

Welcoming newcomers to church

This is a very important ministry and can make all the difference to whether newcomers will return to the church.

There are three main approaches to newcomers:

A. The Frosty Approach.

This approach involves the following:

1. Thrust a dilapidated Prayer Book into his hands without looking at him.
2. Tell him he's sitting in the place old Mrs. Bloggs' family have sat in for decades.
3. Walk up the aisle until you can see who he is and then obviously sit elsewhere.
4. Ensure that the service is so complex that he can't find the relevant pages. (This is especially good for Non Conformist visitors) .
5. After the service, if he smiles in your direction, assume he's looking at someone behind you.
6. If he walks towards you with his hand out assume he's probably wanting something and turn smartly to engage in a long conversation with your friend.
7. When out of the corner of your eye, you see he's gone you can relax and ask if anyone knew who he was.

B. The Lukewarm Approach.

1. Give him the books with a pleasant, smiling "Good Morning."
2. Make room for him in your pew and smile.
3. Watch him fumbling over the pages and wish he'd ask you what the number was.
4. After the service smile and say "Cheerio" and shake hands if he offers to.
5. Tell the vicar about him at the door and hope he got his name.

C. The Heartwarming Approach

1. Give him the books with a pleasant smiling "Good morning" and welcome.
2. Make room for him in your pew, smile and greet him and quietly introduce yourself asking his name or go and sit by him giving him the same welcome.
3. If he is unfamiliar with the service, without seeming condescending, tell him the page numbers or give him your book.
4. After the service, ask him where he lives and memorise his address.
5. Talk to him and find out something about him. Give him a magazine and information on the church. Introduce him to the vicar if he has not already been introduced. If possible, invite him to coffee, or go and visit him yourself.

6. Then, when he's gone, after giving the vicar his address, go and talk to your friends.

At all times we must show people the love of Christ when they join us. St. Paul commands us, "Welcome one another therefore as Christ has welcomed you." (Rom.15:7). I can hardly imagine the Lord showing the frosty or lukewarm approach, can you?

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