

Keeping Your Catch: From Visitors to Fully Engaged Disciples in Ministry

By the Rev. Jim Hollis, Executive Director, Proactive Evangelism Ministries

The Sunday we fell in love with our new church family

The first Sunday we visited, we recall seeing the very visible signs out front pointing us to the “Visitors Parking.” We followed them and found an open space. We were immediately impressed that this church cared about its visitors – after all – these spaces were close to the main entrance!

We had not walked more than ten feet past our car before a friendly voice, with a smile and an extended hand, greeted us, “Good morning! Welcome to First Church. We are so glad you are here today. Have you all been with us before or is this your first time?”

We shared that it was our first time and were not just given a quick list of directions to remember, but John, the Greeter, escorted us into the building with the nursery, introduced us to Kathy, the Nursery Coordinator, and then took us for coffee and doughnuts before introducing us to two other couples standing in line.

John then took us into the narthex and introduced us to Angie, an usher, who enthusiastically greeted us. After chatting with us for a minute, she gave us a bulletin and said she had someone to whom she would like to introduce us to. We said, “Fine.” She led us into the sanctuary and introduced us to Ken and Vicki, who had some space on their pew and also made us feel right at home. The service was wonderful with great music, inspiring preaching and after the benediction; Ken and Vicki asked us about our family. We told them we had one daughter in the nursery. They said they did also and offered to walk us back over to get the children.

As we picked up the children, we felt like we had made fast friends with Ken and Vicki. Ken said to us, “Don’t know what you guys have planned for lunch, but we’d love to take you guys out with us to Gray’s Restaurant, a great local place with all kinds of home-cooked specialties.

After an incredible meal together, we got back in the car. We looked at each other, smiled, and said what both of us were thinking. “We have found our new church home! That’s the friendliest bunch of people we have ever seen. There’s no need to visit anywhere else.”

The testimony of the family above did not happen by accident or coincidence. It took place by definite design, careful organization and excellent ministry execution by a number of trained laity. Would this happen in your church? The good news is that with effective training, IT CAN.

The Lord sends worship visitors to our churches as “God’s guests entrusted to our care” and expects us to work hard to **KEEP THE CATCH!**

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