

**Hello Neighbor
Come on in...**



 **Peace**
CHURCH

Welcome Tips Do This, Not That

*...I was a stranger,
and you welcomed
me...*

Matthew 25:35

This Sunday will probably be someone's first Sunday at Peace Church. Or at church ever! As a congregation, we all have a vital role in welcoming and enfolding others as we work to demonstrate the love of Christ and communicate to the most uneasy newcomer that "We want you here!" Each one of us can make a difference.

In surveying more than one thousand churches, Pastors Thom Rainer and Gary McIntosh have found that every church surveyed believed theirs was a very welcoming church. Visitors, however, often told a different story. It turns out that the church members were very welcoming toward each other but were, probably inadvertently, ignoring the newcomers.

We can trust in God to build His church; we can also challenge ourselves to consciously extend to others the welcome we once received. The following Welcome Tips aim to inspire all of us, even the most introverted introvert, to ways that we can display Christ's love to newcomers, and to each other, every Sunday.

1

Do Show, Don't Tell

It's not just what your English teacher taught you. It's an important part of making newcomers feel welcome. Did you know that the typical church visitor will decide whether or not to return within the first ten minutes of visiting? One way of making those first ten minutes amazing is to show a newcomer whatever they need, or that you think they may need. The Sanctuary. The nursery. Children's Church classrooms. Sunday School classrooms. The bathrooms.

Our Welcome Team, and professional welcome team trainers, know the value of this bit of extra engagement in terms of making a guest feel truly welcome. And now, so do you!

This tip doesn't just apply to the initial meet and greet. Rather it should extend to all things that newcomers (or not so newcomers) do not know how to do. How to connect with a community group? Reach out to the Children's Ministry? Request prayer? Don't tell them how, show them. Sometimes, this may mean by offering to make a connection and doing the legwork to put them in touch directly.

What makes the biggest impression on church visitors and affects their decision to return? It is the friendliness of the people, according to research by Pastors Charles Arn and Gary McIntosh. What's perhaps even more striking is that visitors determined that friendliness by the number of people who talked with them!

Many of us are introverts, and breaking out of our shells (also known as making eye contact) may be hard. But you're probably less nervous than the newcomer, and a smile and a friendly introduction packs a powerful punch.

Don't be afraid of introducing yourself to a regular, or of engaging someone who has attended for decades as if they are new! We can all forgive each other our

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Do Initiate the Introduction

2

poor memories, but a newcomer will struggle to overcome a church experience where they felt unseen.

So, great job, you've engaged and the conversation is going well, but you have to break away to pick up your children from Children's Church. Before you leave, consider whether there is someone else you can introduce a newcomer to. Not only does this smooth the transition for them so they are not left standing alone, but you can demonstrate the reality of community within the church.



Hi! I'm not sure we've met before. My name is...

Hi! I think I remember meeting you a few weeks ago. I'm so glad to see you here again!



A warm smile, friendly introduction, and good conversation go a long way. We can further enfold newcomers and demonstrate how much we value and are thankful for them by highlighting opportunities for them to engage further with the church. We want them here to experience Christ's love, and we know they were brought here for a reason. The collection of initiatives below serves as an informal Enfolding Toolkit.

Enfolding Toolkit

Peace Church has a number of initiatives that can help welcome and enfold newcomers. Engaging new guests and soliciting their interest in such initiatives is just one way of underscoring that we want them here, and it provides them with possibilities for next steps to take. As a congregation, we should be 1) aware of the initiatives and 2) be willing to connect a new (or longtime!) guest to them. Remember to offer to make the connection for them by engaging the point of contact for each on a newcomer's behalf!

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**Carry
It
Through**

- **Connecting to a Community Group.** Anyone can ask to be connected to a community group at any time by submitting a request on Peace's website. Peace's Community Group liaisons are Doug Domin and Michael Regehr.
- **Peace 101.** This class is offered twice annually, and lasts for about X weeks. Our Pastors and Church Leadership can answer questions about current classes or when the next class subsequent classes will be held. The most recent class began on September 15, 2024.
- **Ministry Opportunity Guide.** This booklet on the wide range of opportunities to get involved at Peace is usually available in the entryways. It contains detailed descriptions, as well as contact and scheduling information, about ways to serve God and others at Peace.

Among growing churches, there is a 16 percent chance that a first time guest will return for a second visit. But there is an 85 percent chance that a second time guest will come for third and subsequent visits. Maybe one of the offerings above can help make the difference.

Don't Forget Why

Remember that we welcome as an extension of biblical hospitality, an extension of Jesus's love for us. Many newcomers will feel uneasy or nervous in an unfamiliar environment, and they may not be sure why they even showed up. We want them to know how thankful we are that they came, how eager we are to serve them, and how much we hope to get to know them. Because we want to reflect God's unconditional love, and welcome, as much as we possibly can.

Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

Romans 15:7