

## Hospitality: How We Do It...and How Your Church Can Do It, Too.

Written by

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Hospitality, like any other church skill is learned. How can you teach your church leaders the basics of hospitality in the House of God? A weekend workshop of 4-6 hours can help you accomplish this important objective. Following is an example of how this can be done in your church at little or no cost at all. Your pastor, staff person, or other gifted leader can follow this basic outline and provide a valuable opportunity for your church to begin to practice hospitality to newcomers. (You are free to use and to adapt any and all of this material for your own particular use in the church setting. Simply click on the icon next to the print icon above to produce a pdf file)

It is best to have participants grouped around large round tables for reaction and discussion of presentations from the front. This is important and the time spent making this possible is well worth the extra effort.

Do not limit your workshop to a designated group within your congregation, but invite the entire congregation to attend and benefit from the experience. It will prove to make your whole church more "hospitality contagious."

BREAKS, MEALS and PRAYERS have not been scheduled in this outline and need to be included in the application of this workshop. A very effective way to involve a maximum number of your people in the experience is to offer the content twice on the same day with a meal served between, e.g., workshop-lunch-workshop. This provides the alternative for people to choose a morning or afternoon, while being exposed to the same content. The approximate time of the content only here is noted beside each of the major sections. Obviously the content can be adapted to accommodate the specific needs of your particular congregation.

### **"Hospitality in the House of God"**

Bible Study: Romans 15:1-7 You can print the Biblical text in the version of your preference, and additional content ahead for "handouts" to participants (Approx. 30 minutes)

Questions: Discuss in your table groups

- Is hospitality a program, committee, emphasis, special effort or attitude?
- Who did Jesus spend most of his time with, outsiders or insiders? What about our church?

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Are we limiting “pastoral care” to those inside our church membership?

- How can our church build bridges of care to the whole neighborhood around us? Name specific ways and make a list.

- Where are the “entry points” for newcomers to our church? Are there “non-threatening” activities that are relatively easy for them to take part in on a regular basis?

“Our Town;” Do we really know it? (Approx. 30 minutes)



This is the time in a workshop to introduce some valuable demographic information about your town (city) and immediate community (neighborhood). This kind of information usually surprises most people who think they know their community and provides an opportunity to discuss at their tables what really “is” rather than what we think. A good resource for this kind of information is [thearda.com](http://thearda.com); click on “maps and reports,” then choose counties, metro areas or national maps. This source also provides a breakdown by denomination, which is helpful. Some of this information can be printed ahead for handouts or made into a power point presentation.

Video: “Why People Don’t Go to Church” [highwayvideo.com](http://highwayvideo.com): click on “classics” and look for

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the above title, "man on the street," (5:30) download price \$20. Discuss in groups at tables. ( 45 minutes)

### Questions for discussion

- Which of the responses have you heard people say?
- Which of the responses do you believe has the most validity in your community?
- How do you think our church can help to combat these preconceptions?

### Survey says...

- 85-95% of people in North America believe in God
  - 35-40% attend church regularly. What do you make of this "disconnect?"
  - Many people who don't go to church say the main reason is that no one ever invited them. When was the last time you invited someone to come to church with you?
  - 86% of those who join a church came the first time with a neighbor, friend or relative.
- (Source: Bring A Friend)

### ["Hospitality Checklist" Handout](#) . (30 minutes)

- Have each person fill out the checklist in terms of the "way it is" rather than the "way we wish it were."
- Each person "totals" his/her responses and places their number in the upper right hand corner of their checklist. Each group totals all their numbers and comes up with an "average." Then all the groups report back to the whole and an average is obtained for the whole group. This is probably pretty close to reality for your church. Where are the areas that you could address as church leaders to increase your score and your "hospitality quotient" for your church?
- "Hospitality...is not a function of being friendly to friends but of learning how to be good host and hostesses to the strangers and the seekers who come to church in search of something they do not have." (Reclaiming the Great Commission, Bishop Claude Payne, p. 189)

### Characteristics of "newcomers (30 minutes)

- Unchurched: People who have no memory of church and for whom everything about church is new.

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- Dechurched: People who have been “burned” in a previous experience(s) with a church and who are cautious about another church involvement.
- Underchurched: Nominal church members who attend occasionally but do not participate actively in the church’s mission.
- Rechurched: People who have been part of another congregation (mainly positive) and are looking for a new experience in different faith community.

“What Newcomers are Looking For” Source: Tom Bandy

Not Looking For... Looking for...

- “Organized religion” ... True Spirituality
- “Friendliness” ... Real relationships
- Writing checks ... Service opportunities
- A Church with a history ... A church with a vision
- Offices and positions ... Genuine leaders
- Rules and regulations ... A positive, healthy climate
- Guilt and shame ... Helpful, practical ideas

How can we personally and as a church be hospitable to these people? (Discuss at your tables)

If time allows viewing a clip from the film, “Sister Act” where the nuns go out into the community and begin to serve the neighborhood rather than the institution of the church allows for some good humor with a great message and a nice conclusion to the day. (Approx. 10 minutes running time)

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