

GREETER

A MINISTRY DESCRIPTION FOR LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS

Introduction

God asks the church to be a fellowship sharing a common purpose and continually growing in faith. Paul describes the church as Christ's "body" (Eph. 1:22).

People experience the presence of Jesus Christ in the world through the ministry of the church. When your local church serves the needs of people, members and non-members, it is an expression of the love of Christ. The church is a servant body, created for service. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

Christ calls every member of the church into ministry. The church is "a kingdom of priests" (I Peter 2:9). As a greeter, you are a minister. Every Christian believer is called to ministry, gifted by the holy Spirit, and in baptism ordained for ministry. (Eph. 4:11-12) Shortly after Pentecost, the gift of greeting or hospitality (Romans 12:13, I Tim. 3:2, I Peter 4:9) was first exercised specifically for the church and those whom Christ died to save. As believers praised God, they had favor with people. Their love for one another attracted others to their fellowship and "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47).

God supplies each person in the church with the resources for ministry—scripture, spiritual power, God's character, and spiritual gifts. A greeter is equipped for his or her ministry by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These spiritual gifts are special abilities given by the Holy Spirit to make their ministry effective and build up the body of Christ.

When a person steps into a church for the first time, he or she evaluates the atmosphere. He asks himself: "Will they accept me? Will it be easy to make friends? Will my spiritual and personal needs be met? Will it be easy to find my way around? Will my family like it here?"

The newcomer will quickly come to some conclusions during the first few minutes. First impressions are often lasting impressions. Consequently, the ministry of the greeters is one of the most important things that happens in any congregation! Sometimes it is called "foyer ministry."

Although a greeter's love should be no stronger than is the love found in the rest of the body of Christ, nevertheless the greeter performs a major role in ensuring that people see and experience that love. In Christ, you have received God's unconditional love, and, in Christ, you are called to extend that same unconditional love to others. The ministry of greeting is perhaps one of the most crucial in the church because it is one of the most visible. It is a ministry vital to the saving work of the church.

Duties of the Greeter

Although the program varies from church to church, the ministry to which a person is called when he or she becomes a greeter can best be described in the following ways:

1. *Contact with newcomers.* When you notice unknown guests, introduce yourself first, extend a welcome, and then ask for the visitors' names. While the visitors write in your guest book or complete registration cards, call over an usher or deacon. Introduce the visitors to this person who will show them to a seat or help them in finding Sabbath School classes, the parents' room, etc. It is especially important that you make a record of each visitor and turn this over to the pastor or interest coordinator. This is an important source of new members when properly followed up.
2. *Take an interest in people.* The congregation depends on the greeters to make their church personal. If you really care about people, they will be able to see it. Some are shy and will want you to preserve their dignity by not being too forward. Others are gregarious and want to be asked questions. Try to sense needs such as those who are confused about the location of children's activities or need access to a rest room, etc. Be as helpful as you can.

3. *Invitations to dinner.* Your local church should have a plan to make sure that visitors are either invited to lunch at someone's home or to a church fellowship dinner. Larger churches organize groups to host dinner every Sabbath. Small churches will have potlucks usually once a month.
4. *Listen for deeper needs.* People come to church burdened with hurts, disappointments and personal crises. As you have opportunity, steer hurting people to those in the church family to whom they can turn for help—the pastor, professional or peer counselors, teachers, physicians, social workers, Adventist Community Services leaders, and others. Use your knowledge to meet people at their points of need.
5. *Distribute materials.* Your task as a greeter has more to do with relationships than mechanical aspects like handing out the church bulletin. At the same time bulletins are also important! Many churches have a special handout or packet for visitors also. This often includes a map of the Sabbath School rooms, some history and a list of week-day activities like Bible study groups, Pathfinder Club, health classes, the Adventist Community Services center, family life workshops and Bible seminars. If your church does not have something like this, perhaps the greeters should meet to prepare one.

Resource Materials

The following resources are recommended for your ministry. You can purchase these by calling AdventSource (800-328-0525), the Adventist Book Center (800-765-6955) or your local Christian bookstore.

David Keirse and Marilyn Bates have divided the temperaments into 32 subgroups in their book entitled *Please Understand Me: Character & Temperament Types*. If you want more detail on this subject, you will prefer their work.

Extending a Warm and Caring Welcome is a 43-page manual for training greeters.

First Impressions Matter, presented by Eileen Gemmell. A video seminar for training greeters and ushers.

Full Circle, by David R. Mains, is an excellent book about the dynamics of church life.

How to Say "Hello" Without Saying "Good-Bye" by James Zackrison is a 14-page booklet on reaching out to visitors.

The Many Faces of Friendship, by Eileen Guder and *Out of the Salt Shaker & into the World: Evangelism as a Way of Life*, by Rebecca Manley Pippert both provide helpful information on how to relate to unchurched people who come to visit for the first time.

Ushers Guide for Ushers Pride, by Kenneth Washington. The complete manual for training ushers. Includes responsibilities for special services including weddings and funerals.

Visit AdventSource On-Line at www.adventsource.org for a complete list of the latest resources available for local church leaders. You can place an order or request a catalog by calling 1-800-328-0525.

For information about additional resources and answers to your questions call the Adventist Plusline at 1-800-732-7587 or visit them on-line at www.plusline.org.