to the guest again thanking him/her for visiting and inviting him/her back. (In this note you may even wish to consider including a small gift such as a \$5 gas card or Starbucks/Sonic card.)
 - See alternative non-visit option in *Comeback Churches* (pg. 114).
- Strategy 2: *Unannounced Visit to the Home*
 - Within 36 hours of a guest’s visit, make a visit to the guest’s home.
 - Keep the visit very brief, consisting of three main points: thank them for attending, ask if there is anything you can pray for, and invite them to return (do not go inside).
 - Later in the week write them a hand-written note thanking them for the visit and affirming that you prayed for their stated need.
- Strategy 3: *Scheduled Visit Follow-Up*
 - Within 36 hours of a guest’s visit, either call or email, thanking the guest for visiting and asking if there would be a good time to visit or meet at a neutral location (Starbucks, McDonalds, Subway, etc.).
 - If they decline, invite them back, and write them a hand-written note later in the week.

Appendix C: The Foundation for a Great Visit

“You never get a second chance to make a first impression.”

Note: Phase 1, 2, or 3 is designated in parentheses. Phase 1 refers to elements that need to be addressed immediately. Phase 2 needs to be addressed as soon as possible. Phase 3 should be addressed when resources become available.

Exterior of Church Building:

- Is the yard mowed? (1)
- Are the flower beds/flower pots maintained? (1)
- Are weeds growing from the cracks in the parking lot and sidewalks? (1)
- Is any part of the exterior in need of repair (1) or updating? (3)
- Do you have an attractive, updated website? (2)
- Are there greeters outside the buildings ready to welcome and assist visitors? (2)
- Are some parking spaces designated for guests? (“Guest Parking,” “First-time Guest Parking”) (2)
- Are there signs outside directing guests to their destination? (Sanctuary, education, children’s area, office, etc.) (2)

Interior of Church Building:

- Are there greeters at the doors? (1)
- Is the interior of the church clean? (Floors, windows, restrooms, classrooms, nursery, etc.) (1)
- Do you provide a packet for first-time guests? (Contact info, schedule, events, map, guest card, etc.) (1)
- Is there a “Welcome Table” in the foyer with greeters stationed there? (provides information about your church) (3)
- Are there signs directing guests to their destination? (Sanctuary, education, nursery, children’s area, restrooms, fellowship hall, etc.) (2)
- Is any part of the interior in need of repair (1) or updating? (3)
- Is the nursery area clean (1), well-lit, and updated? (2)
- Do you provide a gift to first-time guests? (gift bag or basket with church information and something the guest might enjoy—cookies, sweet bread, a pen, coffee mug, note pad, etc.) (3)

Church Members’ Attitude:

- Do your church members *want* new people to join? (1)
- Do your members go out of their way to make guests feel welcome? How? (1)
- Do your members visit with guests *after* the service? (1)
- Would any of your members ask a guest to move from *their* seat? (1)
- Can the majority of your members assist someone who appears to need help? Would they? (2)

Follow-Up:

- Is there a strategy for obtaining contact information from guests? (1)
- Do you have a plan for immediate follow-up? (1)
- Who will contact the guest? (pastor, deacons, layman?) (1)
- When will they be contacted? (the sooner the better – ideally within 48 hours) (1)
- How will they be contacted? (phone, letter, email, doorstep visit, invitation to meet, etc.) (1)
- What if they do not return? (consider contacting them to asking *why*—requires thick skin!) (3)



Appendix D: Additional Guest-Ready Considerations

- Refer to visitors as “guests.” “Visitor” sounds like a tourist while “guest” sounds like someone who has been invited to attend.
- Welcome guests at your church as though they are responding to your invitation to attend...it is very likely they are!
- Have a public “manners” discussion within the congregation two or three times a year. This provides an excellent opportunity for members both to be reminded of the importance of guest-friendliness and to share changes being made in that area of ministry.
- Sit in the middle of the pew or row of chairs. When people sit at the ends while leaving the middle empty that pew is closed to guests.
- In your Sunday School classes proactively engage guests in conversation and invite them to your class.
- Ten Foot “Hi” Rule: Say “hi” to everyone who gets within ten feet of them.
- 5-Minute Rule: Visit with guests for the first five minutes after the close of the service before visiting with each other. (Whoever closes the service could say, “Remember the 5-minute rule” at the close of the service.)
- Welcome guests during the “welcome” time in the worship service.
- Being “friendly” only accounts for about 20% of an effective welcome.
- Plan out what will be said during the formal welcome in the worship service. Determine what would be beneficial for a first-time guest to hear at that time.
- At some point during the service, explain that the offering time is primarily for members and that guests should feel no obligation to give. You may also wish to encourage guests to place their completed guest card in the offering plate as their contribution.
- If you show up at a guest’s door uninvited, insist on visiting at the door instead of going inside.
- Consider inviting someone to meet for coffee or a soft drink at a neutral location instead of showing up at their house uninvited.
- Think through your nametag strategy. Have them ready in your Sunday School classes so that everyone can wear them if a guest attends. Do not expect guests to wear a nametag when no one else is. Also, weigh the pros and cons of having greeters wear nametags. (It might give the impression that the people with nametags are required to be nice.)
- Treat guests like you would want to be treated.

Appendix E: Leading Your Church to Be Guest-Ready

I have had some memorable experiences as a guest in churches. At one church a grumpy usher seated my family and I on the front row of their half-empty sanctuary *after the service had started*. Another time my wife and I attended a large church where no one said a word to us before or after the service. That church had a good follow-up plan for guests, but unfortunately the damage was already done. The good news is that neither of these experiences occurred in Arkansas churches. The bad news is that many churches struggle with being intentionally guest-friendly. The following four considerations, taken from Nelson Searcy's *Fusion: Turning First Time Guests into Fully Engaged Members of Your Church*, provide great insight into specific ways you can lead your church to be guest-friendly.

1. How will the first-time guest be *greeted*?

Within the first seven minutes of guests' arrival at your church, they already know whether or not they are open to the possibility of returning. What does the church yard and building exterior look like? Is there a close parking space available? Is there a friendly person wearing a genuine smile standing outside each entrance, eager to greet and assist guests? Is there a friendly person standing at a Welcome/Information Center, ready to greet newcomers? These elements all play into how well a guest is greeted upon arrival.

2. How will the first-time guest be *directed*?

A warm smile is essential when welcoming newcomers to your church, but guest-friendliness does not end there. We must not assume that a person who has never been inside the church building knows exactly where to go. As guests enter they will probably have several questions: Where is the children's ministry area? Where are the restrooms? Where does my Sunday School class meet? Where is the worship center? The more effectively your church answers these questions the better the guest's experience. Signs are an important way of effectively directing guests to desired locations. Make certain the church's signs on the exterior and interior of the property are highly visible and well-maintained. In addition, equip your greeters to be knowledgeable about the layout of the church property and where ministries meet. The greeters should offer to accompany guests to the area they are seeking, thus relieving guests of the stress of roaming the halls looking for their destination.

3. How will the first-time guest be *treated*?

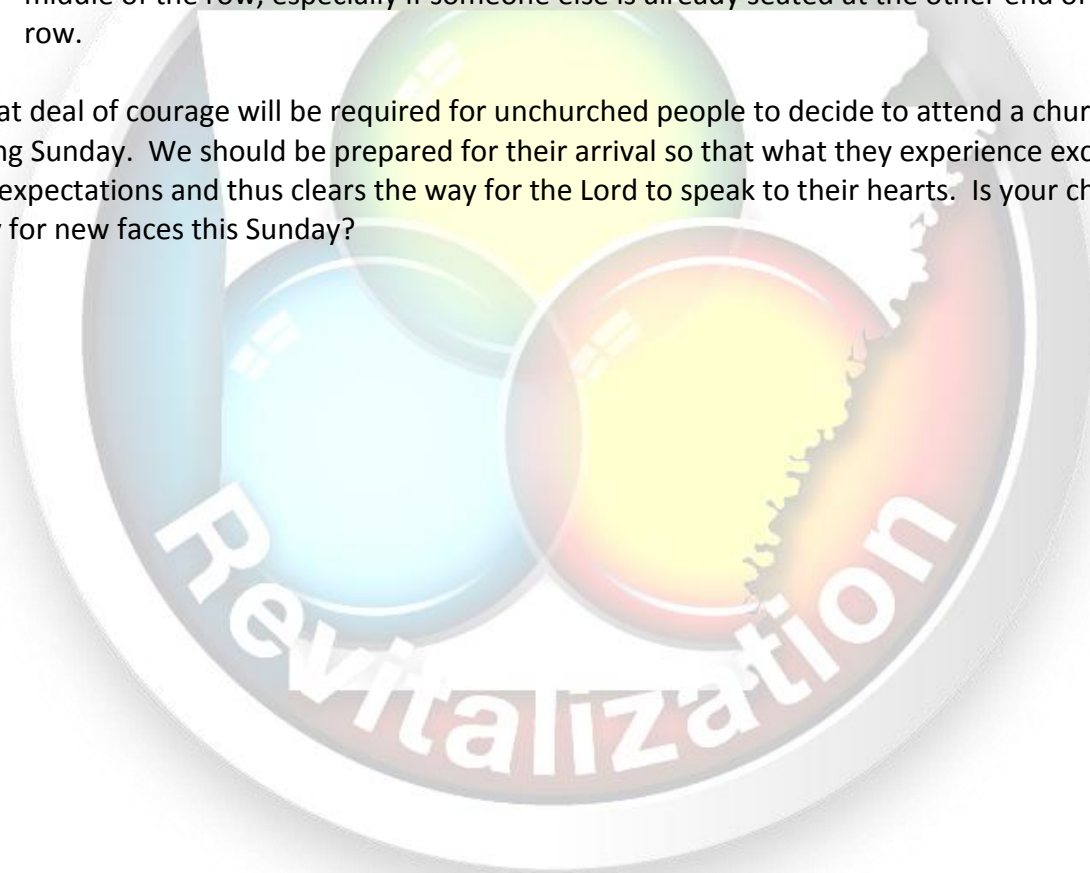
Church members need to understand how important it is to be kind and welcoming to a guest. Newcomers can often discern whether or not the church family truly values their presence. Therefore, the church needs to be conscious of how guests are treated. Welcome guests at church the same way you would welcome them if they showed up at the doorstep of your home in response to a personal invitation. It is very likely that they came to church in response to someone's invitation. You may wish to consider providing coffee and donuts. Teach church members the "10-Foot-High Rule," where they say "hi" to everyone who gets within ten feet of them, and the "First-and-Ten

Rule,” where they spend the first ten minutes after the close of the service visiting with guests who attended the service.

4. How will the first-time guest be seated?

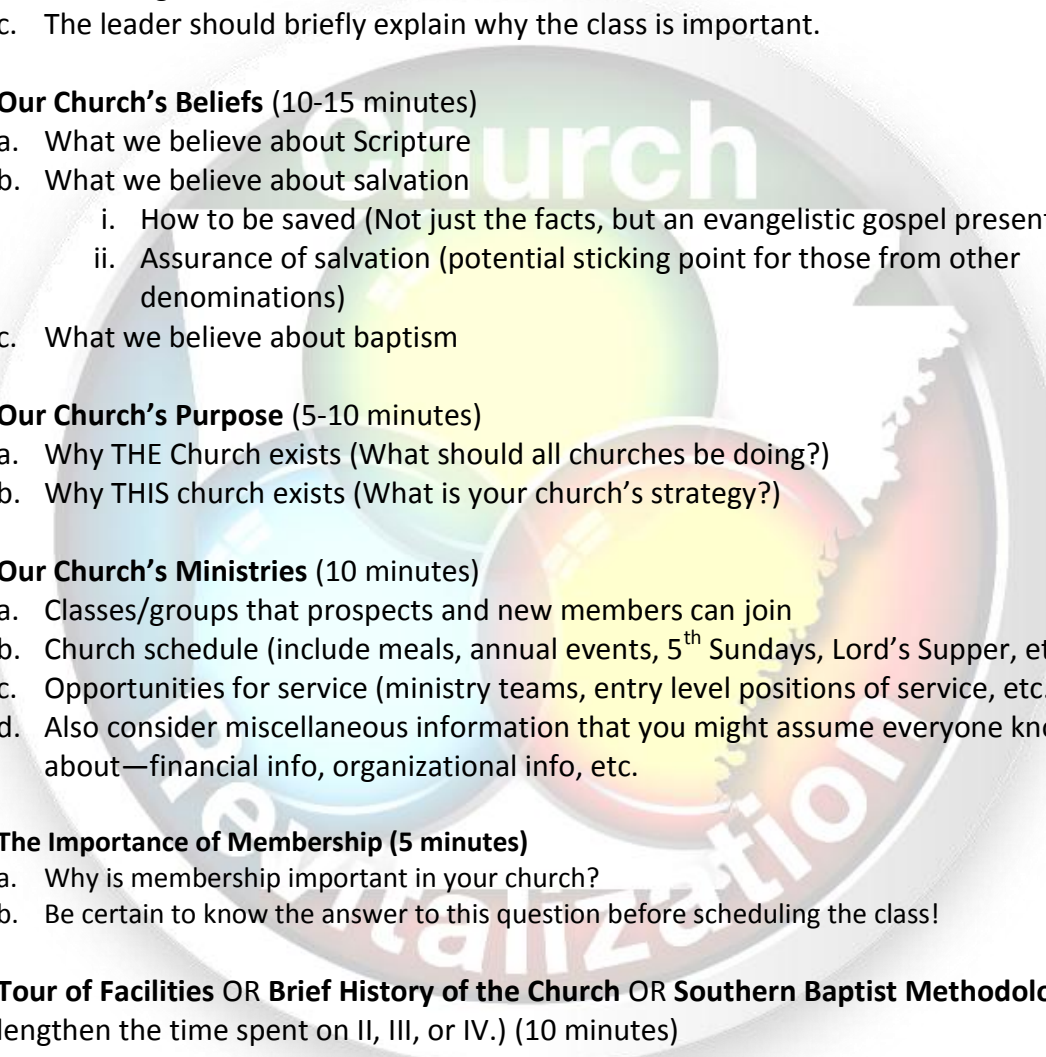
I have spoken with several individuals who have had the unpleasant experience of being instructed to move from their seat, because the seat they were in belonged to someone else. Also, we have all tried finding a seat in an auditorium where everyone was sitting on the ends of the rows while leaving the middle empty. Nelson Searcy recommends recruiting ushers with the responsibility of seating everyone who attends worship. That may or may not work for your church at the moment. Regardless, make sure your church members understand the importance of providing guests with a positive first experience. That requires members to joyfully (or at least willingly) find another seat if someone is sitting in their normal seat. Also, members need to be willing to sit in the middle of the row, especially if someone else is already seated at the other end of the row.

A great deal of courage will be required for unchurched people to decide to attend a church this coming Sunday. We should be prepared for their arrival so that what they experience exceeds their expectations and thus clears the way for the Lord to speak to their hearts. Is your church ready for new faces this Sunday?



Appendix F: Pre-Membership Class

(Simple, one or two-hour pre-membership class)

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- I. **Introductions** (5 minutes)
 - a. Let those present introduce themselves and share some information about themselves.
 - b. The leader(s) takes a moment to introduce himself and thank those present for attending.
 - c. The leader should briefly explain why the class is important.
 - II. **Our Church's Beliefs** (10-15 minutes)
 - a. What we believe about Scripture
 - b. What we believe about salvation
 - i. How to be saved (Not just the facts, but an evangelistic gospel presentation)
 - ii. Assurance of salvation (potential sticking point for those from other denominations)
 - c. What we believe about baptism
 - III. **Our Church's Purpose** (5-10 minutes)
 - a. Why THE Church exists (What should all churches be doing?)
 - b. Why THIS church exists (What is your church's strategy?)
 - IV. **Our Church's Ministries** (10 minutes)
 - a. Classes/groups that prospects and new members can join
 - b. Church schedule (include meals, annual events, 5th Sundays, Lord's Supper, etc.)
 - c. Opportunities for service (ministry teams, entry level positions of service, etc.)
 - d. Also consider miscellaneous information that you might assume everyone knows about—financial info, organizational info, etc.
 - V. **The Importance of Membership** (5 minutes)
 - a. Why is membership important in your church?
 - b. Be certain to know the answer to this question before scheduling the class!
 - VI. **Tour of Facilities OR Brief History of the Church OR Southern Baptist Methodology** (or lengthen the time spent on II, III, or IV.) (10 minutes)
 - VII. **How to Join Our Church** (5 minutes)

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- *What will we call it?* [A suggested title would be "Discovering _____ (church name)"]
- *When will we offer it?*
 - Usually the best time to offer the class is during the Sunday School hour.

- The church has the option of making it a two-hour class, which would allow a more thorough examination of the above topics. Below is a proposed schedule for a two-hour class:
 - Session One (during Sunday School)
 - Morning Worship Service
 - Lunch provided for those in the class
 - Session Two
 - NOTE: childcare would need to be provided during the second session.
- *Will it be mandatory or recommended for membership?*
 - That is an issue your church must decide, but usually a prospective member who refuses to participate in a new member class will not end up being a *active* member in the church.
 - We suggest simply saying, “If you are interested in joining our church, we invite you to attend our one-hour “Discovering _____” class which meets the first Sunday of every month at _____. At that time you will learn about our church and about how to join it.”
- *Who will lead it?*

Membership Matters by Chuck Lawless is a great book on membership classes in churches.



Appendix G: New Members Matter

The Benefits of a New Member's Class

"How can we close the back door of our church?" This is one of those eternal questions every church has to grapple with at some point. Churches that grow very quickly seem to have more of a struggle with this than churches who have more steady growth. A church can be reaching and baptizing many people, but if it is not intentionally thinking about how it is going to keep them, then the back door can get as big, or bigger, than the front door.

There are many reasons for people not sticking with a church after they join and there are several things a church can do to help remedy this problem. One of the tools many churches are using is a New Member's and/or a New Believer's class. These classes help stem the tide of people joining and not staying.

So what are the major benefits of starting a new members' class? Is a New Member's class worth the effort? What needs to be covered in a new members' class? How does this new member's class need to be structured and organized?

1. **Communication on the front end is better than conflict on the back end.** Churches are finding that the more they communicate about their church to new members the less likely misunderstandings are to occur and conflict arise. With so many people moving from church to church, the New Member's class provides an opportunity for the new members, and the church, to see if they are compatible. Prevention is always better than intervention.
2. **Communication on the front end also surfaces gifts, passions, and leadership qualities.** New Member's classes can also provide an opportunity for a church to see how God has gifted these new members and to glimpse their passions and skills. Ministries in the church are always more effective when people serve in positions where they are gifted, passionate, and equipped. This is a great place to spot potential workers and leaders. It is also a great place to highlight opportunities for service. When people find a place of service, they are far less likely to leave a church.
3. **It is an opportunity for relationships to be built.** One of the most difficult things for new members coming into a church is finding friends. New members do not merely seek friendly churches. They want friends. Win and Charles Arn note that most people who become inactive church members do so within the first year (Arn, *The Church Growth Ratio Book*, 23-4). The primary reason for inactivity is that they have not built enough friendships. If a new member can connect with five or more people in that first year, then the likelihood of them becoming inactive is reduced tremendously. A New Member's class provides instant connection with a number of people from the start.
4. **Opportunity for Discipleship.** A New Member's class also provides an opportunity to walk through the basics of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. It is an opportunity to

communicate the church's expectations of its members as they seek to follow Jesus together. The beginning of the discipleship process is the best place to set the expectation level for members, not after they have been members for a while. It is also a great place to plug people into a Sunday School class or small group. It is an opportunity to help people find a place of service. The New Member's class also provides an opportunity to talk to new members about stewardship. All of these things are aspects of discipleship and will help lead people to become fully functional followers of Jesus.

Content of a New Member's Class

What type of information needs to be communicated in a New Member's class? Chuck Lawless, in his book *Membership Matters*, puts content into two categories: "informational" and "instructional." "Informational" content examines church leadership, polity, ministry opportunities, etc "Instructional" content refers more to the introduction of key doctrinal/theological issues, beliefs and practices. Both facets are important and need to be covered.

1. Informational Issues

Church Structure/Leadership – An opportunity to introduce the staff and other key leaders and present the ministry focus and function of each leader. This is a great way to begin connection between new members and the leaders of the church.

Church Vision and Direction – A discussion of the plans for the future of the church in regards to focus, ministry, staffing, and other general vision issues. This is also a great time to talk about the decision-making process in the church. Are decisions made according to a congregational decision-making process, Leadership Team/Council of some kind, or by the church staff? This decision making process will impact the vision and direction of the church and how the vision is achieved and communicated.

Expectations of Members – Church growth leaders (Rainer, Stetzer, Barna, etc. . .) are showing that the churches with higher expectations of their members tend to sustain their growth and function in a healthier way than churches with low expectations. What are the expectations for each church member concerning small group participation, giving, ministry involvement within the church and without, etc.? The more this is communicated up front the less likely problems will arise.

Ministry Opportunities – New members need to be made aware of ministry opportunities both inside the church and outside the church. Finding a place of service in the church goes a long way to keeping new members as long as the tasks they are given are seen as significant. New members need to be made aware of where they can serve, not only in and for the church, but also in and for the community.

Others – There may be other issues unique to your church that you would like to communicate

here. The more information given the better.

2. Instructional Issues

Salvation – Every new member's class needs to cover the topic of salvation. How does a person become a Christian? What is the nature of salvation? What are the results of salvation both now and for eternity? There may be new members coming into the church who are unsure of their salvation, and this is a great place to clarify some struggles they may have.

Church Ordinances – As more and more people change from one denomination to another, it is important to communicate what your church believes about Baptism and the Lord's Supper. There is much diversity even among Southern Baptists on these ordinances, so take the time to communicate your belief and practice on these two ordinances.

Spiritual Disciplines – The more encouragement new members have to build spiritual disciplines into their lives, the stronger their faith will become. Cover not only the importance of prayer, Bible study, worship, evangelism, giving, etc., but also the practical aspects of each discipline. The more these disciplines are modeled the more effective the impact will be.

Spiritual Gifts – Every believer is endowed with Spiritual gifts when they receive the Holy Spirit. Take time to encourage new members and help them discern how God is gifting them. Give them opportunities to exercise their gifts in ministry inside and outside the church.

Basic overview of the Church's major beliefs – If the church has adopted a statement of beliefs concerning the major doctrines of the faith, take an opportunity to do a quick overview of what you believe about each one. The Baptist Faith and Message would be a good guide for this. There may be a new member who has not been a part of a Southern Baptist church before.

The Cooperative Program – One issue that could come up in either the informational section or the Instructional section would be a discussion of the Cooperative Program. Many people within the SBC do not understand the importance and impact of the Cooperative Program locally and abroad, much less people coming into the denomination for the first time. Include information about relationship with the local association and state convention.

A new member's class will not be sufficient in and of itself to give complete understanding of each of the issues addressed above, but it will give a fine introduction to the church's beliefs and practices. The more a church can communicate who it is and what it believes on the front end, the healthier the church will be. The church will be certain of its identity and where it is going. Each new member will be able to understand better the nature of the church in which they have chosen to be a part and also what part they will play in the ongoing strengthening of the church.

Structuring a New Member's Class

Churches and church families carry extremely busy calendars, and sometimes it is difficult to add one more thing to the busyness. How can a church begin to disciple new members and make sure their first steps are straight and true without overloading them or neglecting them? The church must see discipling new members as a priority or the new members won't see it as a priority. Often, the way a new believer/member starts has a large impact on how they finish. Every church needs to understand that discipleship is not automatic and that discipling new members/believers is the church's responsibility. This is an ongoing process that involves more than just curriculum. There needs to be intentionality in everything a church does, and discipling their new members is no exception. How can a church structure a New Member's class to begin the discipleship process with new members and be effective and intentional about it without overloading an already busy schedule?

The Structure

The structure of the New Member's class depends on the information you want to convey. Listed below are four basic approaches to structuring and scheduling a New Member's class. There needs to be time for relationship building between the new members and the staff/key leaders in all four approaches. The identity of the church, expectations of the new members, and opportunities for ministry are important issues to cover as well. A plan for spiritual growth beyond the New Member's class needs to be explained to each new member. New believers need instruction in the first steps of the discipleship journey and more seasoned Christians need to know the opportunities they have to strengthen their relationship with Christ.

Four Basic Models

- 1. Orientation luncheon/banquet** - The orientation/luncheon model is a quick and easy introduction to the church and its ministries. It is convenient for everyone. Most people can commit to a two hour luncheon banquet following Sunday morning worship. It can be offered many times throughout the year. Most churches will offer this once a month or once a quarter. It's a great way for people to have an introduction to the church, what it believes, and how it functions in a relatively short period of time. Sharing a meal with new members is a great way for them to get connected with one another and for them to connect with the staff and key leaders. The one caution is that this can only be an introduction for new members and not seen as a complete introduction to the church and the Christian faith.
- 2. Two Hour Sunday Morning Class** - This approach incorporates the New Member's class on Sunday morning during Sunday School and Worship. Most people will be at church on Sunday morning already, so maximize that time and do a New Member's class all in one day. Like the orientation luncheon or banquet, information can be communicated in a relatively short period of time, and almost everyone should be able to attend. Without a lunch involved, more information about the church, its ministries and opportunities for service, and its beliefs can be covered with this approach. If done on a Sunday morning this class can serve as a natural transition into Sunday School. The one caution is that the pastor and some of the staff will have difficulty participating during both Sunday School and worship.

3. Weekend Class – This strategy offers complete new member training in a weekend retreat type format.

Once again New Member training can be done in a relatively short period of time, over one weekend, opening up the possibility of more people participating. Taking a couple of hours on Friday night, maybe coupled with a meal, and finishing up by noon on Saturday is a great schedule for communicating a lot of information and much more detail about the church and a relationship with Christ. There is more time for each new member to get to know one another and also more opportunity for each new member to get better acquainted with the pastor, staff and key leaders. The major difficulty with this model is getting people to give up one weekend for the class. The reality is that it is only one weekend though, which should help.

4. Multi-Week Class – This is the most comprehensive approach, conducted over a four to eight week time-span either through Sunday School or as a small group study. One primary advantage of doing a multi-week class is the amount of information that can be covered over the course of a few weeks. More time can be spent on all facets of church life and the Christian life. New members will have a lot more time to process the information they are receiving and also more time to ask and have specific questions answered. This approach will require more of a time commitment from new members, but if those expectations are laid out clearly before they join, this shouldn't be an issue. This model can be done as a New Member's Sunday School class or small group and can help them transition into an ongoing class or group. There is greater opportunity for significant relationships to form as members work through this process over several weeks. The more significant relationships new members build, the more likely they are to stay in the church. Regardless of which approach your church adopts, let experienced believers come alongside these new members to be encouragers to them. Those encouragers then become one more significant relationship the new members have. There is no replacement for life-on-life discipleship especially in the lives of new believers and members. Jesus called us to make disciples, and the better the start, the better the finish.

Appendix H: Your Ministry Experiences

LIST ONE: List the experience you have had serving in the churches you have been a part of:

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1) | 5) |
| 2) | 6) |
| 3) | 7) |
| 4) | 8) |

(Use the back if necessary)

LIST TWO: List tasks/roles you do or would enjoy doing at this church (regardless of who is serving in that role now and including tasks or roles that do not currently exist at this church):

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1) | 4) |
| 2) | 5) |
| 3) | 6) |

LIST THREE: List tasks or roles in which you have participated in the past that you *did not enjoy*:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

LIST FOUR: List your strengths (i.e. what you enjoy doing and/or what you feel God has gifted you to do):

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

Appendix I: Finding Your Niche

Check the boxes beside *any* ministry opportunity you might enjoy
(elaborate on specifics if you desire)

WORSHIP:

- ☐ Greeter
- ☐ Choir
- ☐ Play instrument(s): _____
- ☐ Usher (offering)
- ☐ Assistant sound system operator
- ☐ Children's Choir director
- ☐ Children's Church helper

OUTREACH:

- ☐ Visiting/Outreach team leader
- ☐ Children's visitor (enjoy visiting Children)
- ☐ Youth's visitor (enjoy visiting Youth)
- ☐ Adult's visitor (enjoy visiting Adults)
- ☐ Visit people who visited our church
- ☐ Visit unchurched prospects
- ☐ Plan outreach opportunities (for church)
- ☐ Plan evangelistic gatherings (for unchurched)
- ☐ Outreach Coordinator for your S.S. Class
Which class _____
- ☐ Mission trip coordinator
- ☐ Mission trip participant (local, state, U.S.)
- ☐ Mission trip participant (international)
- ☐ Sunday Van driver
- ☐ Wednesday Van driver
- ☐ Cookie & Sweet Bread baker (to give away)

DISCIPLESHIP:

- ☐ Nursery teacher or helper (circle)
- ☐ Extended Session teacher
- ☐ Preschool children teacher or helper (circle)
- ☐ 1st-3rd Grade teacher or helper (circle)
- ☐ 4th-6th Grade teacher or helper (circle)
- ☐ Prepare snack for kids Wednesday evenings
- ☐ Vacation Bible School (VBS) Director
- ☐ VBS Leader – What age/activity _____
- ☐ VBS Helper – What age/activity _____
- ☐ Junior High boys' teacher or helper (circle)
- ☐ Junior High girls' teacher or helper (circle)
- ☐ Senior High teacher or helper (circle)
- ☐ Adult 1 (approx. 18-30) S.S. teacher
- ☐ Adult 2a (approx. 30-45) S.S. teacher

- ☐ Adult 2b (approx. 46-60) S.S. teacher
- ☐ Senior Adult S.S. teacher
- ☐ Substitute S.S. teacher – Which class _____
- ☐ Bible study leader/teacher
- ☐ Mentor to a spiritually younger Christian

FELLOWSHIP:

- ☐ Host a group in your home (not lead it)
- ☐ Coordinate Adult 1 S.S. class fellowships
- ☐ Coordinate Adult 2 S.S. class fellowships
- ☐ Coordinate Senior adult activities
- ☐ Coordinate *Single Mrs.* activities
- ☐ Coordinate small groups
- ☐ Host new/prospective members in your home
(for a meal & fellowship time)

MINISTRY:

- ☐ Cook for others
- ☐ Visit shut-ins
- ☐ Visit in nursing home
- ☐ Visit patients in hospital
- ☐ Organize a prayer group (to meet in homes)
- ☐ Organize a prayer chain
- ☐ Prayer warrior (*eager* to pray for/with others)

MISCELLANEOUS:

- ☐ Bulletin
- ☐ Newsletter
- ☐ Men's ministry leader or helper (circle)
- ☐ Puppets
- ☐ Sign changer
- ☐ Word Processing
- ☐ Power Point Presentations
- ☐ Print and distribute directories
- ☐ Take pictures (directory & misc.)
- ☐ Set up/take down tables and chairs
- ☐ Clean up after meals
- ☐ Decorate church building
- ☐ Organize bulletin board displays
- ☐ Organize rooms/areas for greatest efficiency
- ☐ Landscaping
- ☐ Other: _____

Appendix J: Ten Ways to Get New Members Connected

Being a new church member can be a little intimidating. I know because I have been one. My family and I moved from western Arkansas to Benton, and shortly thereafter we joined a great church in the area. Research and personal experience have taught me that it is vital for new members to genuinely connect to the church if they are to continue as active members. Consider these ten ways your church can help new members enjoy the kind of connection that makes your church *their* church too.

1. Establish Genuine Relationships.

New members will not connect to your church if they do not form genuine friendships. Therefore, church members need to take the initiative to build relationships with new members. For example, learn their names, sit with them at a church gathering, and go out to eat together. People can usually tell when they are loved, and a church is far healthier when the routine Sunday morning “it’s good to see you” comment is accompanied by actions that prove you mean it. The bottom line: *the following nine ways to connect new members matter little if your church does not value them as friends.*

2. Provide a New Member Packet.

A new member packet is a valuable tool for informing new members about your church. The packet could be a folder, a three-ring binder, or bag. It should contain information that your church considers valuable. For example, it might include information such as beliefs, organizational structure, church purpose/vision/mission/goals, contact information, gospel presentation, spiritual gifts survey, potential areas of ministry, church history, and a directory.

3. Encourage Connection to a Sunday School Class or Small Group.

Active participation in a Sunday School class or small group is perhaps the best way for a new member to connect to the church. It is within that group setting that friendships are formed and each person is cared for. Do not assume that a new member will automatically attend a Sunday School class. Pray that God will give your Sunday School classes a genuine desire to include new members, and encourage them to invite new church members to class fellowships and other informal gatherings in an effort to help them feel comfortable and wanted within the group.

4. Distribute a Picture Directory.

A picture directory is an excellent resource for helping a new member connect. It enables the new member to put faces to names and to clarify family relationships within the church without having to ask. Make sure your church uses a directory format that allows for periodic updates. For example, at the end of each year you could distribute additional pages which have on them the pictures of everyone who joined the church that year.

5. Maintain a New Member Bulletin Board.

Picture directories help new members learn current members’ names, but a new member bulletin board helps the current members remember the names of the new members. On the bulletin board post the names and color photos of new members. Place the board in a highly visible area in the church so that people can glance at it as they pass by. You may also wish to print their names and photos in the church newsletter.

6. Wear Name Tags.

This is a very simple way to help a new member connect. One major obstacle to relationship-forming conversation is the inability to remember other members’ names. Imagine how much it

would help the new member engage in conversation if he or she did not have to worry about remembering others' names. (It would probably help long-time members too!) At the very least, you could have permanent or disposable name tags on hand within your Sunday School class to use when a guest or new member starts attending your class.

7. Identify Entry-Level Tasks.

New members want to feel needed and valued. In order to accomplish this, a church needs to consider identifying tasks that are specifically suited for new members. Examples include such tasks as serving as greeters, taking up the offering, serving in the nursery (background checks should be mandatory), assisting in VBS, and singing in the choir. It is important to note that few new members will volunteer to serve, so plan on personally recruiting them for specific service opportunities, and then show your appreciation in a way that leaves them with a desire to continue serving.

8. Forge Intentional Friendships.

Recruit godly individuals and couples in your church that would enjoy being *assigned* to new members for the purpose of befriending them and helping them connect. (Take gender and life-stage into consideration.) This could include showing them around church facilities, familiarizing them with the community if they are new to the area, helping them learn other members' names, and having them over for a meal.

9. Offer a New Member's Class.

There are several benefits to having a new member's class in your church. One of the main benefits is that it provides an excellent opportunity to help new members understand how best to connect to the church. During the class, explain the value of being a connected member. Also, provide other information that will help the new member connect, such as Sunday School, small group options, and potential areas of service.

10. Create a New Member Team.

Your church may wish to consider creating a New Member Team. This team would be responsible for developing and implementing your church's strategy for intentionally connecting new members to the church in the ways mentioned above.

Unfortunately, connecting new members to the church does not happen automatically. It takes effort. Help your church do everything it can to make a *disconnected* member the exception, not the rule.