

How to Be Vessels of God's Merciful Welcome: Invitational Practices

[Jesus said to the twelve:] "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me...whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward."

- Matthew 10:40, 42

Invite people to worship from the relationships you *already* have

- 82% of unchurched people would say yes to an invitation to church from a trusted friend.¹
- We all have opportunities to share our faith with friends and acquaintances, but we don't always recognize those opportunities or feel like we know what to say. See back page for some examples and ideas for how to do this.

When you invite someone to attend church in-person

- Offer to pick them up and drive together so they have someone to walk into church with and so they don't have to find a seat on their own.
- Or, if you meet at the church, make sure it's on a Sunday that you're going to be there and meet them in the parking lot beforehand so you can walk in together.
- Offer to go out to brunch afterwards, maybe even your treat! Then send a thank you note.

When you see someone you don't recognize in worship

- Introduce yourself with your name first. Consider saying something like, "Hi there! I wasn't sure if I recognized you or not, so wanted to come over and say hello. I'm _____. Glad you're here."
- If you DO recognize them, but haven't met them yet, introduce yourself anyway! "I've seen you around, but I don't think we've had a chance to meet yet, I'm _____. How did you get connected to Good Soil?"
- A great question to ask that goes deeper than talking about sports or the weather, but still very approachable: "What's the most interesting thing that happened to you this week?"

Online

- If you're on facebook, share the worship service live on your timeline (more people will see it that way than simply "liking" the service). Consider commenting with something like, "Hey, we're worshiping with Good Soil, click if you want to join us!"
- Like Good Soil's facebook page if you haven't already. FB: [goodsoillutheranministries](#)

Share recordings

- Pieces of each week's worship service are uploaded to playlists on Good Soil's YouTube channel: sermons, children services, faith stories, whole worship services, etc.
- Send a family member, friend, or colleague the sermon or children's sermon if you think they'd benefit from it or enjoy watching it. This is convenient, non-invasive, and lays the groundwork for a future in-person invitation someday.

Prayers

- If someone is going through something and they've shared that with you, tell them: "We pray for people by name every Sunday in church. Can I add your name to our prayer list?"
- Pray for them on your own as well. Follow up to see how they're doing as appropriate.

¹ The Invitational Christian by Dave Daubert, Day 8 Strategies Publishing, 2017

Incorporating our faith into daily conversations²

God is constantly offering us opportunities to share our faith, but sometimes we miss them. Simply changing up our language can open the door to talking about our faith. Consider making some of these small, but powerful changes in everyday conversations:

If someone asks, “How was your weekend?”

- ➔ Instead of simply saying “Good,” consider saying that you went to church on Sunday (or watched online) and share something meaningful about it, i.e., “The music was really powerful this week,” or “I was challenged by something in the sermon,” or “I really enjoy the community there,” or “I always feel filled back up and ready for the week ahead after going to church,” etc.

If someone shares, “I’m really worried about my friend who was just diagnosed with cancer”

- ➔ Instead of simply offering to keep them in your own prayers (a great start!) consider asking to put their name on the church prayer list (i.e. “We pray for people by name every Sunday in worship. Could we add your friend’s name to it?”)

If you do something nice for a neighbor like shoveling their driveway or bringing them food and they say, “It was so nice of you to do that, thank you!”

- ➔ Instead of simply replying “You’re welcome,” consider saying, “You’re welcome—Jesus says love your neighbor as yourself, right?” or “You’re welcome, the church I attend is big on sharing God’s love through acts of service” or “You’re welcome, it’s a part of my faith, reaching out to help those around you.”

If someone does something nice for you, express your gratitude by incorporating faith language: thank them for being a blessing to you, identify it as God’s love and/or Christ’s action, etc.

- ➔ Instead of simply saying, “Thank you so much, that meant a lot to me,” consider saying, “You might see this differently, but that really felt like Christ’s action to me, thanks for doing what you did—it felt like God’s love and it was a blessing to me.”

If someone says, “How are you today?” or if someone says, “Goodbye, take care”

- ➔ Instead of replying “Fine,” consider saying, “Blessed” or “Grateful”
- ➔ Instead of replying “You too,” consider saying, “Be blessed” or “God bless”

Final Thought: Remember that Good Soil has **bundles of invitation cards** located on the welcome table that you can use in any of these instances and other circumstances too. Stash these cards in your wallets and purses, keep some in your car, etc. Post them on bulletin boards in coffee shops and restaurants, share them with waiters/waitresses/wait staff, with other parents at the playground, or on the sidelines at kids’ sporting events, etc. And then grab some more!

² Adapted from “Sharing Faith Practices” by Rev. Nancy Nyland, Indiana-Kentucky Synod