



# Easter Worship

## Visitor Retention Checklist



**Getting prepared for Easter is an important task. You will have people there who haven't been in worship before, at least not with you. So you need to put your best foot forward. Here is a list of things you need to do to be ready.**

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# Prior to the Service



The best time to start planning for Easter is the day after last Easter while the memory of "yesterday's" experience is still fresh in your mind. If you have a staff, gather them together and consider the following checklist items. What did you prepare well for and what will you want to work through more intentionally for next year?

# CHECKLIST

## P R E - S E R V I C E

### 1. Select Your Target Audience

We suggest you start with “unchurched” then proceed to what age group, and if you’re demographic savvy, what lifestyle might be in the majority.

Your target audience may vary from service to service. For example, an early service might be made up of mainly churched older adults, whereas the main service is more likely to include a younger audience.

### 2. Target Your Worship Service

Make sure your sermon, music, and liturgy connects with your target audience. This means you may have to alter the sermon, music, and style of each service. (If your church doesn’t do this normally, this is a good opportunity to “try” something different for this special occasion.)

### 3. Update Your Online Presence

Update your website and social media pages so that people who are looking for a church will be drawn to your message. Make sure the message, location, and time is located above the scroll.

If you have some marketing money, create an ad for social media and target it to those in your ministry area. Most social media ads can be targeted by zip codes, cities, and of demographics as well.

### 4. Don't Forget to Advertise

Work with the Religious Editor of your newspaper to have a news release about the service. If your budget can stand it, plan on sending out a direct mail piece to every home within a targeted area based on your targeted demographic. You may want to place an ad in the Personal Column as well.

And if you have a big advertising budget, get a prominent billboard for the month prior to Easter and only put the message, name of church, website, and worship times.



# CHECKLIST

## P R E - S E R V I C E

### 5. Leverage An Easter Egg Hunt

Don't overlook the importance of an Easter egg hunt for the children. Publicize it anyway you can afford, but do your best to make it a big event with big air balloons, super prize egg, etc.

Don't forget to offer a "valuable" door prize that guests must register for in order to win (what of "value" depends on your immediate context). Then make sure you follow up with each household with a postcard, phone call, email, etc. ... but refrain from the standard "form letter" response.

### 6. Invite a Local Celebrity

Try to secure the witness of some well known celebrity in the area who is a Christian. This witness would become part of the worship service. Of course, if you do be sure to leak it to the press. The press might show up or better yet, they may write an article for the paper or do a broadcast on the local TV News.

### 7. Recruit Parking Lot Greeters

Make sure you have a trained parking lot team with walkie-talkies to help people feel welcome and find a place to park. Use the walkie-talkies to communicate names of new people to the greeters who can then call guests by name.

### 8. Recruit and Train Greeters

Give some extra training for your ushers and greeters about the importance of making people feel welcome without overwhelming them. This is not the time to use your regular rotation of volunteers. Your greeters and ushers must be the most gregarious, friendly, smilers in your congregation.

# CHECKLIST

## P R E - S E R V I C E

### 9. Select Great Music

If you don't have a professional church worship leader, you may want to be involved in the selection of the music and special music. Don't leave this to chance. The music needs to integrate with your message. Make sure you have the biggest choir or best band possible.

### 10. Pay Attention to Your Stage

.If you offer a contemporary worship service, spend time and money designing the stage to fit the message, especially if your target audience is under the age of forty.

### 11. Review Your Worship Handouts

Make sure the worship folder will appeal to your target audience. Include information about the service, about your hospitality services (coffee, child care, etc.), and especially about upcoming events that your target may be interested in. Expunge the folder of any "insider" announcements or events (no board meeting dates, etc.).

### 12. Create a Sermon Series

Launch a multiple part sermon series on Easter Sunday to help entice guests to return for part 2. In addition, spend extra time making sure you have your best sermon possible. If you still use a manuscript or notes, this is the week to break that habit.

### 13. Get Ready for Follow-Up

Train enough people to take a gift to the new visitors so that they can do it on Easter afternoon.



# During Worship



Hospitality doesn't end at the doors to the sanctuary. Your guest relations are on the line from prelude to benediction. In fact, your visitors are more likely to experience hospitality faux pas during worship than they are at any other time. Now's the time to plan to ensure your visitors and guests are not only welcomed, but in a place to hear the Gospel story unhindered by distractions.



# The Worship Checklist

## 1. Get Them Seated

Even if your worship center is nearly empty, there's nothing more impressive than being asked, "Do you have a seating preference?" Sure, your members are going to sit wherever, but a guest? They don't know who belongs in which pew. And most of them are going to want to sit in the back. A good usher makes sure there are premium seats for the most important people in your worship service – the guests.

## 2. Greet Them ... Again

Visitors tend to arrive early or late. For the early birds, make sure that you have worship hosts who flit over and have a conversation with them. (A conversation: more than the Walmart greeting of "Good morning, welcome to First Church.")

## 3. Be a Buddy

Probably most of your Easter guests will be repeat attenders. However, if you have first-time visitors, be strategic and have a Worship Buddy sit next to them (or in the pew behind them). The Buddy's job is to whisper quiet instructions as needed: "We stand for this song" ; "Communion is open to anyone ... take a bit of bread and cup of wine. The cups in the center are grape juice"; and so on.

## 4. Watch Your Language

The best rule of thumb is to Presume Nothing. Your visitors probably don't know who Peter is, let alone Moses or Isaiah. They don't know where the narthex is (or even what a narthex is!). And they don't know who you are.

Everyone who steps to a microphone should introduce themselves and bid the congregation good morning. Every "Christian" term you use should be defined. And every person/place should be explained.



# The Worship Checklist

## 5. Get the Contact Info

Make sure you have connection/commitment cards in every worship folder.

## 6. Get the Contact Cards Filled Out

After the opening song, welcome the visitors and point them to the connection card. Tell them you will come back to it at the end of the service. To ensure you get nearly 100% of guest information, we recommend that you announce that you'll be making a \$5 donation to the local food bank (or another community-favored charity) for every connection card that's completely filled out by a first-time visitor.

## 7. Collect the Contact Cards Effectively

The best option to increase your visitor return rate is to arrange your order of service so that your offering is collected after the sermon. This will allow you to use your connection cards effectively.

## 8. Limit Distractions

Keep announcements to a minimum and put them at the end of the service just before collecting the connection card.

## 9. Give It Time

Immediately following the sermon, walk the congregation through the connection/commitment card and give them time to fill it out.

Then ask them to put the connection card in the offering plate as its passed. If they are a visitor tell them they are your guests and you don't expect them to give this morning – Instead put the connection card in the plate.



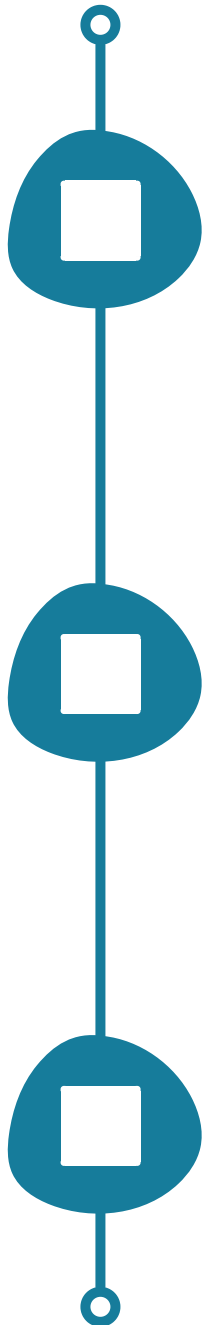


# Post Worship



The postlude is done and another Easter service is in the books. But your job isn't done yet ... not by a long shot. In fact, what happens over the next 72 hours will determine the odds of turning your visitors into returning guests. To be honest, the odds are stacked against you. Many of your guests were there under protest (a parent, spouse, or grandma dragged them to church). But it's a virtual guarantee – skip the follow-up and you'll get a zero return rate. You might as well up the odds!

# Follow-Up Checklist



## 1. Re-Invite Everyone

QuickTrip is famous for their "Thanks. See ya later" greetings whenever you visit their convenience store. It's amazing though, churches rarely "greet" their members of guests when they leave. It's as if we don't care whether a guest returns.

Solve this issue by assigning greeters to each exit to hold the door, to offer to assist anyone needing help, and most important to invite them to return next week. "Thanks for being here. We'd love to see you next week!"

## 2. Easter Afternoon Follow-Up

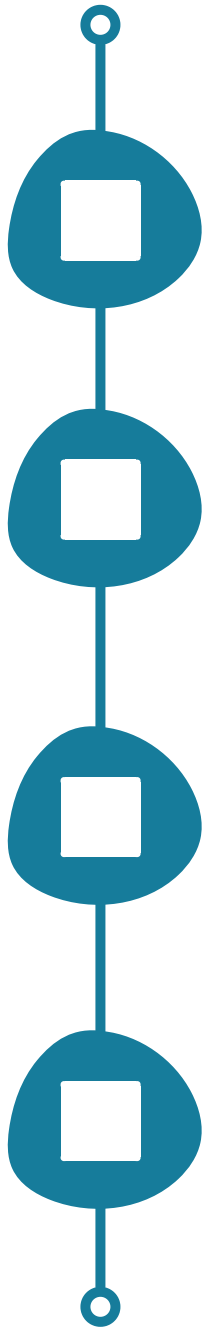
Make a doorstep visit with each new visitor within two hours of the service. The laity should make these visits, although if you have a small church and are committed to growth, the pastor and whomever else served "up front" where people could see them should make these visits.

Be sure to take a "gift of value," that is, something that's NOT consumable and that will find a home where the gift is on display (do you *really* need another mug?!). Include church information, a follow-up business card, and an "ad" for the next sermon/sermon series.

## 3. Easter Monday Morning Follow-Up

The pastor should handwrite a card to each new person welcoming them and inviting them to hear next week's message (be sure to include the title). In addition, if your target is a younger crowd, invite them to be a part of an upcoming, hands-on mission project that your church is hosting. Many young adults will enter the church through these kinds of hands-on opportunities.

# Follow-Up Checklist



## 4. Easter Tuesday Follow-Up

On Tuesday email or mail them a new visitors brochure. If you have the budget and you can increase the Wow! factor by sending them a FedEx package with an easy-reading Bible, a short video about the church on a high-capacity thumb drive, a gas coupon, etc.

## 5. Easter Thursday Follow-Up

Send a text (preferable) or an email thanking the guest for their visit and re-inviting them to the upcoming worship service. Be sure to mention the title and theme of the sermon and if you can point out how it might be relevant to the guest's lives, all the better.

## 6. Easter Saturday Follow-Up

On Saturday, send an invitation to an upcoming Meet the Pastor and Explore Our Church luncheon or dessert. This event does not need to take place the following week, but should be scheduled within four weeks of Easter.

## 7. Later Follow-Up

If the guests return at least one other time in the next month, during week four or five following Easter, the pastor (churches under 250 in worship) or a paid staff person (churches over 250) should call, email, or text the new family inviting them to consider becoming part of a small group or some other group building ministry.

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