



Open House Preparation

Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.
The People of the United Methodist Church.

Becoming Disciples Together

Once someone has visited our church, the journey has not ended, but simply begun. We must not open only our Doors to have them visit, but our Hearts and Minds to have them become part of the church family.

Are you someone helping newcomers build discipling relationships within the church? In years gone by, congregations as a whole did not feel responsible for finding ways to help others fit in (they thought). They said that was the pastor's job. If people visited and they joined up, that was great. If not, then the people already there would really not miss them much. If people stayed away, it was assumed they either did not have faith or had lost it. No one asked where they went.

Yet 9 out of 10 unchurched people say they believe in God. Then why aren't they at church? The number one reason is that they believe churches do not offer anything worth the required investment of time and effort. What happens at church seems irrelevant to life outside church.

Rick Warren, a noted pastor and author, asked people why they didn't go to church. Here's what they said: "Church is boring, especially the sermons ... church members are unfriendly to visitors ... the church is more interested in my money than in me ... we worry about the quality of the church's child care" (The Purpose Driven Church, 191-192).

Because Jesus called us to go into all the world and make Disciples, we must ask ourselves some tough questions about ourselves, our world and our church. Read these questions thoroughly, and answer honestly.

Identifying the audience:

Who are the types of people around our church who are not in church?

Is there some way we can reach out to them? What kind of church do they need?

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Identifying the Obstacles

How do we respond when a visitor comes to church? Is there follow-up visits from church members? From the pastor(s)? How can I help welcome the new person into our church? What more can we do?

How easy is it for a newcomer to break into the social groups of the church? When a person is gone, are they truly missed, or are they just not here? How can we encourage more interaction and connection?

Growing Together as Disciples

Do we have small group ministries that enable people to grow spiritually and socially, such as Bible Studies, prayer groups, UMW, UMMen, UMYF, UMKids, Choir, Sunday School, etc.? **Am I myself active enough in these ministries that I am growing spiritually?** Can newcomers easily find their way into places where they can grow?

In what ways does our church encourage people to be in mission and ministry to those Christ called us to reach and help—the prisoner, the stranger, the naked, poor, homeless, widowed and orphaned, outcast and children? **Am I myself active enough in these ministries that I am showing the love of Christ as he called me to?** Are these areas easy for newcomers to come and be a part of?

What more could our church offer in this area to help people grow spiritually? What other ideas/suggestions do I have for our church's small group ministries?