

Participant's sheets

Hospitality audit - 1

first
impressions
count



PHOTO: @PHOTOS.COM

Score your church on each of the following

3 **Excellent** 2 **Some room for improvement** 1 **Oh dear!/Don't Know**

- 1. Is your church easy to find, both offline (signage) and online (on a website)?
- 2. Can the church's name be read easily from the road?
- 3. Can service times be found easily?
- 4. Is it obvious which door gets you into the building?
- 5. Are the premises and grounds well maintained and attractive?
- 6. Is there good access into and within the building for those who use wheelchairs or pushchairs?
- 7. Are the toilets clearly signed and well maintained?
- 8. Are noticeboards (inside and out) up to date, attractive and contemporary?
- 9. Are there piles of up-to-date magazines, notice sheets and information?
- 10. Is a welcome pack giving up-to-date information available to offer new people?
- 11. Is the lighting good enough for reading?
- 12. Is the church seating comfortable?
- 13. Is the heating adequate?
- 14. Is suitable provision made for children? (eg toy bags, changing facilities, toddler seat and step-ups available, a place for prams/pushchairs)
- 15. Does the church website include a 'What to expect' section including the usual length of a service?

TOTAL (out of 45)

Participant's sheets

Hospitality audit - 2



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Score your church on each of the following

3 **Excellent** 2 **Some room for improvement** 1 **Oh dear!/Don't Know**

- 1. Do you have people by the initial door to greet people?
- 2. Are door stewards/welcomers smiling and attentive?
- 3. Do the door stewards/welcomers receive any training?
- 4. Is it clear where people can sit?
- 5. Are clear instructions given to enable people who may not have been to church before to join in? (eg when to stand and sit, where to find hymns, what to do during communion)
- 6. Are the needs of disabled people met? (eg large-print versions of any printed material, amplification and loop system, adequate lighting for lip readers)?
- 7. Are the relevant people mentioned in notices identified?
- 8. Do members of the congregation see themselves as hosts, ready to welcome guests?
- 9. If the peace is shared, is it explained?
- 10. If refreshments are served, do people offer to show people the way and get a coffee for them – especially people with children who may have their hands full?
- 11. Do members chat to visitors and introduce them to others?
- 12. Do you have a system to obtain information about new folk which makes follow-up possible?
- 13. Has your church interviewed people who have recently visited your church and asked them for feedback about their experience?
- 14. Has your church received feedback about welcome from those who have become regular attendees?
- 15. Does the church make it clear that visitors do not need to contribute to the offering?

TOTAL (out of 45) **GRAND TOTAL** (Parts 1 and 2) (out of 90)



Session 1: Creating a welcoming building

1. Having looked at hospitality audit 1, what are the weak points in your church? How might these be improved? What action are you going to take?

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2. What key characteristics of a welcoming place did you discuss? To what extent does your local church match these characteristics?

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Session 2: Being a welcoming people

1. Having looked at hospitality audit 2, what are the weak points in your church? How might these be improved? What action are you going to take?

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2. What do people's experiences of going into an unfamiliar place have to teach us? Are there particular aspects your church needs to note? How are you going to raise these?

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Session 3: Welcoming through inclusion

1. What have you learned about the cultural gaps that make church an alien environment for newcomers? How can we make sure people feel included and at ease in worship? What can you do?

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2. Are there particular groups of people (eg young people, children, older people, people with various disabilities) whose needs your church should cater for more fully? What are they? How can you cater for them better?

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Inclusion scenarios

first
impressions
count



PHOTO: @PHOTOS.COM

1. Adult Care Services in your area have opened a residential home for adults with learning disabilities just down the road from your church. A small group of them have started coming to church with a couple of their carers. Their abilities vary, but some are unable to speak and one or two have mannerisms which others might find distracting, such as rocking in their seats and making gratuitous noises. What are the issues here? How can they be helped to feel welcome and be integrated into the life and worship of the church?
2. For the first time in your community an ecumenical service is due to take place at the Methodist church on Remembrance Sunday. The congregation of the local parish church will be attending. What needs to be considered and how can you plan for a warm welcome?
3. A Baptism is taking place during a morning service (one set of grandparents are very active members of the church). The baptism party includes a number of non-churchgoing friends of the family, including people of other faiths and young children. How can they best be welcomed, made to feel comfortable and helped to join in?
4. A special service has been arranged for Mission in Britain Sunday, to which the Revd P has been invited to preach. The Revd P is the chaplain to a big name football club, an interesting speaker and talented in his ability to use multimedia presentations to illustrate his message. A Thursday night youth club is also run at the church, and the young people who attend do not normally attend worship and have no church connections. How would you plan to involve the young people?

Going further...

first
impressions
count

We hope that this workshop has helped you reflect on ways in which you and your church can leave visitors with a positive 'first impression' that communicates something of God's welcome to all.

Welcome is, of course, much more than first impressions, and there are a number of ways in which you can take further the issues raised in this workshop.

If you're interested in exploring further the ministry of welcome, consult the excellent five-session course, *Everybody Welcome: the course where everybody helps grow their church*, by George Fisher and Bob Jackson (London, Church House Publishing, 2009). Although the training covers similar ground as *First Impressions Count*, it develops a range of related issues, such as the theology of welcome, helping newcomers belong to a church community, and training a welcome team. For material specifically related to inclusion and disability, see the range of resources in *Enabling Church: a Bible-based resource towards the full inclusion of disabled people* (London, SPCK, 2012), by Gordon Temple (with Lin Ball). On issues of culture, see the CTBI material for Racial Justice Sunday 2012 (available for free download at www.ctbi.org.uk/588). For helping to create an inclusive church for children and young people, see the free resource *Creating Space* at www.childrenandyouth.org.uk/worker/resources-workers/new-methodist-resource.

If you're interested in planning an Invitation Sunday, where members of the church invite those outside the church to a service or event, two initiatives provide resources and publicity. *Back to Church Sunday* (www.backtochurch.co.uk), the largest invitational initiative in the world, takes place in September and is an opportunity for Christians to invite friends, neighbours and colleagues to church. *The Big Welcome* (www.thebigwelcome.org) encourages Christians to invite someone they know to something they love, but this could also be to an event the church hosts as well as to a service. Both initiatives provide information on preparing for an Invitation Sunday, as well as posters, prayer points, and invitation cards. A useful general guide in encouraging a church to become more 'invitational' is by Michael Harvey (with Rebecca Paveley), *Unlocking the Growth* (Oxford, Monarch, 2012).

If you're interested in courses that introduce visitors to the Christian faith, a number of approaches are available. *Alpha* is one of the best-known and has been tried and tested in a number of environments (uk-england.alpha.org). *Christianity Explored* offers a similar introduction, based on reading through the Gospel of Mark (www.christianityexplored.org). For a course from a different theological perspective, you might check out *Living the Questions* (www.livingthequestions.com). A helpful guide to the variety of courses on offer can be found in *Evangelism – which way now?* by Mike Booker and Mark Ireland (2nd edition, London, Church House Publishing, 2005).

If you're interested in exploring further the nature and the mission of the church, there are also several resources. *The Healthy Churches' Handbook* by Robert Warren (London, Church House Publishing, 2012) will get you thinking about the strengths and weaknesses of your particular church while also prompting suggestions for improvement. Jack Lawson, district development enabler and district evangelism enabler in East Anglia, has produced a useful booklet to help review your church or circuit. Entitled *Gateways to God?*, it includes a number of helpful questions to get you thinking about what the church is about, including the excellent question 'if our churches were businesses, would people know what our product is?'. This can be freely downloaded at www.methodist.org.uk/media/865670/dd-gateways-to-god-0413.pdf. An excellent and well-recommended course to engage with questions around church and mission is *Mission Shaped Intro*. For a free download, visit www.freshexpressions.org.uk/missionshapedintro.

If you're interested in exploring these issues further, a good first contact is your local district training officer or district evangelism/mission enabler, who can offer or signpost training in the areas described. Also feel free to contact the Evangelism, Spirituality and Discipleship team at esdadmin@methodistchurch.org.uk.

Feedback sheet



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How would you rate the following? (Place a check mark in the column)

		1	2	3	4	5
1	Poor	The content of the workshop				
2	Fair	The quality of the presentation				
3	Average	Your learning experience				
4	Good	Your involvement in the learning experience				
5	Excellent	Overall rating of the session				

What would you do differently in the light of the session today?

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What suggestions or recommendations might you make to improve the workshop?

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Any other comments or suggestions?

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