

Are We a Friendly Congregation?

While we must be concerned with doing what we do in worship according to Christ's expressed will, we must also be sure to reflect His love to strangers, newcomers, outsiders, and otherwise unfamiliar faces.

It offends my sensitivities anytime I hear anyone complain that a church I love so much seems cold and unfriendly to them. However, when I see so many focused on one another or on no one or hear accounts of our visitors complaining that we are neither warm nor welcoming. That motivates me to say something. Consider the following principles:

We must stop expecting that others will represent us in friendliness.

Maybe we look at those seven or eight members of the congregation that "go after" our visitors and conclude that they are covering the bases for the rest of us. In a congregation our size, that is woefully inadequate. They cannot reach everybody, but even if they can their friendliness does not let us off the hook.

We must not use our introverted nature as an excuse. It would be hard to get an accurate estimate, but it is probably fair to say that more of our members are introverted than extroverted. Yet, the introverts may mistakenly conclude that extroverts are merely doing what comes easy and natural to them. As a representative of the extrovert clan, may I suggest that reaching out and connecting with strangers and visitors requires effort. Everyone must make an effort!

We must avoid the thinking that the visitor bears responsibility to be friendly. Some visitors may be outgoing and find it easy to connect with us, but we are the hosts and they are the guests. Think about how hard it is to come into an unfamiliar place where you know no one and reach out to them. This is our "home turf," and we must always take the initiative!

I want our congregation to be known for preaching and teaching the truth, but I want far more for us. Another thing I want is for us to be the church that doesn't just embrace and accept "our own," but who is always making room for one more.

Donald