

# The ABCs Holiday Checklist

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- Accessibility:** Is your seating adequate for seniors with walkers? Children who squirm? Can the wheelchair-bound get into your space and are they relegated to the back, or worse, the front? Is your multimedia readable?
- Bulletins:** If you use them, do they contain really useful information for guests, or mostly for insiders? “Meet at Bob and Sue Smith’s House” means nothing to a guest. Is there enough white space or is the bulletin crowded?
- Coded Language:** Are your bulletins, handouts, multi-media presentations, and preaching free of Christian-ese? Never mind *thou* and *thee*; don’t overlook *incarnation, invocation, Gloria Patri, doxology, sanctuary, narthex, hymn, passing peace, redemption, sanctification, justification, atonement, UMW, CYF, Chi Rho, PW, LW, DW* ... the list could go on and on.
- De-Clutter:** Get new eyes and look at all the clutter: hymnals stacked on the back table, left-over coats on the cloak rack, that box of last quarter’s *Daily Bread*, and all those dust-bunnies covering in the corner. Oh – and what does the Church Office look like???
- Encouraging:** This joyous time of year is also the season for the highest rates of suicide, clergy burnout, and extreme stress. Who have you intentionally telephoned to find out how you can pray or encourage in the faith today? Who else is calling?
- Follow-Up:** What arrangements have you made for 24 hour first-time guest follow-up, especially after the all-important Christmas Eve service? (See the November 2009 issue of *Net Results* for more.)
- Grounds:** Are the building and grounds “spiffy?” Does it look like you care? Are the leaves raked? Is the clutter dealt with? Is the parking lot in good repair? Is the building painted? And does the whole picture look like a holiday scene from a Hallmark card?
- Handoffs:** Does each service have a handoff to the next? What will bring your Halloween folks back for Thanksgiving? From your Thanksgiving service through Advent? From Advent to Christmas Eve? From Christmas Eve to the following week and the New Year both? Sermon series, special events, etc. should all be in play.
- Invitations:** Enable your congregation to easily invite their spheres of influence. Give them be-ribbon-ed candy canes with the church’s Holyday schedule listed upon it. Go to [VistaPrint.com](http://VistaPrint.com) to make business cards for use as invites to the next sermon series. Whatever you do, make it easy for your congregation to be invitational.
- Jesus:** This is where it begins and ends. We’re Christians, not merely deists. Jesus is not only the reason for the season: He’s the reason for the Church. Remember that it’s all about Him. Spend

time in prayer, spend time in silence, spend time listening. And make sure you introduce your Holyday guests to Him.

- Kiosk: Do you have a well-staffed Information Kiosk that's at the front-and-center of your main entrance space? Is it stocked with information on every church ministry and upcoming event? Are there three "local church experts" staffing the kiosk who could answer virtually every conceivable question about the church, its staff, its traditions, and its events? Are they paying attention to the crowd, not to each other? Is the space truly welcoming?
- Liturgy: Every church has *liturgy*, some churches simply do a better job of thinking through it than others. Liturgy doesn't need to scare you or be old fashioned, but it does need to be relevant to those in the worship center. Are you taking the time to think through the liturgy of this Holyday season, or are you caught up in what's easiest – that is, whatever we did last week or last year?
- Message: What messages are you giving? How are you communicating the Mission and Vision of your congregation? If the Holydays are a time of peace, be sure your congregation has dealt with its unresolved conflicts. What will your message be in each service? Will the sermon be another "Gee Whiz" sermon that leaves people feeling good (or even thoughtful), but offers no expectation of life-transformation? And perhaps most importantly, what will your Christmas Eve service message be? A lesson in Carols and Scripture that is steeped in tradition, but rarely encourages a new life? This is the season for relevant, life-challenging, life-transforming sermons. Ask, "What's the *real* message we're sharing?"
- Nursery: Does your nursery meet the three S's? Is it *safe*? Is it *sanitary*? And as important as the other two, is it *secure*?
- One-Anothering: The danger of the Holyday season is that it can become so busy that we stress out, spend out, bleed out, and burn out. If ever there was a time for taking care of one-another, of burying the hatchet, of letting go of conflict, of giving and receiving of hugs, let alone peace, this is it. Skip a couple of Christmas parties to spend a quiet evening with a church friend. Offer to do some visitation for your pastor so she can have a night off. Call the members of your small group and ask how you can pray for them.
- Parking: Is your parking lot in good repair? Is it well lit? Are 10 percent of the spaces clearly designated for guests? Are members and staff parking in the back of the parking lot so that guests and the less-able can park in the closest parking spots? Have you removed the Pastor or Staff parking signs? Have you invested in *Guests Parking* signs?
- Quality: Is everything your church does measured for quality? Is it as good-as-it-gets, or is it just good enough? Authenticity is important, but not at the expense of excellence.
- Restrooms: Do they all smell great? Are they well stocked? Are they clean? Is there a changing station in the men's room as well as the ladies? Does the men's room smell of flowers and

lavender or is it slightly more manly (think GoJo)? Is the décor gender specific? Who's checking them on an hourly basis.

- Signage: Sure, the restrooms are clean, but can anyone *find* them? The three rooms that must be well signed are *restrooms, nursery, and worship center*. Try this test: if you can stand in any hallway in the church and not see a visible sign for all three, you have inadequate signage. Then there are the outdoor signs. Can a guest find a sign to the entrance of the worship center no matter where they park or walk from? And finally, there's your marquee sign: Are you reminding people that Jesus is the reason for the season or some other "cute" saying, or are you using your sign as the marketing real estate that it is?
- Technology: Is the level of technology relevant to the intended audience? If you're reaching Boomers and younger, screen technology is a must. If you're reaching the thirty somethings and younger, think SMS, IM, and Twitter – yes, in your worship services.
- Ushers, Greeters, and Hosts: Think smiling, happy, welcoming faces who are more interested in those entering the worship space than the Buckeyes, Yankees, or Cowboys. *Greeters* begin in the parking lot, outside the doors, and just inside the doors. Ushers "ush" – they don't just hand out bulletins, they seat people. *Hosts* wander the worship space, look for guests, welcome people with conversations, and get contact information for follow-up.
- Visitor Sensitivity: See all of the above – and below. Remember, the church is the only organization on Earth that exists for those who aren't here yet.
- Worship: As in "Awe-Inspiring" worship. Worship is all about experiencing the presence of God. What are you doing to provide that space in this Holyday season?
- X-it: As in "Exit strategy." How are you touching and greeting your guests (and members) as they leave following a service? Are your greeters and Information Kiosk hosts cued to be available at their stations *before* the worship is over?
- Yes! How are you helping those visiting your worship center to say "Yes!" to Jesus this year? This is the ultimate "So what?" for each service.
- Zip and Zing: Does your worship service have zip, zing, and sizzle? Does one piece transition to the next with less than two seconds of dead time? If you lose your audience in the dead time, it's tough getting them back.