
7 Ways to Attract People to Your Church

Your church isn't growing. You've been doing the same thing for months or years. You can't remember the last time you witnessed someone commit his or her life to Jesus. You're disappointed. You feel stuck. And you're not sure if God's at work in your church.

Here's the deal: You're not alone.

According to a recent study by Exponential and LifeWay Research, 6 out of 10 Protestant churches have plateaued or their attendance is declining. What is more, less than half of the churches surveyed saw fewer than 10 people commit their lives to Christ.

Now isn't the time to give up, throw up your arms, and walk away. If you've been planting seeds in the life of people, it's only a matter of time until God grows them and brings people to faith (1 Cor 3:6).

How can I be so confident? Simple.

God is faithful, and we've had the opportunity to help many churches break the 200 attendance barrier. In our work, we like to keep an eye on what churches are doing to attract people to their church with the goal of making disciples.

In this post, I'm going to share seven things your church can do to attract more guests this month.

Let's get started!

1. Get your church ready for visitors

The first few minutes of someone visiting your church are crucial. I can't stress this enough.

Here's why:

Most people decide whether to return to a church within the first 6–10 minutes of entering the campus.

Faith Perceptions has found that friendliness alone won't make guests return to a church, but an unwelcoming encounter is enough to send them packing.

I know you're excited to reach new people for Christ.

But before you launch a new outreach campaign or invite new people to your church, your church has to be ready to welcome first-time guests. If you're not ready, good outreach and marketing efforts will only make your church fail faster.

Think about it like this:

If you were a farmer and you prayed for it to rain, but you didn't prepare your fields for the harvest, then you lost out. Or let's say you're a business owner; you make widgets and you launched a marketing campaign to sell 100 widgets, but you only have 25 on hand or your widgets are terrible. If that's the case, then your marketing efforts will cause your business to fall flat on its face.

Not convinced this is true? Here's something else to chew on:

For better or worse, most people will make a decision about your church within the first few minutes of their experience. What is more, if you don't follow up with your visitors, then you run the risk of not connecting with them again.

Ready to get started?

Here are a few things you'll need to get ready:

- Your website
- Parking
- Signage
- Church connection cards
- A welcome plan
- A follow-up plan

Let's take a look at these in turn.

The first impression you make with any potential visitor is online.

Most people who are thinking about visiting a church will search online for somewhere to visit before thinking about stepping foot into your worship space.

To create a good first impression with your online visitors, here's a list of information you must have on your church's website:

- Location
- Directions
- Service times
- Parking information
- Childcare information
- What to expect

Don't take this information for granted.

If you need to, ask someone who's not familiar with your church (even if it's a family member or friend) to check out your website to see if they can easily find what they would look for if they were planning on visiting your church.

Alright, so someone has visited your website, and now they're ready to visit your church. The next place you need to prepare is your parking lot.

To get your parking lot ready for visitors, here are 3 things you need to consider:

1. Marking visitor parking
2. Providing clear signs
3. Placing parking lot attendants

These three tactics alone should place your church well on its way to preparing for visitors.

After people exit their cars, the next thing you need to think about is providing clear signs. Not only signs in your parking lot(s) pointing people in the right direction, but signs in your foyer and lobby letting visitors know where to go to get information or where your sanctuary is located.

Remember, visitors will be feeling nervous.

Make it easy for them to get around your facilities.

Now, there's a good chance you have no information on your guests. To make sure you don't lose touch with them after their first visit, be sure to provide church connection cards to capture their contact information.

Having a hard time getting people to share their info?

Provide first-time guest gifts for visitors to encourage them to share their info.

A lot of what I've been talking about deals with "marketing assets." But even if you create eye-catching material, it cannot replace the importance of creating a welcoming environment for people.

From placing greeters and ushers at key locations to building a welcoming church culture, you want to prepare your church members to identify, welcome, and make visitors comfortable at your worship service.

The last piece you need to prepare is your follow-up.

You've led someone to your worship service.

You've created a great experience.

You've gathered their contact information.

Now it's time to follow up with them to invite them to take the next step. We've covered this in detail elsewhere, so let me recommend reading [The Best Follow-Up Process for First-Time Guests](#).

Alright, your church is ready to welcome visitors.

Now it's time to talk about attracting guests to your church.

2. Identify specific needs in your community your church can meet.

Think about the felt needs of your community.

Do you really know the needs of individuals or families?

Do you understand their common objections to Jesus?

Are you aware of what may compel them to visit your church?

Immersing yourself in your community is vital to reaching your community for Christ. As a church leader, you have to get to know the community you serve. If you've lived in the area for any length of time, you probably have a pretty good idea about some basic information, such as the schools, demographics, average income, family dynamics, and employers.

As you get to know your community, you want to build relationships and answer this question:

Why would someone want to visit a church—especially your church?

Apart from asking someone this question, a survey by Pew Research unearthed the top reasons why someone may visit a Protestant church in the United States:

- To become closer to God
- So their children will have a moral foundation
- To make themselves a better person
- For comfort in times of trouble

Based on this survey, there are really practical things your church can leverage to attract guests to your church. Here are just a few things that come to mind:

- Preach a sermon series on drawing closer to God or parenting
- Provide Bible studies or resources on living a “better” life
- Offer counseling services or partner with a counselor
- Build a healthy small group ministry to connect people together

These general ideas will just get you started.

After spending time with people in your community, you may unearth different needs or angles you can take to answer questions and provide guidance for people to learn to live and love like Jesus.

Don't be put off by the idea of meeting the spiritual and physical needs of your community. Jesus himself met the spiritual and physical needs of people, and he calls us to do the same today.

Share the gospel.

Find out the spiritual questions and struggles in your community.

Meet the physical needs of people.

3. Make it easy for guests to plan a visit to your church.

As I mentioned above, people in your community are searching for a church online. Not only is it a good idea to provide basic information on your website, but many churches today have found success in promoting a "Plan Your Visit" option online for visitors.

Here's how it works:

Make it easy for your website visitors to then physically visit your church by providing a simple, clear process.

Before getting into the details, here are a few examples of what I'm talking about:

- [Foothills Church](#)
- [Passion Creek Church](#)
- [Belief Church](#)

Remember, many people who visit your church's site are looking for a church. By adding a "Plan Your Visit" section on your site, you are letting them know

you're interested in having them visit your church, and that you want to make it as easy as possible.

The info you add in this section will be similar to what I suggested above (e.g., what time does your service start, what's your address, what can I expect, and what should I do with my kids). But there's one thing you should be sure to include: An automatic reminder.

When someone shares with you their email address, you can send them an automated message (email) reminding them what time your service starts and other details. This little feature will encourage people to follow through and not get cold feet.

[Church Tech Today has more tips for creating a plan-a-visit video on your website.](#)

4. Equip your people to invite their friends to church.

Lifeway Research found that 82 percent of unchurched people would consider attending a worship service if a friend, neighbor, or coworker invited them.

This percentage is huge.

There are no other outreach events or tactics you can use that can even come close to matching these results. Don't believe the hype from other ideas. Asking someone is still the single best thing your church members can do to reach more people.

In the business world, this is known as word-of-mouth marketing, and it's just as effective. I know technology can make it feel easier to reach more people (like social media advertising), and it's definitely worth pursuing. But don't overlook the importance of challenging your church members to invite people.

Practically speaking, as a church leader, here are ways you can equip your church members to invite people:

- Provide evangelism training
- Offer simple suggestions people can use to ask someone to visit
- Use invite cards
- Create shareable social media content
- Share stories/testimonies during your announcements or sermon

These tips are just the tip of the iceberg.

Here's a list of [19 Ways to Encourage Your Church to Invite Others](#).

5. Optimize your church website for guests.

“If you build it, they will come.”

This promise may have worked well in the movie *Field of Dreams*. But it's worthless advice for church websites.

Here's the actual deal:

If you promote your church's website, people will come.

When it comes to promoting your site, there are different tactics you can use, such as posting about it on social media, including it in your church's bulletin, or mentioning it in direct mail.

These different tactics are helpful in the short term. But the most effective thing you can do to turn your website into a tool that regularly leads new people to visit your church is to optimize your website for search engines.

This tactic is referred to as search engine optimization (SEO), and for your church, it means optimizing your site to rank for local searches like “church + zip code” or “church nearby.”

Remember, as I pointed out above, most people in your community will check out your website before they visit your worship service. These people will not generally review pages of church options online. They'll primarily take a look at the churches on the first page of their search results.

What's the bottom line?

If your church's site doesn't rank toward the top of the first page of local search results, then there's a good chance no one will find your site in search engines.

To optimize your site, there are several things you can do:

1. Claim your local listings (e.g., Google, Bing)
2. Claim your church on local directories
3. Encourage reviews
4. Optimize your site for relevant keywords
5. Include your church's name, address, and phone number on every page

Use these tips—along with other tactics—to optimize your site for search engines.

6. Organize outreach events to reach new people.

During the life of your church, it's easy to start going with the flow of things.

Every week, your church does the same thing.

From gathering your people together for a worship service, Bible studies, or mid-week services, there's a rhythm to the life of your church.

This isn't a bad thing at all. But if you're not careful, the rhythm of your church can be like sitting in a rocking chair that lulls you to sleep.

Thankfully, you don't have to change your weekly rhythm to fight this morass and reach your community. You can arrange short-term outreach events to rally your church around a common cause.

The ideas are endless, so there's no need to stick to an annual event unless you're experiencing consistent results. Feel free to mix up what you're doing to reach different people in your community. For example, if you want to reach families, then you'll need to organize a family event. However, if you want to reach single adults or couples, then the outreach event you organize will be different based upon attracting that target audience.

Here are [7 Summer Outreach Ideas](#) to give you some ideas.

There's one added benefit to short-term campaigns that's easy to overlook:

This is also a great way to increase your volunteer base and train volunteers.

When putting together your plans, be sure to open up the opportunity to volunteer at your church. You might be surprised who steps up to help out.

7. Advertise your church on Facebook and social media.

Do you know where most people in your community socialize?

If you guessed social media, you'd be correct.

According to the [Pew Research Center](#), 7 out of 10 adults in your town spend their time on social media—especially Facebook.

Practically speaking, to reach people in your community, your church needs to consider advertising on Facebook, since just having a Facebook Page no longer cuts it.

For starters, advertising on Facebook probably isn't what you think.

It's not expensive.

It doesn't require a ton of technical expertise.

And it's not like sending a piece of direct mail—it's hyper-targeted.

When it comes to advertising on Facebook, you can run ads promoting “Plan a Visit” or an outreach event you’re organizing. Or you can promote a piece of content you created—such as a sermon clip, a Bible verse image, or a short video—to be seen by more people.

Not sure if Facebook advertising is a good fit for your church?

No sweat.

You don't have to sign a contract with Facebook or commit to spending thousands of dollars. You can test a short-term campaign for little money, and see what type of results it generates.

Take a Next Step

If you want more ideas and tools on equipping your church to invite, we have a free resource called The Senior Pastor's Guide. This insanely practical resource is filled with ideas, examples, and principles to help you lead your church to healthy growth.

There's a section on reaching new people, which is great to inspire ideas or share with your team. [Download this free resource here.](#)