

Consider the following "checkpoints of opportunity" to determine if any of these opportunities should be incorporated into your church's New Member Assimilation plan. Note that each church will have its own unique way of assimilating newcomers. Each church may have a different plan. But consider the following **opportunities** as a part of that plan.

Opportunity # 1: Church family welcomes newcomers. Guests sometimes complain that "no one spoke to them," or "the church didn't seem to be very friendly." Members must learn that it is their responsibility to be authentically friendly to guests. Their friendliness and openness measure a church and its membership to guests. Being open and friendly to guests means that the church family is conversational, listening, inviting, encouraging, and caring.

Opportunity #2: Church facilities appear "inviting" to newcomers. Guests apply, consciously or subconsciously, the "five senses" test when they visit church facilities. Consider from the visitor's perspective just what they are...

- **See** - Building(s) attractive, well lighted, cluttered and unclean? Do they see church members who are happy?
- **Hear** - Happy sounds, welcome voices or unsmiling faces and unhappy voices?
- **Smell** - Are there clean and sweet smells or musty odors?
- **Taste** - This is not a sense a person has in their mouth, as it is a perception or experience. Is there a good spirit in the church, a good relationship between the congregation and pastor, and a warm friendly place to be?
- **Touch (feel)** - Do newcomers feel welcomed? Accepted? Excited? Involved? Remember that there is only one time to make a good first impression. It is important that the church and its members present an attractiveness and warmth to help newcomers feel welcomed.

Opportunity #3: Trained greeters for all church functions. Greeters provide a "warm, friendly face" that guests need to see when they arrive. Well-trained greeters should be ready to provide helpful information and directions for guests.

Opportunity #4: Trained counselors to assist during decision/ministry times. Are there trained counselors to assist at decision/ministry times to permit the pastor and staff to minister to more people? These counselors should be enlisted personally, challenged to assume this responsibility, and then trained.

Opportunity #5: Some kind of "Meet the Pastor and Staff" get-together. It may be a meal after church or a short-and-to-the-point "Intro to the Church" type class. The best time to help a new Christian get a good start is immediately so the above mentioned gatherings should be planned no less than every four weeks and should include a specific "what's the next step?" invitation. These types of gatherings help newcomers meet new friends; obtain an initial orientation; and find out how to get involved in the life of the church.

Opportunity #6: Newcomers welcomed and involved in worship and small group Bible studies. Small group Bible study and worship are essential to the growth of any new Christian. How a church invites and involves newcomers in these areas is very important.



Opportunity #7: Church provides entrance interview for each newcomer. This is a time when the values, mission, and vision of the church are explained. It is a time when questions are answered. It is a time when newcomers are helped to feel important. It is a time when newcomers are challenged and growth expectations are outlined. It is conducted in a warm, open, and "comfortable" setting.

Opportunity #8: Newcomers participate in new members training. The church provides a new members' course for all church members. Someone who is personable and outgoing should lead it and apprentice small group leaders should be invited to participate as well in order to connect with newcomers. In addition to envisioning newcomers with purpose and plans for the church, the training should utilize materials that help a new Christian get a "jump start" in their Christian growth. The training should also provide an opportunity for newcomers to "tell their story."

Opportunity #9: The church recognizes newcomers for completion of new members' course. It is important for a church body to appropriately acknowledge completion of new member training. This recognition provides a bridge from this initial growth over into a deeper walk and commitment to Christ.

