

What Are Reasons Visitors Come Back?



What encourages comeback visits? Sometimes the reason, we struggle with seeing return visitors on Sunday morning is because of the atmosphere. Is your church a friendly church? Really, really? Do you warmly welcome complete strangers?

At our ARK (Attract, Reach, Keep) workshops I often hear members say, "We're a very friendly church." Then we send a worship evaluator and the experience is very different. "What happened?" one pastor stated after we made two visits to his church. The simple answer is that too often we smile, greet and laugh with people we know but the complete stranger is ignored and rarely welcomed. Let us illustrate what our evaluators have discovered.

Here's a case in point. A worship evaluator visited a church. She arrived 15 minutes early came to a pew seat and sat down. Throughout the first 15 minutes, ushers passed the seat, members sat down and others walked in. Once the worship service started there was "Passing of the Peace." The church came alive and people walked around the sanctuary greeting. The worship evaluator stood

and a few members touched her hand while they hurried to greet or comment to another member friend. Sound familiar? At the end of the visit, the evaluator waited 10 minutes in the church entrance and the only person to share, "Come again" was the pastor. Sound familiar?

I hope not, but in case you're looking for ideas to encourage comeback visits, here is what our evaluators suggest:

1. Smile and greet everyone.
2. Say the word, "Welcome" often
3. Look around and speak especially to the people you do not know.
4. **Pastor:** During greet time during worship, suggest members greet visitors before they greet each other.
5. **Pastor & Members:** Make every effort to invite someone back.

Now Ask Your Ministry Team Members, What are some ways your congregation encourages return visits?

Will Visitors Come at the Right Time?

Welcoming: Will Visitors Come at the Right Time?



Can you imagine what goes on in the minds of people who are not churched before they make their first steps to your church's doorsteps? I wonder how many times they had to overcome the word, "no" to get to yes I am going to church? I wonder what may have stopped them from going to church in the first place? I wonder what will happen if the first person they meet shows them Christian love? As we prepare for Sunday, now may be a great time to put on the shoes of people without church homes and get ready to welcome people who may or may not look or act like you. Recently I met a gentleman I'll call Ron, who was returning to church after years of not attending. Ron had seen a local pastor on a cable television station and decided it was time to venture out to that pastor's church. Instead of visiting the regular worship service, he first went to their Bible study. This is where I met Ron. When I asked him how he got to the church, his answer was simply, "I couldn't say no anymore." Wow! In some cases it may be that simple. As we know we serve an awesome God.

Some unchurched people experience a lot of no's before ever arriving at the doors of the church. Before they arrive to your door they may have said no when a co-worker invited them to church. Then they may have said "no" when they got a flier about a fall concert and then "no" when they noticed the banner on the lawn of the church and "no" when they saw a local preacher sharing an inspiring message on television. But then one day ... the words, "Yes I am going to church" are uttered.

If your congregation is seeking to be even more faithful to the Great Commission, you may have these questions: "What can we do to give new comers every reason to believe they made the right decision to visit our church? How will we entertain

strangers who come in our midst?" To give you a few ideas, here are 7 practices that we hear growing congregations practice. Some of these may be new to your ministry.

1. **Be intentional** about saying "welcome." Assign greeters to entrances and key areas of the church.
2. **Teach hospitality.** Share biblical hospitality stories in Bible study, Sunday School and during worship.
3. **Encourage the people with friendly personalities to serve** as "unofficial greeters" at worship, special services, receptions and throughout the life of the congregation.
4. **Remind members that we honor Christ by sharing our Christian love.**
5. **Set aside time for personal testimony.** Encourage new members to share how hospitality impacted their first visits.
6. **Practice greeting people by sharing your name and introducing yourself.**
7. **Constantly speak about smiling and welcoming...** In newsletter, on website, in bulletin, small groups, from the pulpit and other times.

Please email me and let us know what your congregation is doing to encourage members to welcome.