

## **Acclimation to Church and Membership for New Members**

### **What Does Scripture Say?**

Our mission as a congregation, of course, is contained in the following words of Christ: **“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”** Matthew 28:19-20

**He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”**  
Mark 16:15

To that end, we strive to proclaim that gospel to as many as we can reach. We rejoice when the Spirit leads visitors to our church to want more of what we have to offer and to become members. Through the regular offering of the means of grace in Word and Sacrament, they will more fully know the truth, as is expressed by Paul to Timothy: **“(God our Savior) wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”** I Timothy 2:4

### **Possible barriers to new members feeling acclimated to the church**

Of course, we want to bring to our members the clear message of Christ’s gospel, for their edification, as is expressed by Paul in I Timothy 4:1-4. Verse 2 of that section of Scripture expresses this goal, **“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction.”**

First and foremost in our goal of acclimating new members to our church should always be making sure the pure and true gospel is preached to them. That is our goal as a congregation. We should do everything we can to promote their receiving this pure gospel in Word and Sacrament.

In addition some of the following items might also be barriers from new members becoming comfortable and acclimated to our congregation.

1. Not being greeted or welcomed - not necessarily by formal greeters, but by any congregation member.

2. The music not being appropriate or well done. Of course, there are many of tastes in music, but the music can hinder and distract from the preaching of the gospel.
3. Time of worship. Having inconvenient or not enough worship times may be a problem.
4. The church building. If it is not easy to navigate or is not clean or well maintained. If areas of the church are not clearly defined. If signage is poor or not easy to read. If there is not adequate parking.

### **What Can Be Done To Help Acclimate New Members?**

Again, the most important way to make a new member feel welcome is to make sure they have access to the Means of Grace – the pure gospel and the sacraments administered the way Christ instituted them – and that nothing hinders them from that. We need to make sure we are clear in our conviction that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God, and that in-depth preaching and teaching of the Bible are found here. Beyond all else, that will keep members interested in the truth coming back for more. Other helpful suggestions follow:

1. Make sure new members feel welcome. Be friendly. Make a point to talk to people you don't know. If they have been members for awhile, so what? You have now made a new connection you haven't had before.
2. Talk personally about your Savior. That will make a huge impression on new members.
3. Use Bible Class and small groups to encourage connections with existing members.
4. Make sure your church is clean and well-kept. Volunteer to clean the church. Help out on church work-days or on projects to be done around the church.
5. Make sure new members with young children are aware of the nursery and Sunday School opportunities. Introduce them to other families with young children in the church.
6. Have a new member packet which might include a picture directory so they can associate names with faces.
7. Have a bulletin board in the narthex with new members pictured so current members can identify them.
8. Invite new members to participate in entry level tasks to do within the congregation so they can feel needed and valued.
9. Have a congregational orientation class/meeting in addition to the normal instruction class with Pastor.

In conclusion, we rejoice that we have a church which proclaims Christ crucified to the world. Let us do nothing to hinder that proclamation, and do all we can to promote a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere to all who are new to our midst!