

## A Quick Look at How to Treat Guests

The receptionist system in your church is one of its most important activities, and deserves careful attention and training of personnel.

What do people look for when they step inside your church door? This is not an easy question to answer, because people's personalities vary so much. There are, however, some common denominators:

- People look for a warm, friendly place.
- They are looking for the right kind of human contact.
- They expect courteous treatment, and they expect recognition of their existence.
- They expect verbal and body language that says: "You are welcome and accepted."
- They expect an attitude that says: "We want you here."

### Who Walks in Your Church Door?

There are four general categories of guests who walk in your church door:

- Unchurched people who for one reason or another visit your church.
- Non-attending or occasionally-attending Adventists.
- People brought to church by friends, relatives, and acquaintances.

- Adventists from out of town or from other Adventist churches.

Each of these groups has its own set of expectations, fears, and preconceived ideas.

The following chart lists some common perceptions and expectations.

None of these is universal, because people have individual personalities, and no church can be expected to read minds and hearts, but they point to some common denominators.

Your congregation, and especially your receptionists,

need to have a general idea of how to approach each group.

### Key Strategies

1. **Take - don't send.**
2. **Show - don't just "hand to."**
3. **Connect guests with other people as quickly as possible.**

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*Lasting impressions are made in the first 30 seconds, and guests often decide within about five minutes whether or not they will come back to your church.*

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<b>Unchurched People</b>	Unchurched people tend to be suspicious and fearful of church people and church buildings. They're in unfamiliar territory and don't know what to expect. They don't understand "church" language. Unchurched people tend to want anonymity. That means they don't want to stand out from the crowd. They just want to be accepted and feel like part of whatever is happening
<b>Non-attending or Occasional-Attending SDAs</b>	1. The exact phraseology used when greeting them. is very important. 2. Do everything in your power to protect these guests from the kmore unstable people in your congregation who somehow tend to surface in exactly the wrong place at the wrong time
<b>People Brought to Church by Friends, Relatives, and Acquaintances</b>	These guests already have a point of contact. The people who bring them can tell you whether they want to be smothered with affection or left alone.
<b>Adventists From Out of Town or From Another SDA Church</b>	We Adventists have a keen sense of "family." We expect to be received in any of our churches as if it were our own. In practice, we may end up being ignored, and as a result feel hurt. Untrained greeters tend to pay attention to the people they know, not the people they don't know. But it is precisely their job to pay attention to the people they don't know.

## Invitations to Lunch

1. Make sure the church has a plan to ensure that visitors are either invited to lunch at someone's home or to a church fellowship dinner.

a. Larger churches organize groups to host dinner every Sabbath.

b. Small churches usually have a potluck once a month with individuals taking responsibility for inviting visitors on other Sabbaths.

2. Extend a dinner invitation to each visitor. If the invitation is to someone's home, introduce the host to the visitor sometime during the morning's program.

3. Greet visitors again after the church service, making sure they have an invitation and know where to go for the dinner. Take them with you to the church fellowship dinner and introduce

them to two or three other people.

4. At church fellowship dinners it is important to seat visitors with members so they feel welcome and part of the fellowship. Often visitors are asked to go through the serving line first and end up sitting with other visitors, and so feel ignored by the members of the church.

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**A smile, a warm sign of welcome, either a handshake or whatever form is used in your culture, and a brief word of welcome are always in order.**

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