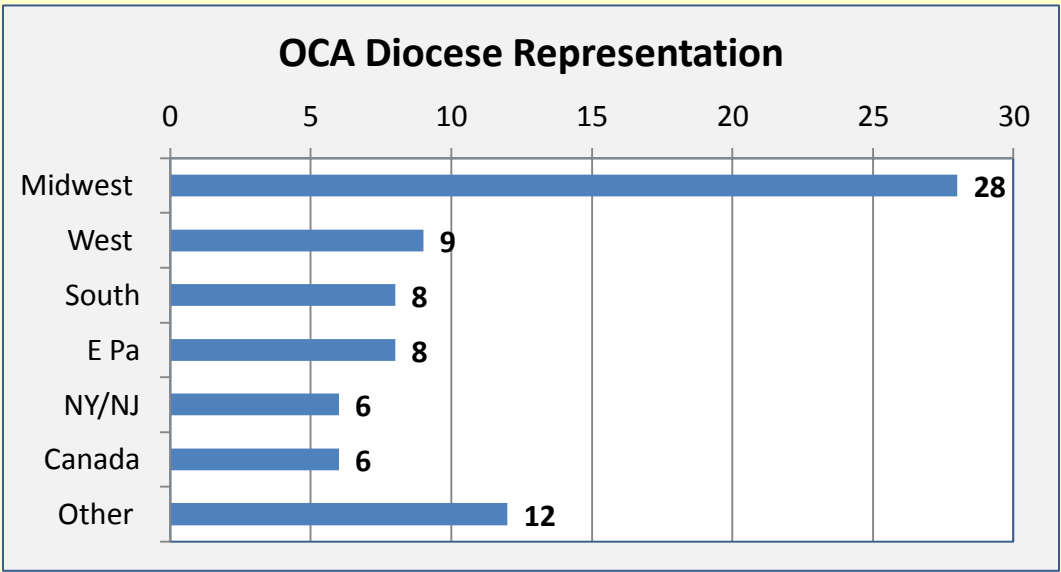
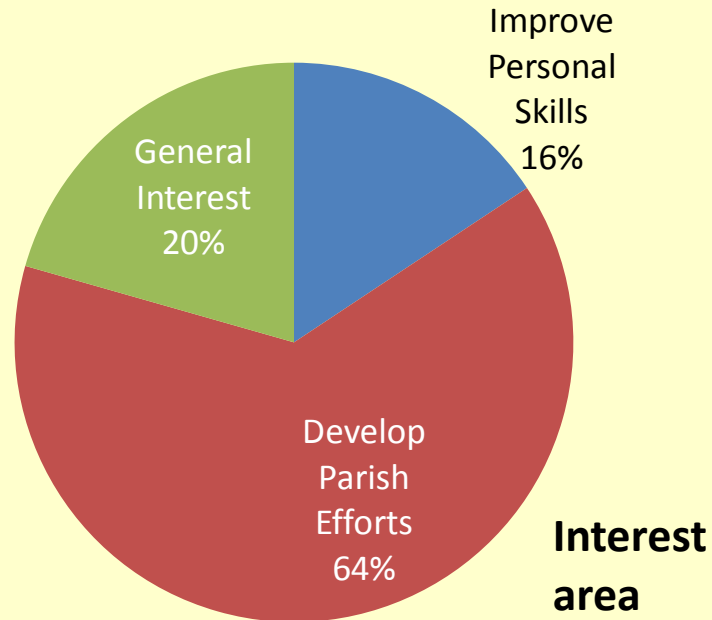
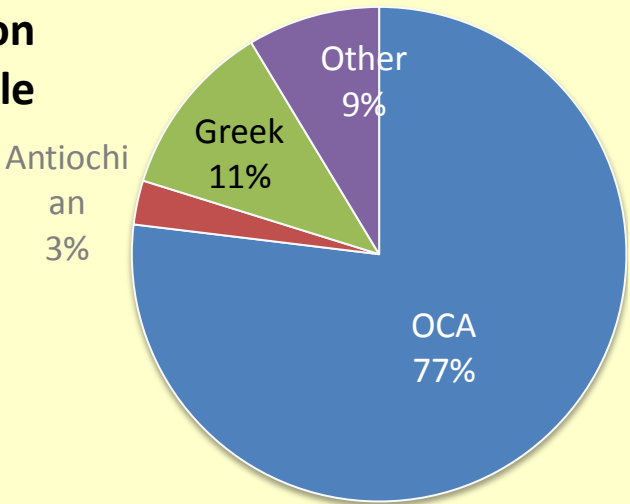
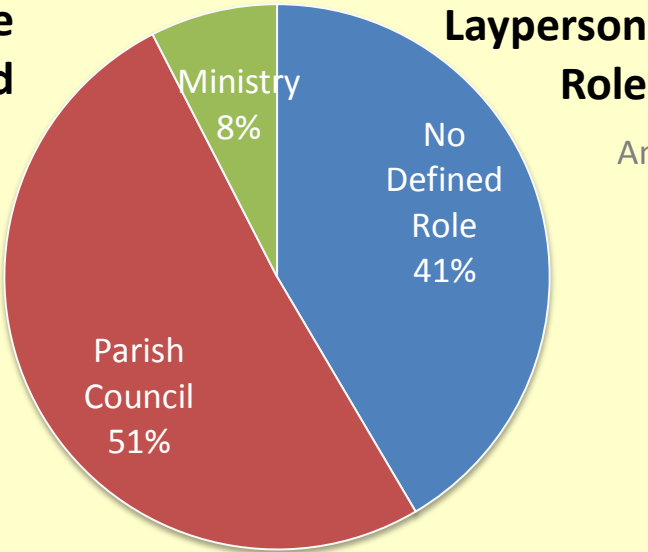
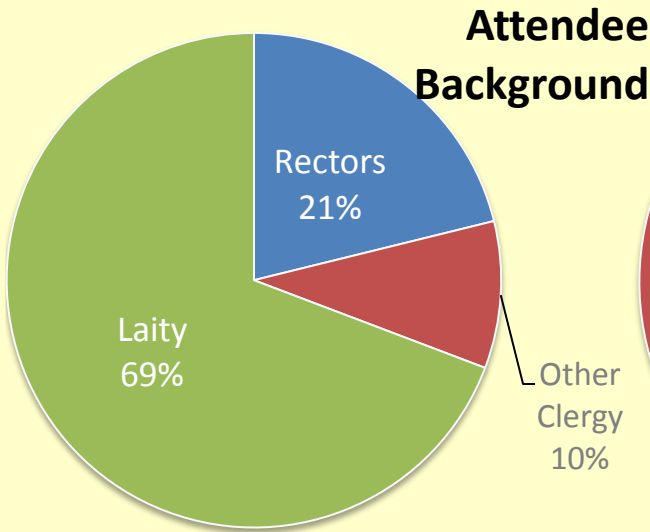


# Registrant Profile

## The Unchurched:

### Session 4: Creating Positive First Time Experiences



# Reaching Out to the Unchurched Webinar Series

## Today's Topic

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### Session 4

## Parish Hospitality

*Creating Positive First Time Experiences for Inquirers*



Fr. Jonathan  
Ivanoff



Joseph  
Kormos

*"Do not neglect to show hospitality, for by that means some have entertained angels without knowing it."*

*Hebrews 13:1-2*

# Assumptions

YOU have:

- A decent understanding of Orthodox faith
- Reviewed or attended previous sessions

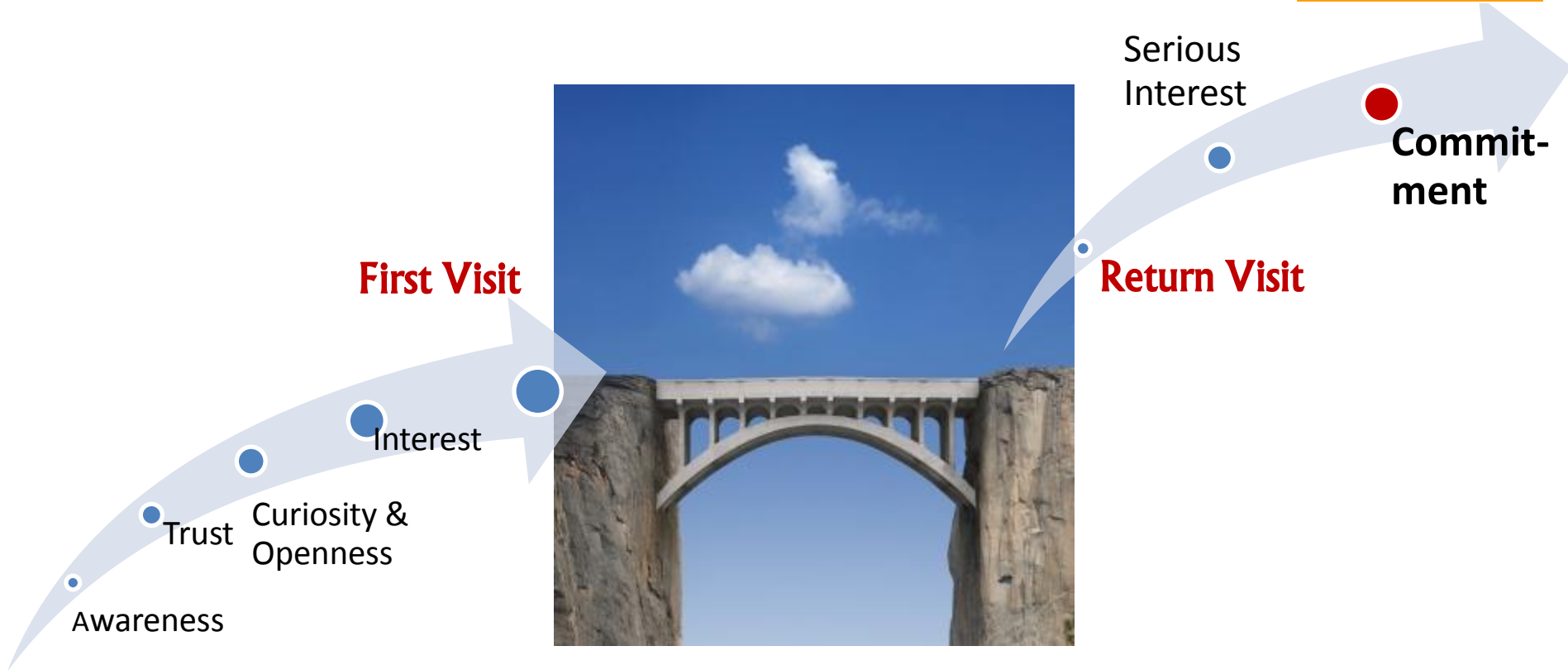
Your parish:

- Is open to becoming effective at sharing the gospel
- Wants to grow.



**The “Good News” is NOT  
our little secret”**

# Tonight's Main Topic



## Bridging the Gap between first visit and return visits

Creating a Welcoming Atmosphere --  
Positive First Experiences

# Outline

*Hospitality: An attitude, an environment, an action*

## Preparing for a Warm Welcome

- Understanding the visit from the inquirer's perspective

## Greeters Ministry

- Recruiting/ training
- Before
- During
- After – Post greeting

## Eliminating Seeker Insensitive Behaviors!

- One by one!

## Good Follow up

- Increasing the likelihood of return visits.

## A Parish Inviting Effort

- Putting this into practice



Understanding the First visit from the Inquirer's Perspective

# **PREPARING FOR A WARM WELCOME**

# Opening Our Doors

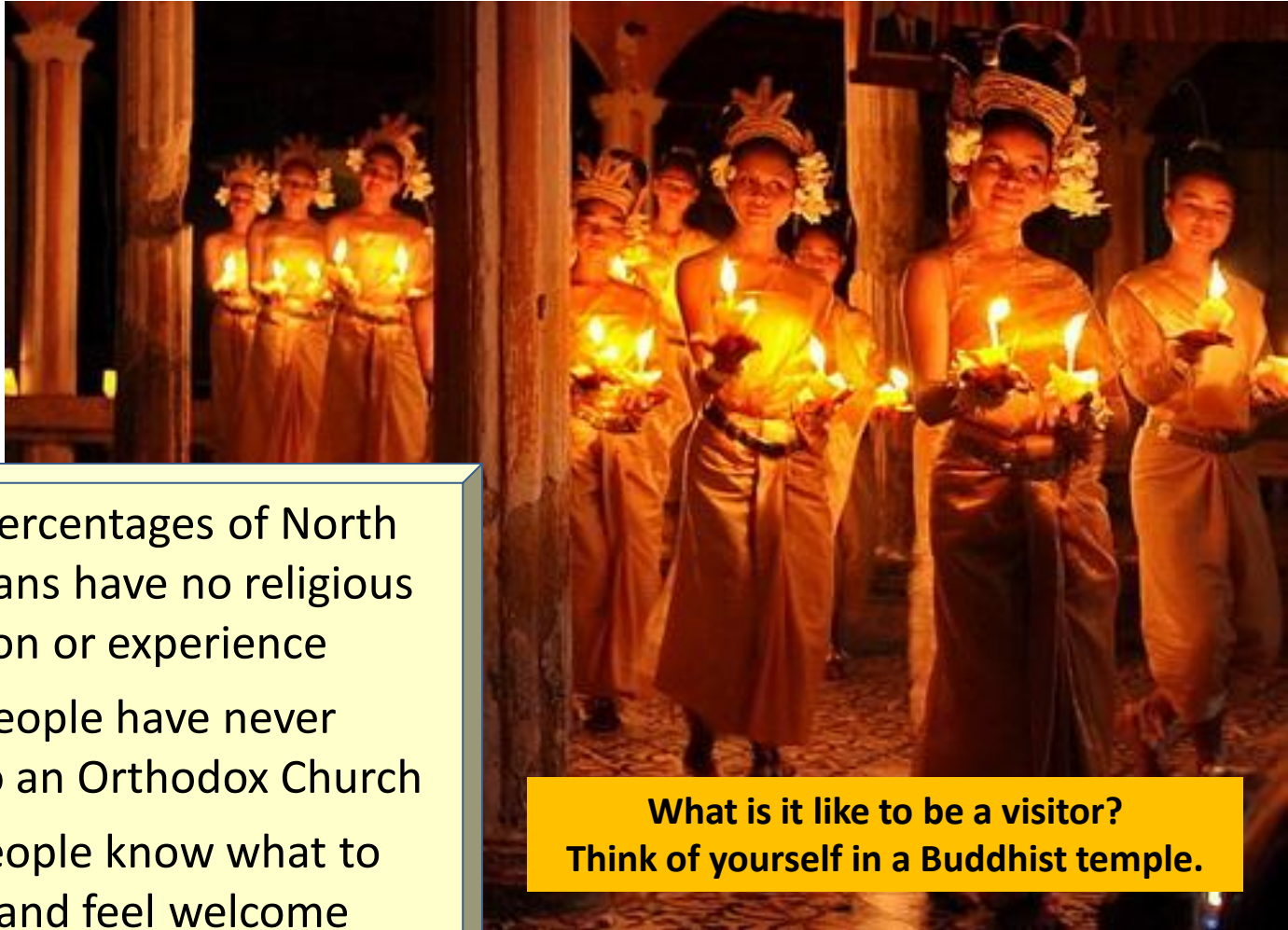
## *Key Questions*

1. # guests in last 6 months?
2. # returned?
  - Why? Why not?
3. What (your opinion, or theirs) were they looking for?
  - Did they find it?
  - How would they evaluate that?
  - What might they find unusual?



# What Is It Like to Be a Guest in Your Church?

## *Think Like a Guest*



- Large percentages of North Americans have no religious affiliation or experience
- Most people have never been to an Orthodox Church
- Help people know what to expect and feel welcome

**What is it like to be a visitor?  
Think of yourself in a Buddhist temple.**



# Desired vs. Actual Experiences

## *Improving First Time Experiences*

### Desired

- What experiences do you want to convey to first time guests?
  - What do you want them to say/feel afterward?



### Actual

- What are the experiences of:
  - A non – Orthodox inquirer in our parish?
  - Orthodox, but new to our parish



- Read the summary [here](#)

# Home Grown Mystery Worshipper?

- Pay someone to attend for three weeks!
- Follow up for reactions
- Do they come back w/o \$.



# Mystery Worshipper Highlights

## *(Lowlights)*

- “...impossible to determine the exact point at which the service had actually begun...”
- “This is **apparently a church that does not expect outsiders** ... not worried that strangers will show up and be confused”.
- “When I arrived, there were about 10 to 15 people... continued to drift in for an additional 30 minutes! **Was I at church or the train station?**”
- “people were standing around talking in (ethnic language). I learned that a smile and "hello" apparently mean **"I'm not one of you; ignore me"** in \_\_\_\_.”
- “I hung around at back looking lost... **no one spoke to me.** People looked at me & **quickly averted their gaze.**”
- “...like being in the Russian section of heaven”
- “There's a lot of Pantocrator and not too much carpenter. For me, this church brings out Christ's divine nature **more strongly than his human nature.**”
- “...service book and bulletin dwelt on **exclusiveness of Orthodox Christianity** too much to make other Christians feel comfortable.”
- “Being **grilled by the priest.** I'm happy to be identified as a goat to be kept separated from the sheep, but in guarding the integrity of communion, Father should lighten up.”
- “service was **hardly visitor friendly.** I spent first half flipping around the service book”

# Manage Impressions Before Greeters...

## *Hospitality & Expectations*



- Convey hospitality
- Condition expectations



Review





## *Tips*

- Welcome!
- Aid worship experience
- Watch “tone” & language level
- Consider adapting unfamiliar liturgical terms
  - “Prokeimenon” vs. “Responsorial Psalm”.
- Beware...
  - local acronyms & terms
  - Incomplete Info – “meeting @ Betty’s house; usual time”
- Include:
  - Website, street address, phone #'s
- Track “Real Estate”
  - Non Core Activities
- Tell Stories of *New People*
- Info for guests
  - Rest rooms etc.
  - When NOT to leave.

*See some useful example texts for bulletins in appendix of these slides*

*Read more tips in our articles about parish bulletins [here](#) and [here](#)*

# Other Pre-Greeting Experiences

- Phone
  - Answer machine up to date?
  - Speak to a live person?
  - Pleasant answer
  - Are questions treated as “work interruptions” or opportunities to exercise servant leadership
- e-mails
  - responded to promptly?

# Then it's the greeters...





Preparing for a  
Warm Welcome

**Greeters Ministry**

Eliminating Seeker  
Insensitive  
Behaviors!

Good Follow up

A Parish Inviting  
Effort



Fr. Jonathan  
Ivanoff

Recruiting. Training. Before. During. After

# EQUIPPING AN EFFECTIVE GREETERS MINISTRY

# What's Your Idea of Greeting?

**This?**



**Or This?**



**It often isn't this obvious!**

# Two Initial Thoughts...

Getting them  
*to* your front  
door is  
“evangelism.”



Greeting  
starts when  
they come  
**through** the  
front door.

➔ If you don't have many visitors, it's not the Greeters program that's a failure.

# ...And One Subsequent One

*“Visitor” or “Guest”*

*Visitor*: One who goes to a museum  
(which implies...)

*Guest*: Someone you welcome into your  
own home (which further implies...)

# Eight Traits of Greeters

## *Establishing a Greeters Ministry*

- Recruit those w/ gifts of *hospitality, evangelism*
- Take this ministry seriously! NOT just a fill-in position
- Do NOT assume everyone can do this well



1. *Engaging smiler!*
2. *Hospitable, warm, friendly*
3. *Diligent, faithful*
4. *Good listener*
5. *Sincere, genuine*
6. *Helpful*

Source: <http://www.thehardygroup.org>

# Some Tips...

## It's more than a handshake!

### DO:

- Smile! Look like you like people
- Fresh breath
- Initiate! Make eye contact, shake a hand, welcome
- Offer a bulletin, free literature
- Show them where the restrooms are
- Offer help to light a candle

### DON'T:

- Ask "Are you new?"
- Ask "Is this your first time?"
- Ask "Are you Antigreessian?"
- Ask for contact info right away



# Some More Tips...

- Arrive on time. Dress Appropriately
- Imagine how the guest is feeling
- Be Prepared – look over bulletin, know what special events & services are taking place
- Capture info for follow up (if natural)
- Expect the unexpected (Therapeutic dogs?)
- Don't publicly introduce guests
- Handoffs for follow up ➔ *This is important!*





# Listening is Important!



➔ Should be **\*\*OBVIOUS\*\*** that  
your visitor isn't happy with his **HIS** church  
because that's what drove him to visit **YOUR** church!

---

- He'd like to talk about it, so...
- Concentrate on what **he** is saying, thinking, and feeling
- Do **not** give them **YOUR** advice, **YOUR** experiences or **YOUR** thoughts and feelings (it's not about you!)
- Don't drive him away by taking over the conversation and preaching "Orthodoxy"



# Likes and Dislikes

## LIKED:

- Nothing special during service; treated no differently
- Greeted individually after the service by people
- Information about parish readily available
- Received thank you note from priest/greeter that week
- Coffee Hour!

## DISLIKED:

- Priest/layman visited their home *that* week
- Asked to wear a name tag at the service
- Asked to I.D. themselves, as a guest/visitor, during service
- Small gift brought to home as a thank-you for visiting

*Evangelism That Works*  
George Barna

# Greeter Support Needs

- Bulletin
- Service books
- Literature rack
- Guest book/guest card
- Music
- Parish Brochure/Info
- Signs (rest rooms)
- Emergency Numbers
- Spills
- Wheelchair

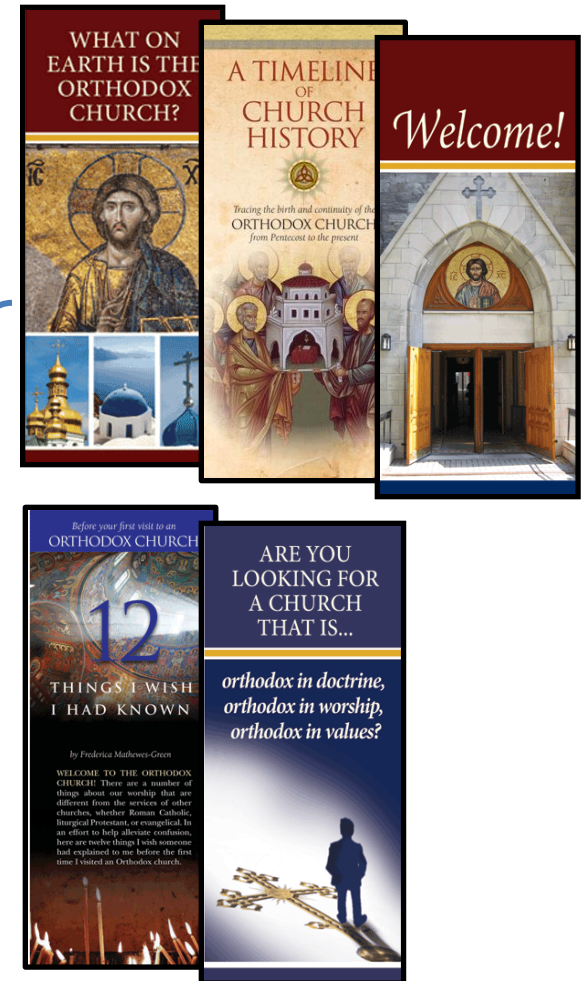


# “Be Prepared”

## *Skills / Tools*

### Welcome Kit

- Business card /fridge magnet with church name, address & phone
- Professionally-printed tri-fold or booklet on the parish
- Brochures
- Latest newsletter
- Icon



# The *Liturgy After the Liturgy*

## The “common work of the people”, Part 2

- Get them to coffee hour... or bookstore... or talking with the priest
- Get into a “substantive conversation” – remember why they’re there (but don’t push!)
- Avoid Orthodox arrogance
- Everybody’s job!



Preparing for a  
Warm Welcome

Greeters Ministry

Eliminating Seeker  
Insensitive  
Behaviors!

Good Follow up

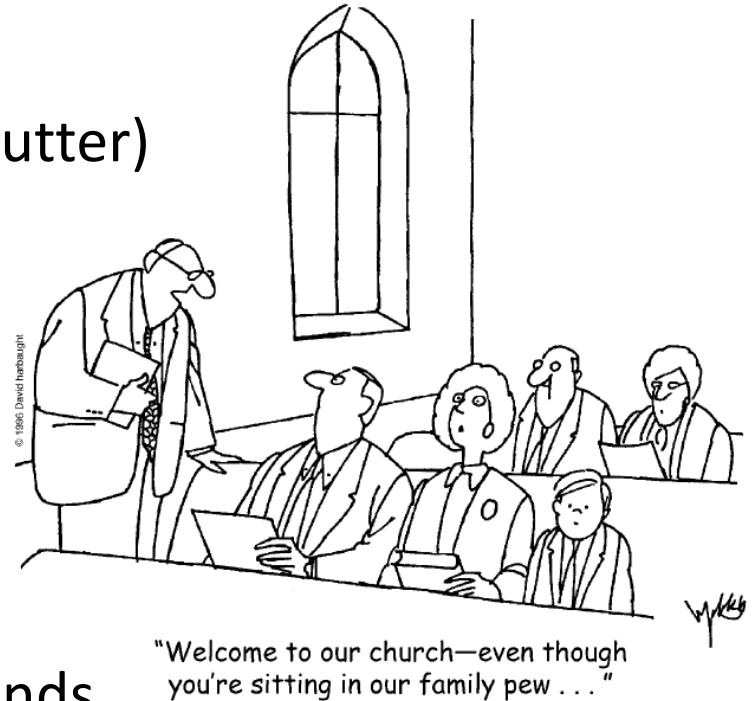
A Parish Inviting  
Effort

One by One

# **ELIMINATING SEEKER *INSENSITIVE* BEHAVIORS**

# Seeker Insensitive Behaviors

- “Are you Antigreessian?”
- “You’re in MY seat!” (harumph, sputter)
- “Why are you here?” (vs. “how?”)
- “I don’t know, ask Father”
- “Would you like to buy...”
- Correcting ... “don’t do that”
- Ethnic food emphasis
- Introducing guests/ ask to raise hands
- Glaring at children



# Taming Difficult Behaviors

Insensitive Behavior	Unfortunate Implication	A better approach...?
"Are you <i>Antigreessian</i> ?" (or insert favorite ethnic offender)	This place is closed to you	"We're a multi-ethnic parish"
"You're in MY seat!"	We have rules here & we don't share them!	<i>There is no better approach; don't say this</i>
"Why are you here?"	"You don't look 'right'"; "We've actually never had a visitor."	"Did you find us through our website?"
"I don't know, ask Father" (in response to any serious question)	"We're not serious about our faith... we're just here for the coffee"	"That's a very good question. We teach...(or) My understanding is..."
"Would you like to buy..." Fund raising appeals	"we expect others to pay for our church budget" or "Things are desperate here."	<i>There is no better approach; don't say this</i>
"Our people"	"... are not YOU"	"You'd love it here, it's easy to get to know everyone!"
Correcting ... "don't do that"		<i>There is no better approach; don't do this</i>
Introducing guests/ask to raise hands	"We're a well oiled recruiting machine"	"We'd like to extend a warm welcome to all our guests today"
Orthodox arrogance	"I'm Orthodox and you're wrong"	<i>There is no better approach; don't say this</i>
Ethnic food emphasis	"We'll keep reminding you that you're –well - different"	"Please try some of this, it's my grandmother's recipe"
Glaring at children	"Its only the beginning ... wait 'til you get to know us!"	<i>There is no better approach; don't do this</i>



# The Pew Blocker

*Do you have these types in your parish?*

- Body language conveys a clear message: Do not enter. Do not sit near me. I've found my seat and I'm keeping it.
- “Even in movie theaters with complete strangers, ushers ask people to move to the center so others can find seats easily
- “clergy and greeters... encourage others to slide away from the aisle so that others could sit next to them?
- Reserve a pew at the back
- **Or better yet invite visitors and strangers to sit near you.**



Simple Solution: Move Over



# The Gatekeepers

*Do you have these types in your parish?*



*"This used to be a nice little church"*

*"Your own parish must miss you"*

*"Orthodoxy can be hard for outsiders"*

*"We're all Antigreessians. What are you?"*

*"Hope you enjoyed your visit"*

# The “Texter”

*Do you have these types in your parish?*



**It transcends generations**

# More...

*Do you have these types in your parish?*

- The Interrogator!
- The Ignorer
- The Historian
- Baba Anna!



Preparing for a  
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Insensitive  
Behaviors!

Good Follow up

A Parish Inviting  
Effort

Increasing the Likelihood of Return

# FOLLOWING UP

# Visitor Follow-up: A Clear Next Step

- *Post*-liturgy greeter: the “Up-fronters”
- Follow-up contact within 2-3 days
- Invite them to join existing ministry groups
- Feedback: Ask newcomers what they found
  - helpful
  - Off-putting
- Ask those that did not return their reactions
- Don’t overly “processify” this. Natural.

Preparing for a  
Warm Welcome

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Effort

Now that we've established an atmosphere of hospitality... getting started with..

# A PARISH WIDE INVITING EFFORT



# Parish Wide Inviting Effort

- **Goal**
  - Everybody invite someone in next six months
  - Create environment where inviting becomes natural –part of what parishioners do, so...
  - Provide some training (see Session 2 materials)
- **Don't**
  - Focus only on *lapsed* parishioners –
    - Some may honestly take a second look – but they do bring baggage
    - They left/stopped for a reason – unless you can convincingly demonstrate a change, don't bother
  - Concentrate on one Sunday
- **Celebrate**
  - Who invited the most? Thank you!

When inviting becomes  
a part of parish life it  
becomes easier to  
invite – infectious

# QUESTIONS



# NEXT SESSION

# Evangelization Webinar Series

## Session 1 The Unchurched

### Defining the Unchurched

- Characteristics
- Statistics
- What matters to them
- 5 faith stages

**July 18**

## 2 Inviting People to Church

### Personal Evangelism

- Motivation
- Obstacles
- Skills & tools
- Who to Invite
- Inviting Tips

**Aug 22**

## 3 Engaging the Parish for Action

### Parish wide Evangelism

- Planning; Sizing the effort
- Connecting with neighbors
- Communicating the Parish

**Sept 26**

## 4 Positive First Time Experiences

### Welcoming Atmosphere

- The first time experience
- Greeting
- Seeker insensitive behaviors
- Good follow up

**Oct 24**

## 5 Assimilating

### Integrating New Persons

- Mentors
- Making friends
- Total Stewardship
- Member expectations
- Small Groups
- Inspiring to Invite

**November 28**

Begin to equip & encourage Orthodox to  
share the Good News of the Gospel  
... using words when necessary

....with those God sends to us ..or to whom God sends us.

# THE END

# APPENDIX

# Bulletin – Welcome Text

- **Various Versions of Welcome Text for Use in Parish Bulletins to convey that communion is restricted to prepared Orthodox Christians**

We welcome all visitors to our Divine Liturgy. While Holy Communion may only be received by prepared Orthodox Christians, our non-Orthodox guests are welcome to join us in venerating the Cross and receiving blessed bread at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy.

Thank you for choosing to worship with us. We're grateful for your prayers and participation.

*Then text similar to one the others... then...*

Join us for coffee and continued fellowship!

If this is your first visit to our parish, we welcome you and invite you to return as often as you are able. For those interested in learning more about Orthodoxy, please contact Fr. \_\_\_\_\_ about our Entrants Group. Greeters will answer immediate questions you might have.

We are delighted to have visitors worship with us, and we pray that you will be blessed through your participation in our services.

In the Orthodox Church, the reception of Holy Communion is a mark of membership in the Church. Only those who have been united to the Orthodox Church through Baptism or Chrismation, and have prepared themselves through regular Confession, prayer and fasting are permitted to partake of Holy Communion. We encourage visitors to participate in our prayers and hymns and partake of the blessed bread at the veneration of the cross. Literature about the Orthodox faith and this parish can be found in the vestibule. Feel free to ask questions before or after the services. Please sign our guest book and join us for refreshments and fellowship in the Parish Center after Liturgy.

# Scriptural References

Reflecting on the following passages will assist you in discovering more fully the attitudes and principles of hospitality for which we will be held accountable.

## Gospels:

- Matt. 8: 5-13: Jesus is gracious to the centurion.
- Mt. 10:40: "Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."
- Mt. 18:20: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in your midst."
- Mt. 25:35: "When I was a stranger you welcomed me."
- Mark 14:3-9: Jesus is anointed at the home of Simon the leper.
- Luke 10:25-37: Jesus gives a lesson on hospitality – the Good Samaritan.
- Luke 10:38-42: Jesus is welcomed in Bethany.
- Luke 19:1-10: Zaccheus experiences Jesus' hospitality.
- Luke 24:13-35: In the Emmaus story, two travelers receive the unexpected blessings of the Lord himself.
- John 4:28-29: The Samaritan woman at the well experiences the hospitality of Jesus.

## Epistles:

- Acts 9:43-10:48 Luke weaves together three stories of hospitality that become a turning point for spreading the Gospel by welcoming Gentiles into the Church.
- Romans 12: 9-17: St. Paul speaks of hospitality in the context of mutual love.
- Romans 15:7: "It can only be to the glory of God, then, for you to treat each other in the same friendly way as Christ treated you."
- 1 Cor. 12: 18-22: There are many different members in the one body; each is important and indeed, indispensable.
- Hebrews 13:1-2: "Love your fellow Christians always. Do not neglect hospitality, for by that means some have entertained angels without knowing it."
- 1 Peter 4:8-9: "Above all, let your love for one another be constant, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be mutually hospitable without complaining. Put yourself at the service of others."

## Old Testament

- Genesis 18: 1-5: Abraham and Sarah's care and concern for three strangers brings an unexpected reward.
- Judges 19:20: "'You are welcome, but let me provide for all your needs, and do not spend the night in the public square.' So he led them to his house and provided fodder for the asses. Then he washed their feet, and ate and drank."
- 1 Kings 17:9-24: The widow of Zarephath offers shelter and the last of her food to Elijah and is rewarded by the raising of her son from the dead.