

SURFACE TO SOUL

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10 Tips for Welcoming Guests

Honor your members and guests. Each church member and guest who arrives at your building is a human being. Some prefer anonymity. Others hope to see a friendly face in a strange place. The things you do and say will show either honor or disrespect. Think of ways to honor your guests in your greeting.

Don't get stuck saying "hello." Replace "hello" with "welcome to our church" or "we are glad you're here." Ask a question such as "May we show you where you can take your kids?" Listed below are a few more samples:

- What's your name (introduce yourself first)?
- How did you find out about our church? Do you live in the area? Do you know anyone that attends this church?
- What keeps you busy during the week? Which school do you attend? What's your major?
- Do you have any questions about our congregation?
- Do you need directions to any part of the church (sanctuary, fellowship hall, restrooms, etc.)?

Greet people after the service. Spend time greeting people after the service. If you are in a smaller church under 250 people, you might easily know who is a first-time visitor. In larger churches, look for people who seem out of place or looking for signage, or who appear a little uncomfortable.

Offer to pray with visitors if appropriate. If you are making small talk with a visitor after the service is over, listen for a need that could be prayed for. Don't go fishing for something just to create a prayer opportunity. Simply listen. Offer to pray with your guest before leaving if a concern or celebration is mentioned.

Help guests know where to go. If you're able to recognize a church visitor when they are arriving at the church, offer to help them find the sanctuary. If they have not been to your building before, they may need some guidance. Some church facilities are laid out easily enough to find the sanctuary. I once attended a church in a movie theater inside a mall, on the third floor, above the food court. Once at the theater, I had to figure out which "screen" the church held its meeting at.

Smile. It shouldn't need to be said, but it does. A smile goes a long way toward creating a warm welcome.

Provide handouts or bulletins. If your church provides handouts or bulletins, your job is to share those with a smile (see #6). Make eye contact with people. This is not the time or place to talk about Sunday's game, the college game, or anything else. Rather, notice people.

Pray. As a church greeter, you are part of the "welcome" experience of your church. A good greeting process will help prepare the way for whatever work God desires to do in that visitor's life. Pray for the visitors that God will bring to your church. Pray that you might be a blessing, rather than a hindrance, to each visitor and member who comes.

Provide extra care for the elderly. Greet older members and guests of the church in ways that honor them. Know where to get a wheelchair if one is needed. If they need a hearing device, know ahead of time where they are located.

Provide extra care for children. Greet the children as well. They might be more nervous than their parents who are attending a new place. They might be fearful about all the new people they might have to meet. Some may be more outgoing than others. Honor the children with a personal greeting, eye contact, and a handshake.



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