

## Welcoming Worship Guests

By Kate Bohannon, Hulen Brown, Harriet Fairley, David Hannah, Cherie Hunter,  
Celeste Jonson, Jeremy McClain, and Teal Sanders

Presented in Partial Fulfillments for Requirements to Complete Leadership UMC

April 27, 2019

### Project Overview:

What are the most critical elements necessary to welcome guests to a worship service? What efforts might promote positive experiences that will facilitate increased return rates among guests? These questions are central starting points for church growth efforts in congregations of various sizes across the North Georgia Conference because worship remains the entry-level experience for most persons new to congregations.

Components of welcoming guests include advance planning efforts which include training key volunteers to creating guest packets and everything in between. Ease of access becomes very important to guests who lack familiarity with a specific church and so signage and other casual access tools and designs can enhance the comfort level with a guest. Research suggests that the taken-for-granted predictors of religiosity do not meet real world data and so rethinking our theological task to meet the needs of all people becomes essential.

As important as thinking through the welcoming experience is avoiding the tendency to overwhelm and smother guests. Faulty assumptions that guests are ready to join, be recognized, have ongoing follow-up, or other factors could prove detrimental to one's efforts. Ultimately, increasing entry experiences and capitalizing on the worship service are tactics that can enhance any congregations church growth efforts.

### References

- Gunnoe, M.J. & Moore, K.A. (2002) **Predictors of religiosity among youth aged 17-22**. A longitudinal study of the National Survey of Children. *Journal for Scientific Study of Religion* 41 (4), pp. 613-622.
- Ketcham, S.G. (2012). **Solving the retention problem through integration: A communal vision for youth ministry**. *Journal of Youth Ministry* 11 (1), pp. 7-29.
- Whitehead, J. (2014). **Towards a practical theology of whole person learning. Enriching youth ministry formation through Pneumatological Perspectives**. *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 11(1), pp. 61-73.