

HOW WELCOMING IS YOUR CHURCH, REALLY?

Identify a *Welcome & Hospitality Task Force* for making your church more welcoming. Have members represent a good cross section of your congregation (long-timers, newcomers, different ages, etc.) Have each person complete the survey below. “Score” your surveys and compare scores.



Discuss your findings as a group, and decide ways your congregation could be more welcoming.

Decide on 2-4 action items to execute in the next 2 weeks.

Prioritize other action items to make the church more welcoming, designate “owners” and dates.

NOTE: Not all ideas on this survey would fit every congregation. In your follow-up discussion you will need to consider your own context and which ideas might best work.

Welcome and Hospitality Checklist

Circle *Y* for yes, *N* for no, and *U* for uncertain.

Before the first visit

- Y N U Do you have a website that is up-to-date, that clearly indicates location, times of worship services, current activities and a way to contact the church? Do the photos prioritize people over buildings?
- Y N U Does your church have a Facebook page, a blog, a Twitter feed, or other ways to engage in social networking where parishioners and their friends can engage in the life of the congregation? Does the information posted there give a positive and accurate image of the church?
- Y N U Do special activities of your congregation get regularly reported in the local paper?
- Y N U Do you attempt to raise public awareness about the life and activities of your congregation through advertising, specific member invitations, special events?
- Y N U Is the receptionist and/or voice mail message on the church phone friendly and informative?
- Y N U Is the phone book, church signage, or other publically visible information correct?

Facilities

- Y N U Is your church easy to find? Do you need new signs on major roads or streets near the church? Can the church’s name and service times be easily read from the street?
- Y N U Does the exterior of your church look well-maintained and attractive?
- Y N U Is the landscaping well cared for?
- Y N U Do you have designated, prime parking spaces for guests located near the front doors of your building?
- Y N U Is there designated parking close to the building reserved for the handicapped?

- Y N U Are the sidewalks, entrance, and interior spaces of the church easy to navigate for persons in wheelchairs or with other mobility concerns?
- Y N U Is it easy to tell which entrance to use for the church office? For the sanctuary? For Sunday school or evening programs?
- Y N U Are all rooms in the church clearly marked? Are there clear directional signs to restrooms, nursery, parish hall and classrooms?
- Y N U Are the restrooms clean? Without rust or mildew? Bonus: Do you have soap, towels, lotion and tissues available in each one?
- Y N U Do you have adequate lighting in the hallways, classrooms, and the sanctuary? Is there adequate lighting at night in parking areas and entrance areas?
- Y N U Are your public spaces uncluttered? That is, have old bulletins and out-of-date church brochures been discarded? Are collection boxes neat looking and well marked? Are seldom used items stored out of sight?
- Y N U Are rooms clean and free from mildew or other odors? Has painting, floor cleaning and other maintenance been kept up to date?

Nursery and Children

- Y N U Do ushers and greeters warmly welcome children and proactively offer information about Sunday School, Nursery, or other child-focused ministries?
- Y N U Are there inviting and appropriate ways for children to engage during worship? (Special children's bulletins, activity bags, children's message, worship roles like acolyting, reading, ushering and greeting?)
- Y N U Is information about provision for children and nursery available in the bulletin or in the pews / seats?
- Y N U Are the locations of the nursery and other child-spaces clearly marked?
- Y N U Is the nursery located near the worship space?
- Y N U Do mature, capable, and warm persons staff the nursery?
- Y N U Are children in the nursery registered, and is their safety assured?
- Y N U Are the rooms for infants, toddlers and children attractive, clean, well lit, odor free?
- Y N U Are toys, furnishings, equipment and bedding new enough and in good order?
- Y N U Is your church up to date in all *Safe Church* practices and training?

Worship

- Y N U Do you have designated "greeters" besides ushers who are trained to welcome and help guests?
- Y N U Do you have an understandable and seeker-friendly bulletin that helps guests participate in your worship?
- Y N U Do the clergy have opportunities to greet guests before they enter and are seated?
- Y N U Do you regularly announce the page numbers and location of music or prayer book material?
- Y N U Do you welcome guests early in the service?

- Y N U Do you welcome guests without singling them out, making them stand, or creating awkwardness for them?
- Y N U Do you issue an invitation to receive communion so that guests know they are welcome and how to participate?
- Y N U Is your worship bright, vibrant, and well paced?
- Y N U Is your music, whatever style, done well and will guests be able to participate in congregational singing?
- Y N U If you use musical settings for portions of the service, is the music readily available to guests?
- Y N U Do you avoid unique, quaint, or idiosyncratic actions in your liturgy that make sense only to long-time members?
- Y N U Do all readers speak clearly and move along at a pace that can be understood given the acoustics of your building?
- Y N U Do the sermons generally have "take home" applications relevant to people?
- Y N U Do the sermon and announcements avoid technical terms, or denominationally specific jargon?
- Y N U Does the service start on time?
- Y N U Does the service begin and end well, i.e., on a strong inspirational note?
- Y N U During the peace, do regular attendees introduce themselves to people they do not recognize?
- Y N U Is the format and are the instructions in your bulletins and worship services clear to guests? Are they understandable for someone who may not have a church background or who is not Episcopalian?
- Y N U Are large print bulletins available?
- Y N U Is hearing amplification available?
- Y N U Do you have mints available for persons who experience coughing or a dry throat during worship?
- Y N U Do you have hand sanitizer and tissues available in or near the pews / seats?

General Hospitality

- Y N U Does your church have a "coffee hour" or other social activity after the service?
- Y N U Do your members engage guests and invite them to coffee or to other social activities after the service, taking the initiative to introduce them to regular members?
- Y N U Do you have a workable procedure for getting the names and addresses of first-time guests? Are you able to solicit this information both at worship and fellowship?
- Y N U Is there a system for following up with first-time guests? Do clergy and laity both have roles?
- Y N U Does your follow up system include responding to guests within 48 hours of their attendance by leaving a small gift at their homes? (Freshly baked cookies or bread, a devotional booklet, flowers, or a mug with your church's name are all possibilities.)

- Y N U Do you have an information table or area with current newsletters, attractive brochures and other information on congregational life located in the main entryway and in the parish hall space?
- Y N U Are the bulletin boards current? Guests are in fact more likely than regular members to read the bulletin boards!
- Y N U Are extra copies of curriculum and Bibles in the classrooms? Are teachers prepared and trained to welcome guests?
- Y N U Do you have a name tag system that is current and utilized?
- Y N U Are there classes, groups or special events held regularly for newcomers?
- Y N U Do you have a system in place to follow up with newcomers when they return after their initial visit? Do you have a system to shepherd newcomers until they decide to become regularly active in the church?
- Y N U Do you regularly interview people who have recently visited your church and ask them for feedback, including those who came only once as well as those who have continued to come? Do you ask how people found out about the congregation and what their initial experiences were like?

Score: Y: _____ N & U: _____

Our Church's Welcoming and Hospitality Task Priorities:

Task	Owner	Target Date

(Adapted from several sources, including "Hospitality Checklist," from the Congregational Development Office, Diocese of Texas (Episcopal Church, U.S.A.)

Mission Network, Diocese of Southern Virginia, 2011