

Newcomers And Assimilation

Four Universal Questions/ Longings all People Have:

- **AM I SAFE HERE?** (Security)
- **CAN I BE MYSELF HERE?** (Identity)
- **WHAT DO I HAVE IN COMMON?** (Belonging)
- **WHAT DIFFERENCE CAN I MAKE HERE?** (Significance)

The Assimilation Process

1. **How are people IDENTIFIED?**
 - Who identifies someone as new?
 - Who informs who?
 - How do we follow up?
 - What information do we need? (F.O.R.E.)
 - What administration is required?
2. **How are people INCLUDED?**
 - Worship and Fellowship
 - Meeting people with things in common (children, hobbies)
 - Areas of interest (Episcopal Church, etc)
 - Informational materials
 - Mailing list – news letter – parish communications
3. **How are people KNOWN?**
 - Participation in small group activities – Bible Study, Alpha,
 - New comers Class/Confirmation
 - Home fellowship groups
4. **How are people ACCEPTED?**
 - Regular attendance
 - Formal membership (transfer)
 - Regular giving
 - Joining into the life of the parish voluntarily

Who People Meet When They Visit Your Church

Visitors begin sizing up your church when they drive in. The grounds, the building, the paint, and the parking are all on the radar screen. Most churches do not have parking attendants so the

visitor's initial contact is when they walk into your sanctuary or parish hall. As they enter they will begin to meet the following people:

- Ushers
- Greeters
- Nursery Workers
- Sunday School Teachers
- Clergy
- People in the Pew (Passing of the Peace)
- Coffee Hour

Ushers

The Ushers are normally involved in passing out the bulletins, the collection and helping to direct the traffic flow for Holy Communion. They can assist in the welcoming process, however, that responsibility is primarily for the "greeters".

Common Duties of Greeters

The most important group will be the Greeters – They are to be highly trained and coached in how to interact with your visitors.

Before the Service

- How to introduce yourself – "Hi, I am _____, I don't believe we have met. Welcome to our church."
- Make church information available.
- Encourage guests to fill out the visitor information card.
- Assist with information about nursery, children's chapel, Sunday school, etc.

During the Service

- Look for new faces to greet after the service ends.

After the Service

- Welcome all the new people – invite to coffee hour
- If possible, hook the visitor up with a regular member
- Encourage them to take home a packet of information
- Try to have a visitor card filled out

Nursery/Children's Ministry

Those involved with Children/Nursery are extremely important. Parents are greatly concerned about the safety and care of their children. Appearance of workers, volunteers and teachers are as important as the cleanliness of the facility. Safety includes, sign-in, child identification, how emergencies are communicated to parents (pagers are good options or the projection of name or number in the main sanctuary).

General Congregation

Name tags are a huge value for your church. Many regular members don't really know each other. They smile say hi, but often avoid conversation because they are embarrassed that they know "the face" but not the "name". Wearing name tags is really a challenge. If you use permanent name tags, they have to be stored, available for next week, and sometimes people forget and wear them home. Some churches use "single use" name tags that are discarded after each service.

Whatever you decide, encourage the use of name tags. It is an enormous help to visitors as well as your regular people.

Coffee Hour

It is important to sensitize your people to the stranger in your midst. There is nothing more awkward than standing in a room of strangers who appear to know each other. It is important that all your people take some responsibility in reaching out to those they do not know and initiating simple conversations. One model is the **F.O.R.E.**

F – tell me about your **FAMILY**.

O – tell me about your **OCCUPATION**.

R – tell me about your **RELIGIOUS** background and **RECREATION**.

E – tell me about your **EDUCATION**.

Train your people to introduce themselves as follows:

Good morning, my name is _____, I don't believe we have met. What is your name? (shake hands)

Follow-Up

- Visitor Information Card turned in to office.
- Information given to Rector and follow-up committee.
- Letter of thanks or email acknowledging their visit.
- Personal contact made by phone – by Rector and Laity.
- Ask if they want to be on the mailing list.
- Invite them back to worship with you again.
- Invite and inform them about current parish events, Sunday school, Youth, etc.
- Invite them to go through the Newcomers Class.