

Ushers and Greeters

- Is There a Difference?

(Part 1)

In a conversation with a pastor of a church in which only 5% of its visitors return, I suggest that he utilize "greeters" in the foyer. The response is often, "Yes, we do that. We have a team of ushers." This may sound like they have tried the greeter idea and it doesn't help solve the situation of non-returning visitors. But are ushers and greeters the same? This church consultant's experience is that most of the time, traditional "ushers" and welcoming "greeters" are not the same thing. This brief ministry methods article points out some of the differences as seen in practice in the churches.

Ushers	Greeters
Dressed somewhat alike – in sort of a "uniform" of coat and tie like the preacher	Dressed more casual or like the visitors who come.
Function more formally (except with their friends).	Relaxed, flexible, and pleasant to all
Takes a "station" in the foyer to supervise and cover.	Moves around in search of visitors and newer people who are returning.
Positioned near entrances to sanctuary	May greet people in the parking lot and assist with an umbrella when it is raining.
Involved in "crowd control" (Brings more chairs, removes the ropes on back pews, etc.)	Involved in meeting the needs of visitors or new people.
May direct visitors to seats.	Offers to sit with visitors or locates someone to sit with the visitor.
Places a bulletin/program in attender's hands.	Provides information that fits the visitor's/new attender's interest or needs. (Nursery, restroom, refreshments)
Collects an offering later after the service starts.	Gives information, time, and gifts to visitors – walks with visitor to the coat rack, childcare, refreshments, or restroom
May help the visitors feel that they have "passed the test" of acceptability and may now enter the service.	Helps the visitor feel that the greeter is glad they came and that they have found a new friend.

First impressions are very important in helping a visitor decide to return. How they are received in the first two or three minutes can determine whether or not they will be back to listen and learn more. Next month's ministry monograph will provide more specifics on how to help a visitor feel welcome.

Greeter ministry is one of the many concepts that ChristWay Ministries assists churches with through the Excelling Church Consultation service.

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