



IS YOUR CONGREGATION READY FOR VISITORS?

SOME IDEAS, TIPS, AND POINTERS FROM YOUR COMMISSION ON CHURCH GROWTH & EVANGELISM

Signage and Visibility

- Are your outdoor signs visible, eye-catching, informative, properly placed, and easy-to-read?
- Do you have clearly marked visitor/guest parking close to the church?
- Is your parish on the World Wide Web, with clear directions and worship times?
- Does your parish's answering machine/voice mail warmly invite visitors to your services, with specific worship times and directions from main roads?
- Do you have knowledgeable greeters and ushers, who can point newcomers to the restrooms, nursery, and Sunday School classrooms?
- Are restrooms, nursery, Sunday School, and other rooms clearly indicated by signs?
- Is the narthex (lobby) welcoming and inviting? Free of junk/clutter/storage?
- Are your restrooms clean? Would you want to use your facilities, or would you rather wait until you got home? Schedule a parish scrubbing party on the Saturday before Easter, if necessary!

Visitor-Friendly Materials and a Friendly Welcome

- Is your bulletin/worship guide readable? Is it free of Episcopalspeak (“*Sanctus*” and “*Sursum Corda*” mean something to us, but would a newcomer know what these are?)? Many congregations choose to put the entire service of Easter morning in the bulletin, rather than using the *Prayer Book*?
- Are the hymns and service music singable? For Easter morning, choose familiar, easy hymn tunes.
- Do members of different ages/saxes/races take leadership roles in your services?
- Is the PA system loud and clear?
- Do you have “buddies” who will help newcomers during the service if they appear “lost”?
- Do you greet newcomers in your service in a way that makes the person truly feel welcomed and not singled out? (Surveys show that most seekers and newcomers dread the idea of having to stand up and “introduce” themselves or to have to wear a newcomer button.)
- Do you provide a thank-you remembrance to newcomers? (This doesn't have to be fancy: a welcome packet, pens, a plant, and a loaf of baked bread are some of the ways congregations thank newcomers!)
- Is your nursery clean and safe? (Would you leave your child in the nursery?)
- Do your nursery workers/volunteers know how to greet and welcome a new child and assure nervous parents that all will be fine? Do you keep a log of children in the nursery (allergies, parent names, etc.)?
- Do you pass the peace with guests or newcomers?
- Are all guests intentionally invited by the clergy during the announcements to receive Holy Communion or to come forward for a blessing? Do you explain how to receive Communion?
- Does the sermon or message focus on the relevance of the Holy Scripture for everyday life?
- Do you offer a hospitality hour and personally invite guests to it? Are there designated minglers at coffee hour who will talk to a guest if they are standing alone? (A great conversation starter: “Hi...you'll have to forgive me, I'm having a “senior moment” and am not sure we've met. My name is _____....Are you a guest this morning? Did you grow up in the Episcopal tradition? What do you do for a living? Are you from this area? Would you like me to introduce you to our priest?”)

- Some congregations choose for their members to wear nametags, especially on Easter Sunday. Declare the day a “Name Forgetting Amnesty Day” for those who may have forgotten other members’ names; make it fun for everyone to wear nametags!

Following Up With Newcomers

- Do you have a way to collect the names/addresses of newcomers and guests? (This can be as easy as a welcome book, or as fancy as Welcome Cards in the pews!)
- Do you keep newcomer information and follow-ups in a database for additional contacts?
- Do you have entry-level groups for newcomers (e.g. Inquirer’s class)?
- Do you have a packet of information for newcomers?
- Do clergy *and* lay members invite guests/newcomers to return for other services?
- Do you send informational mailings to newcomers and others on a quarterly basis?
- Does your clergyperson follow up with a handwritten note to all visitors?
- Does a layperson make a follow-up contact (e.g. postcard) within 48 hours to thank first-time visitors for attending the service?
- Some congregations have a “Back Door Drop” ministry to drop a warm loaf of bread and a thank-you to all those who visited on Easter Morning. (No conversation necessary, just a quick drop off!) Do you have something similar?
- Do you offer a welcoming event for newcomers? Some congregations do an easy drop-in once a quarter (ice cream social, tea, lemonade and punch, etc.).
- Indicate your openness to newcomers about baptisms and weddings. (Many newcomers will visit a congregation to scout out the possibility of getting married or having their child baptized.)

Want more ideas?

Does your congregation need further help in preparing for Easter and beyond?

Looking for financial resources for Congregational Growth and Development?

Your Commission on Church Growth & Evangelism is here to help you!

Call the Diocese of Newark’s Congregational Development Hotline

at 973-430-9906 or visit us at www.dioceseofnewark.org/churchgrowth.