

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



**Boost Your Church's  
Guest Return Rate  
*in 3 Steps***

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When you consider how many guests came to your church last year, do you ever wonder how you could get more of them to return?

Every time a new guest comes to your church, it represents a huge step of faith. What can you do in the next month that would help more guests connect to your church and become a core part of your community?

**Seeing guests return needs to be a high priority for church leadership teams.**

As a rule, the total number of guests that visit your church in a year should equal the same number of people that attend your church on any given Sunday. For instance, if your church averages 200 people on a Sunday, then you should see four guests on any given weekend. If your church has 2,000 people, you should see 40 guests. The reality is that most churches aren't meeting that benchmark number of guests, so we need to ensure we are doing whatever we can to see them return and take steps closer to Jesus.

When I think of an organization that invests a lot of effort into making sure people return, I immediately think of the dentist's office. Now, I'm not saying that attending your church is anything like getting a root canal, **but have you ever noticed all the different ways that your dentist reminds you about upcoming appointments?** Not only does the office send you home from your last visit with an appointment card, but they might also send a postcard, leave you a voice message, or send a text reminder. (My dentist even sends me a

birthday card!) All of this and I'm only there twice a year.

Dentists use every outreach method they can to ensure you don't miss an appointment. We need to be just as consistent and thorough in reaching out to our guests as a dentist's office is about reaching out to its patients. With that in mind, let's think about how to boost the guest return rate at your church in the year ahead:

## New-here gift exchange

From time to time, I have the opportunity to visit churches across the country. Oftentimes, these churches are approaching numbers around 2,000 people, but it wasn't just a great teacher, great musicians, or a great kids' ministry that helped them grow. **The consistent practice of offering a gift to new-here guests in exchange for their contact information is a proven way to begin reaching your visitors.**

What does a new-here gift exchange process look like? Do you have a process like this happening every weekend at your church? Make this a dedicated part of your service and ensure that it's well-rehearsed and clear. Consider your options and offer a gift that people would actually like to have.

[Click here to see dozens of examples of what churches around the country are offering as new-here guest gifts.](#) My personal preference is to give out t-shirts because people love a free t-shirt and it's an economic, cost-effective solution for many churches!

## Dedicated and obvious new-here area

Of course, your church needs to do more than just give your guests gifts; you also need to dedicate a place in your lobby for the gift exchange and to provide visitor information.

Chances are that you could improve this area to make it even more clear that your guests should head there to learn more about your community. Here are a few questions to consider with your leadership team about your new-here area:

- Is this area clearly obvious to our guests?
- Is the area well-lit on a Sunday morning?
- Does the new-here area have staff or volunteers helping every weekend?
- Is the signage easily readable when the lobby is full?
- Are the new-here team members wearing something that designates them as a volunteer?
- Do you have enough gifts to give out to your guests?
- Is the area free of clutter?
- Can you make it even more visible?
- Is it close to the traffic flow leaving the exits from your worship center?
- If a line of new-here guests begin to form, what do you do to turn those lines into circles?
- Do you need to do more training with the team who runs this area?

It's amazing how often we start down these roads of development but don't push it all the way to ensure that our new-here process and table or kiosk is as helpful as it could be. Take the time to consider what changes you might need to make to your new-here area to make the process as easy and clear as possible for your guests.

## Kind but persistent follow up

We live in an era when people don't give away their contact information easily. Gone are the days when people would willingly fill out a credit card application at every sporting event just to get the free t-shirt.



Here's what you need to know: when people provide you with their contact information, they're expecting you and your team to actually *make contact*.

**By providing their information, your guests are asking your team to follow-up with them. So, you simply must follow-up!**

Based on experience, I've often found that most churches could double the amount of follow-up they're doing to see dramatic results in connecting guests to their church for the long-term. What does your follow-up process look like? Ask yourself if it includes the following best practices:

- Have your new-here volunteers write handwritten "Welcome to Our Church" notes on Sunday and drop them in the mail that afternoon.
- Have a campus pastor call all new-here guests on Sunday evenings.
- Ensure that the lead pastor sends out thank-you notes on Monday mornings and extends an invitation to visit again.
- Have a volunteer at the church call new-here guests on Wednesday to invite them to return for the coming Sunday.
- Ensure that each new-here guest receives information about your new members class (or whatever the first step towards membership is at your church).
- Send a quick email from the campus pastor or lead pastor on the Saturday after guests attended, inviting them back to church the next Sunday.
- List your new-here guests in mailings and emails for the next big day at your church.
- Consider having team members drop off cookies at the new-here guest's house a week or two after they have visited the church and invite them to come back.

**The big idea here is our follow-up needs to be kind, but it also needs to be persistent.**

We don't want to let people off the hook if they have given us their contact information and said that they'd visit again. We should do whatever we can to repeatedly invite them to come back in the days and weeks after their first visit.

## Looking for more help to boost your church's guest return rate?

If your church is looking for ways to see more new-here guests return to your church, we have some additional resources that you could use to make that happen! Getting guests to return is a vital area for your church to focus on at this time of year (and really at any time of the year). [Click here to download free resources to help your church increase its guest return rate.](#) [In this download, you'll receive:](#)

- A PDF with first-time guest gift information
- Pictures of what other churches are doing to see guests return
- Two MP3s featuring church assimilation expert Greg Curtis, as he talks about the best practices at Eastside Church that have seen thousands of guests return and become a part of their church

Click [here](#) to download these resources!

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