

ASSIMILATION

Helping guests become family is not automatic!

***WHEN THEY ARE GUESTS: *finding out who they are*

- + Guest cards: 10-25% will sign and turn in. A few more with the tablet passed down the row.
- + Welcome center, or line to meet the pastor: A few more will come to this, but it must be close and easy, not at the front of the worship room. Someone must host and give the “gifts” out and get names and email!
- + “Coffee with the pastors,” or “Pizza....” A monthly or every other month reception will catch more people, another percentage.
- + Lunch after the last service: Some of the others will stay if they know it will only be an hour and they will meet the pastors and get a chance to ask questions.

Important: Each of these ministries has a Point Person on staff who cares for and leads this area – probably the same person for all of these. But then each one must have a volunteer Ministry Manager (single or couple) who take care of details and getting publicity out and hosting and getting names

***“FIRST CALL”

This is crucial and overlooked. Who calls the guests to say the church’s happiness about the visit, to see if there are any questions, to ask timidly if they would like to have coffee with a staff member to know more about the church, to invite back?

These people must be trained to be listeners, to be sensitive to any needs, and to keep any information confidential. None of this, “Guess who visited our church!” to others.

The Ministry Manager for this can train several others to make these calls or send the emails or hand-written cards or drop off the freshly baked cookies

or loaf of bread, as some churches do. But always with warmth and awareness that anything pushy will be a turn-off and detriment. Obviously, we need names and addresses to do this!

***INTRODUCTION CLASS

For many churches this is the membership class – but consider that as a serious step that might scare some. Why not a one-time or two-three times class on Saturday after 9:30 or Sunday morning if you have multiple services. The good of Saturday or Sunday evening is that the pastor can attend and help to present. People want to know more about the church. And here as in the membership class, true salvation should be explained carefully – much more than “ask Jesus into your heart.” Some who try church for the first time, or who are “lapsed” church people, need to get the real issue of Biblical faith.

Cautions: Do not attach a commitment to this. It is introductory and to get to know the church and feel (important word here) that the church cares about them. Do not allow this to be cold facts or hosted by a logician. Again, of course, a Ministry Manager (by definition a volunteer) who “owns” this and carries the details so pastor can major on teaching and love.

***SALVATION-CHRISTIAN GROWTH-BEGINNING DISCIPLESHIP

Consider offering a short set of meetings or breakfasts with content and QA related to real facts of salvation and growth. This is especially important for new converts, people we all pray and hope will be part of our new friends for the church.

This is indeed a crucial time for those who have just become sure followers of our Lord, especially if it started in the class or with people of the church and led to taking this course.

A strong hope would be that some might join a group of 5-7 men or 5-7 women for ongoing two-year discipleship groups

***MEMBERSHIP CLASS

Now we are ready for this, and consider a variety of times each year. If it is always Saturday morning (again, start at 9:30 to help the people who love Saturday sleep-in), then those who work Saturdays cannot make it. Be sure the group eats together and with some staff there, so the first meeting is fun and engaging and relaxing.

Remember that "once a person brings a casserole or takes a job" (Lyle Schaller), he or she calls it "my church." So start the class with a casserole and have them take an easy job as greeter or helper in a class or ministry as the class closes.

Probably this class should be offered at least three or four times a year, so the classes are not huge.

Basic doctrines like salvation, growth, and the church must be taught -- not just the peculiar practices of the church. Some who take these classes are not sure of the Romans 3:21-26 explanation of justification by faith in Jesus Christ.

Be sure those who are not sure of forgiveness/ imputed righteousness get a chance to talk personally with a staff person or church leader. Please, woman to woman, or couple to couple, for comfort's sake.

This is a great class in which to introduce other staff, in addition to the senior or solo pastor. If there is the typical "church mother" who handles calls and concerns in the office, she should be introduced for the sake of warmth.

Very significant: this class should lead into a strong invite into a Sunday or home Adult Bible Fellowship (okay, "covenant group," as serious as that sounds; or "life group," as health-related as that sounds; or "small church," even though some have had their problems with small churches).

Often we can invite these people to stay together as a Sunday or Home ABF, since they have enjoyed being together! If you do, the teacher or host and leadership team must be ready.

***“HOW SHALL I SERVE?” CLASS

Some serious newcomers might want an extra class or two about service opportunities in the church. If they have been believers for a while, they want to do more than greet or help in the nursery, or other lighter jobs that may be offered in the membership class.

FACTS TO REMEMBER ABOUT GUESTS:

- + They are better “guests” than “visitors.” Seems a warmer term.
- + They need to make friends in the church. How will this happen? Most regular or long-term friends already in the church have “all the friends they need.” So we might work hard to help these people make friends in the class of others whose webs of friendship in the church are not full yet.
- + Mood is everything. Warmth, fun, proper reverence, joy, comfort, coffee.
- + The pastor must show up and be a vital part. In any size church.