

The Sunnyside of Decatur

March 29 2023

Next Sunday, April 9th is Easter, and many of our friends and neighbors will be looking for a church to attend. Why not invite them to Sunnyside? Think with me for a moment about the “visitor experience.” Jennifer Grisham is a writer for Faithlife, makers of Logos Bible Software and other tools for churches. She wrote:

Picture it with me.

You’re visiting a new church this Sunday. You’ve done your research: you combed through the church’s website and Facebook feed, and you pulled up the address. As you drive into the parking lot, you look for a parking spot. Then you look for the entrance. Once inside, you look for a bulletin, coffee, where to take your kids for Sunday School, or maybe all of the above—really anything that will tell you where to go and what to do.

If you’re like most church visitors, you’ve already made up your mind about whether you’ll return to this church—and service hasn’t even started yet.

Danny Franks, connections pastor and author of *People Are the Mission: How Churches Can Welcome Guests Without Compromising the Gospel*, writes:

Church growth experts are nearly unanimous in telling us that first-time guests make a decision to return within the first 7-10 minutes



on the property. The intangible “feel” of your church, the visual cues you deliver, and the general mood of the congregation will add to or take away from the main event.

You know the best thing about your church isn’t how easy you make it to find parking.

It’s the community, the teaching, the music, the years of faithful service.

But none of your visitors can see that in the first 5-10 minutes. All they see is what you show them, and they begin forming an impression before they even see your building.

Think about that first-time guest experience. How can we

make them feel welcome and loved? Our greeters help, and next Sunday, we’ll put our best foot forward by serving a holiday bread breakfast in the foyer, and by putting extra effort into our worship service that morning.

But it all begins with an invitation. Jennifer continues:

People are more likely to visit your church if they feel like they already have a friend there. When a visitor comes with a friend or neighbor, they can skip the awkwardness of deciding where to sit, searching for the restrooms, or knowing what to do during the service.

Go ahead! Give it a try! Invite someone to visit the Sunnyside of Decatur.