

## ***“Becoming a Welcoming Church”***

***By Thom S. Rainer***

Romans 12:13 “Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.”

Deuteronomy 10:19 “Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.”

Exodus 22:21 “Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

### ***The Wakeup Call***

Just because you feel welcome doesn't mean that everyone else does. It takes an honest evaluation of yourself as well as the church to see how welcoming you are and how welcoming the church can be.

On a scale of 1-10 how welcoming would rate Antioch Baptist Church #2? \_\_\_\_\_

If you were searching for a new church home what are the top three things you would be looking for?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Top Ten Reasons Why Visitors Don't Return***

1. *The stand-and-greet time in the worship service was unfriendly and awkward.* This can be very awkward for visitors when it seems to be more of a ritual for members than guests. Second, guests feel out of place when members go speak to other members and not to the guest.
2. *Unfriendly church members.* Although most members don't see themselves as unfriendly, guests can view you as unfriendly when you don't speak and retreat to your “holy huddles.”
3. *Unsafe and unclean children's area.* If your church does not have clear safety and security procedures, and if the children's area does not appear safe and clean, do not expect young families to return to your church.
4. *No place to get information on the church.* Guest are trained to look for some type of welcome and information center. Healthy churches need an information center, it needs to be in a visible location, and it also needs to have someone working to greet and help guests.
5. *Bad church website.* Most guests typically view the churches website/social media page to get a glimpse of what the church is like before they arrive. Websites and social media pages are free and easy tools that are successful for Evangelism. A lack of these entities as well as out of date information is a good way to turn guests away.

6. *Poor Signage.* If you have been attending your church a few weeks then you don't need signage. But guests do. And they get frustrated when they don't have clear directional signage for parking, restrooms, children's area.
7. *Insider church language.* Do we say things throughout the worship service that first-time guests would not understand?
8. *Boring or bad church services.* With so many resources there is really no excuse as to why our worship services should be boring or bad. However, bad and boring worship experiences can turn away potential members.
9. *Members telling guests they were in the wrong pew or chair.* This is rude and insensitive behavior however it is relevant behavior.
10. *Dirty facilities.* A dirty church says to visitors that we don't care about our church and we don't care if it is an inconvenience to others.

### **The Happy Guests**

1. *Someone asked the guests to sit with her.* "You know, as a single person, I can feel pretty lonely sitting by myself. I am so glad Joanie asked me to sit with her. We plan to get together for coffee."
2. *People introduced themselves to the guests.* Several people introduced themselves to me. I did not get the impression it was either contrived or routine.
3. *There was clear signage.* "From the parking lot to the children's area of the worship center everything was clearly marked. It was easy to navigate."
4. *There was a clearly marked welcome center.* "It made it really easy for me to ask questions and to get some information on the church."
5. *The kids loved the children's area.* "My kids were so happy with their experiences. We will be back for sure."
6. *The children's area was secure and sanitary.* "That is one of the first things I check when I go to a church. This church gets an A+!"
7. *Guest parking was clearly visible.* "From the moment we drove into the parking lot, I could find the guest parking. It was marked very well."
8. *The church did not have a stand-and-greet time.* "My wife and I just moved to the area and are visiting churches. If we visit one with that fake stand-and-greet time, we don't return."
9. *The members were not pushy.* "They seemed to really care about us rather than just making us another number on the membership roll."
10. *The guest card was simple to complete.* "Some of the cards in other churches ask for too much information. This one was perfect and simple."

After tonight's lesson how welcoming would rate Antioch Baptist Church #2? \_\_\_\_\_

What three things would you like to implement to make Antioch more Welcoming

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_