

Pastor's Perspective: Being More Guest Attentive

July 2018

What is YOUR first response when you notice someone new on Sunday morning? Do you assume they've come with someone else so that person will "show them the ropes"? Are you quick to judge their character based on appearance? Are you surprised to see new faces and curious how they found their way to CCAM? Or do you even care at all?

Many of us raised in or around the church a good portion of our lives have found a level of functioning and perhaps even comfort in the typical way things are done on a Sunday morning. We are familiar with the general layout, expectations and the language. However, a growing number of our population have not had such experiences. Some have little to no experience in a worship service while others have been significantly hurt by the church. For these folks it is an enormous step to even come into such an environment. What do we do with such people? They are not a threat. They are not an inconvenience. Guests are a gift!

Each person lives her/his life on a journey; a story that interacts with God's story. They are either drawing closer to making Jesus Christ their Lord or growing distant from this destiny. I want us to be a people God can trust to care for his children when their journey intersects with ours. In some cases, their journey will become a long-term part of our journey and we will all grow closer to Christ together.

For this to happen we need to treat our guests as the gift each one is. We can improve our attention to the way they are greeted at the door, oriented to our surroundings, interacted with by regular attenders and connected with during our regular gathering time. This is why we invested in interior

directional signage. This is why we adjust the flow of our morning service, introduce ourselves from up front, regularly use connection cards and send a thank you note with a small gift to guests who fill out their card for the first time. Guests are worth the investment and even the sacrifice of what we might want instead.

As a small congregation we can have a great “family feel” that is quite welcoming to guests and a great comfort to many who regularly attend here. We do well in this area and while this trait is important we must always be prepared to extend the family circle to include others desiring to become part of God’s family. We don’t want to gravitate toward being a closed group. In fact, we should expect guests and be praying that God would allow us to be a part of other people’s journey closer to Christ.

It may at times challenge our traditions or the things we’ve come to expect but being attentive to guests will transform us more into the shape of Christ. So, you may see us ramp up our hospitality efforts or shift some things around in the foyer and sanctuary, but this won’t come as a surprise to you because you know that CCAM cares about her guests and desires to create an environment for each person to have transforming connections with Christ. Transformation is the goal of the Christ-centered life and this significantly informs my preaching/teaching. More on that in the coming issue of *The Pastor’s Perspective*.