

PASTORPEDIA

A FREE RESOURCE FOR PASTORS AND CHURCH LEADERS 

cenational.org/pastorpedia

Vol. 1, Issue 3

Produced by CE National

Receiving New People into the Church

It is a simple way to critique a church:

- Do new people come?
- How are they received?
- How are they assimilated to the family?

Each area needs honest answers and wise strategy. For sure!

So this month we address these questions, knowing the issue of relationships of our people with the unchurched is most important, and central. Relationship, relationship, relationship!

But read on!

Best Concepts or Events to Attract People

Jeff Bogue

- 1 Invest in events that empower your people to invite guests.
- 2 It is extremely important to remember that events and activities do not attract people to the church. By and large, the community is indifferent to the activities of a church. So church events, like a Christian music group or a dramatized reading of the Bible, will not bring non-churched people into the building. The events that should be invested in are events that energize your people... for they will do the inviting!
- 3 Children and youth events.
Kids bring their friends...and their parents and grandparents and aunts and uncles....
 - Bible camp
 - Teenage "parties"
 - Children/parent events (father/daughter dance, mother/son camp out)
- 4 Weekend party—(We call ours, "The Funniest Weekend Ever"!)
Take your regular service times, have an abbreviated message and release everyone to a giant "picnic," inflatables, grilling, etc.... great icebreaker!
- 5 Social justice efforts.
We surveyed college students and the #1 thing that gave our church credibility in their eyes was our social justice work (relief efforts, housing, tutoring, etc.)

We call this “doing good *with* our neighbor, instead of *to* our neighbors.”

We have a whole series/program called “ICARE” that we use. Huge connection point for us.

6 Connect events.

These are events that are only intended to “Break the ice.”

- Golf outing... non-fundraiser
- 5K—ours is called the “Grace Race”
- Coffee and Laughs—women’s comedy night
- Sporting events of all kinds

These events must have a defined purpose and defined follow-through plan—never do them just to do them.

7 Quality and creative children’s ministry.

Children are the #1 reason people come and stay at a church. (Beats preaching every time. 😊)

8 Relevant sermon series.

Title your preaching series in relevant and interesting ways, then advertise it.

Example: Sermon series on the beatitudes we titled: “Life Hacks”—things Jesus taught that are useful in everyday life.

7 High quality services.

Avoid “cringe factors”—squealing sound systems, bad soloist

“Every weekend is Easter weekend.”

8 Being guest sensitive.

Clean building and grounds...first impression formed in less than two minutes. The #1 emotion associated with

trying a new church is fear! Information alleviates fear...
address the room like it is full of guests every service.

- 9 Make outreach a mindset, not an event.
- 10 (Pray—I forgot this one, then read Knute’s list and felt guilty.)

Jim Brown

- 1 Ask yourself this question: “Would you want to invite someone to your church?” The answer to that question trumps everything else.
- 2 Make your building a place people already want to come to before you invite them. Ask yourself this question: “If our church moved, would anybody miss us or notice we were gone?”
- 3 Make a visible presence in your community way before you invite—with outreach blitzes. Find ways to make yourself visible in community events where you are the hands and feet serving. Market your presence with same color shirts to identify who you are.
- 4 Everything goes into motion by the leaders leading the way first. They must be inviting others and living out their own faith in a compelling way so that people would want to come.
- 5 Establish a great first impressions team from the parking lot to the auditorium. Make sure your greeters know how to greet and ushers know how to usher! These people must be friendly, helpful, and full of smiles. They walk guests to

- necessary places! What happens in the parking lot could even determine if that person makes a decision to trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior.
- 6 Don't say someone's "no" for them. Just simply make the ask and be willing to meet them at the door before the service. Even attend a different service that accommodates them.
 - 7 Strive for excellence in your weekly gatherings. Pray that God allows you to have an ear toward heaven in your planning. The local church should be the most creative, excellent, Spirit-filled, and attractive place on planet earth. We have an "unfair advantage" that the world doesn't have since the Holy Spirit lives in us.
 - 8 Capitalize on your strengths when it comes to planning big events. We go all out on Father's Day ("DadFest"), Mother's Day ("Momma Mania"), Easter (memorable message with creative altar response times), and Christmas (creative setting designs and foyer designs). We also plan large outreach events such as "Beast Feast" for men, "Hero Adventure" for moms and sons, Judgment House at Halloween, "Daddy-Daughter" Dances, and Married Couple Dances.
 - 9 Make your building design speak to men, too. Way too many buildings are only designed to attract and appeal to women. Ask a man what he likes.
 - 10 Have a staff member overseeing first impressions and budget in such a way that this reflects a strong value.

Knute Larson

- 1 Reminding our people that fully 80% of guests come the first time because they are invited by a friend.

- 2 Reminding myself and staff that those who are faithful (those noted in #1) invite others if three things are true: consistency of services and mood, excellence (doing our best), and punctuality (begin and end on time).
- 3 Christmas and Easter and other specials.
- 4 "Getting on the map" so people know where the building is and what the church is about—like kids' festivals, running races, walking track, "grace car wash," food bank, and more.
- 5 Everyone makes their best shot every Sunday. There are no off Sundays.
- 6 "Side doors" of the church—especially sports and music, the languages of America.
- 7 Someone on staff to be the local outreach point person, caring for all this and more.
- 8 Home groups, and restaurant groups, and special events that urge people to invite friends.
- 9 An attractive and easy-to-use website and church building (including signage and entry ways and rest rooms).
- 10 Prayer. The last is first.

GOALS AND CONCEPTS ABOUT RECEIVING PEOPLE WHEN THEY COME

Jeff Bogue

- 1 Greeters without names badges.
Greeters with badges look like employees instead of friendly people. Only safety team members and children's workers should have badges.

- 2 Upbeat music playing.
Silence is scary, and music fills in silence.
Music also identifies whether you fit in this place. Think of heavy metal music playing in a candle store—feels wrong.
Play upbeat, even secular music, before and after services.

- 3 Offer coffee and refreshments for free.
You would never ask a guest in your home to reimburse you for coffee. We should expect guests and treat them with the hospitality due them.
 - Give them the best parking.
 - Give them the best seats.
 - Act like they are there!

- 4 Clear directional signs:
 - Restrooms
 - Parking
 - Entrances
 - Especially children's ministry

- 5 Welcome "guests," not visitors.
Guests are expected and appreciated. Visitors are only stopping by.
"If you are our guest this weekend..."

- 6 Mugging.
When a guest comes for the first time, deliver a gift mug. Ours has the church logo and website on it. This is a

personal touch—one that does not expect an invitation to come into the house and visit. It is just a gift. If they want to talk, great; if not, at least they tend to feel seen and heard by the church.

7 Connection cards.

Put these in the program every week and collect them through the offering baskets:

- Contact info
- Prayer requests
- Commitments to Christ
- Etc.

8 First Impression Team.

More than greeters—they are a team of people who are always thinking about how to make someone's entrance into the church easier.

Jim Brown

- 1 Create an environment where guests are the most important people, but don't require them to state they are a guest. Never make a guest stand or raise his or her hand in a service. But make sure you have created an environment where your members welcome guests before and after the service with warm handshakes and smiles.
- 2 Have good signage that helps people know where to go and how to get there. Much like getting off an airplane when traveling. Create a place where they can go and ask questions if they need to.
- 3 Keep in mind while you are preaching that there are guests, even unsaved guests, in the room. Preach in such a way that a guest can relate to the message you are

- giving. Smile while you preach—there are some scary preachers out there. 😊
- 4 Refrain from Christianese while preaching. Explain terms well, but don't assume everyone understands "sublapsarianism!" 😊
 - 5 Give a warm greeting at some point in your service to welcome guests and point them to your website, bulletin, or the place in the building where they can ask more questions.
 - 6 Give them a chance to respond if they choose to, with their address on a fill-out form. And follow up with a letter that is signed with a handwritten note by the pastor. I have been amazed by how many people approach me later to thank me for the letter.
 - 7 Create a safe, clean, and protected place to drop off kids for children's ministries. Plus, have an electronic notification system in place to notify parents if the child needs special attention. Keep this checking place manned by friendly, loving people. Ask yourself if you would drop your child off here.
 - 8 Have friendly greeters stationed at entrances that do not get locked in conversations with insiders while guests walk by. There is nothing worse than a volunteer talking about last night's game with an insider while a guest walks by.
 - 9 Utilize social media and your website as a place where guests can go to check out your church way before they arrive. Most guests today will decide to come based on information they find in these sites.

- 10 Create a worship experience that is warm, challenging, heartfelt, transparent and relevant. Don't scold your people from the pulpit or communicate inside problems while preaching.
- 11 Pray for your services and guests way before the service begins and ask the Holy Spirit to help and to give your volunteers a special touch.

Knute Larson

- 1 Greeters, ushers, and all regular people are motivated to care to welcome people—after the worship service also! They know more than, "Hello, here is a bulletin."
- 2 One point person on staff leads and coordinates all the ways of receiving and assimilating people—with strong volunteer ministry managers taking care of each of the categories or ministries.
- 3 Leaders of all groups and ministries know that their activity must also have a strategy for reaching new people, and a careful way to receive them. It is not just about the worship service, but rather part of the DNA of the church.
- 4 Using a variety of ways to touch new lives—cards, phone, welcome center, "coffee (or pizza) with the pastors." Monthly brunch with staff, a short intro class. You will connect with some through each of these.
- 5 A careful, warm way to welcome from the pulpit (or down on the floor) without embarrassing the guests.
- 6 "Side door" events for regulars to use to introduce friends to the church—restaurant groups to discuss the sermon with the pastor, women's teas, support groups, men's outreach events with a great mood, special felt-need, short-term electives.

- 7 Pastor and staff greet both before and after services—they and other leaders do not “hide” on Sundays, the one day people come to where we are.
- 8 Careful, loving sermons that bring the Scriptures and real life together in a clear way.
- 9 Clean and attractive parking lots, entrance ways, nurseries, and restrooms.
- 10 Prayer. The last is first.

Ministries and Programs Under the Heading of Assimilation

Jeff Bogue

It is extremely important that this pathway is clearly and easily accessible!

It cannot be overly communicated.

1 101 seminar*

This a behind-the-scenes look at the church

- History
- Vision
- How to involve yourself and family
- Tour of facilities

*I highly recommend it be taught by the senior pastor (I still teach mine). It allows folks to get to know you and helps to remove the “wall” the pulpit can create.

2 Discovery groups

These are formed in 101 and are the vehicles in which base line information is conveyed and relationships are formed.

3 Discovery seminars

Attended by discovery groups. Taught by other staff or leaders. Serve to teach interaction with God and the "beliefs" of your church.

4 "VolunTours"

These are tours of all the volunteer opportunities at the church. Held during a weekend service, potential volunteers can see the ministry in action and understand how they might be involved.

5 Life Groups

Small groups in which people connect to God and each other. The Bible is the focus, relationships and service the outcome. Not a traditional teaching class room, but very interactive and at times personalized.

We consider someone "fully assimilated" when they join a Life Group.

Jim Brown

- 1 "Get to know Grace"—this is a quarterly gathering after our services where lunch is served and pastors have time to share about ministries, vision, structure, history, and their own personal journeys of coming to the church. Wrap it up by pastors giving a tour of the building. Most people are not fully aware of the layout of the building or all the ministries offered. This is a fun time of time spent with the pastors and leaders.

- 2 "First Call" ministry—where a pastor calls and thanks the person for visiting. Even in our world today people love a personal touch or evidence that you went the extra mile.
- 3 Create forums to allow people to jump in and serve quickly, such as outreach blitzes that involve the whole family. Many new relationships are developed and enable a bond to occur, thus connecting the new family to the church.
- 4 Provide environments where people can do life together—weekly prayer encounter, small groups, Fight Club, "40-Day Remarkable Women's Challenges." Give people a chance to reduce their circle from the larger Sunday gathering to a smaller more intimate setting. Common experiences bond and cement relationships.
- 5 Don't try to do too much. Do one or two things well and don't try to compete with the church down the street. Develop your own DNA and stick with it.
- 6 Create a central contact person to answer questions about how the church functions and how one can join. Be careful, though, of those who want to drive their own agenda and are bent on bringing it to your church. Don't ever fall into the trap of letting some big givers or the fear of their leaving shape the direction of your church. It's God's church.
- 7 Be yourself and not another person and ask Jesus to give you great vision for your church. No one, absolutely no one, thinks about the church as much and as often as you do. And no one spends as much time praying about the church as you do. So beg God to help you lead His church well.

- 8 Once people are attending, get them connected to a daily contact memo and prayer chain. We call it "Today at Grace." This it goes out daily and appears on the Grace Community website page.
- 9 Use Facebook as a tool to get to know your people and for them to get to know you. Way too many pastors under-utilize this tool. It gives you a chance to pray for and encourage and gain the heartbeat of your people. I have been amazed at how this has connected me with them. A simple but powerful tool to use for good. Plus the younger generation no longer sends emails, but communicates through social media.
- 10 Utilize a software program that tracks attendance and activities of attendees so that less people get lost in the mix and people feel connected by your checking in on them. *Fellowship One* is a great tool.
- 11 Take notice of attendees who begin to show less involvement and make a phone call, send a message, or pray for them. If you are doing the right things and running after Jesus, take heart because people will still leave the church. Grieve when applicable, but don't let it be the death of you.

Knute Larson

- 1 Greeters and ushers, well trained. They must see themselves as part of the guest relations ministries, not people who say hello and give out paper.
- 2 Reception: A good place for some guests to meet the pastor and his wife after the service. Gifts are given and names are recorded.

- 3 "First Call"—a team of caring people who email or phone or take a small gift and greeting. Part of training for all these is knowing what is pushy and what is gracious!
- 4 "Pizza (or coffee) with the pastors"—60-80 minutes at a convenient time and place, to ask questions and get a feel of church values and mood.
- 5 "(Name of church) 101"—A series of two or three classes (or seminar-length Saturday or Sunday class) introducing the church and its central beliefs and practices. Some will do this who are not yet ready for a membership class. In all these, it is best for the lead pastor(s) to be involved.
- 6 Membership class—offer at various times so people with different schedules can attend. We started ours with a bring-a-casserole dinner and had a "ministry fair" at the last session, asking everyone to sign up for a basic job in the church.
- 7 Introduction and celebration of new members. Do not keep them a secret, but do not put them on the spot either.
- 8 Sunday ABF*s or home ABFs—often the best way to form new ones is with the new members. Established groups are often, sadly, hard to break into!

*Adult Bible Fellowship

Pastorpedia is produced monthly by three experienced pastors: Jeff Bogue, of [Grace Church](#), in several locations in the Bath-Norton-Medina areas of Ohio; Jim Brown, of [Grace Community Church](#) in Goshen, Indiana, a church known for its strong growth, family and men's ministries, and community response teams; and [Knute Larson](#), a coach of pastors, who previously led The Chapel in Akron for 26 years. Pastorpedia is brought to you by [CE National](#). Visit cenational.org/pastorpedia for more issues and to read the bios of our contributors.