

HOSTING A SUNDAY MEETING

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At Common Ground, the responsibilities of the person hosting during Sunday meetings entail three main kinds of hosting:

- 1) Hosting the Presence of God
- 2) Hosting the congregation
- 3) Hosting guests

This document primarily focuses on practical ways to get sharper on this third aspect of hosting

1) Do what you can to break the ice in non-threatening ways from time to time.

Especially in the mornings, people are a little icy at the beginning of a meeting. Think of creative things to break this – always keeping new people in mind who could easily feel intimidated or overwhelmed.

2) Welcome everyone, especially guests before you do announcements.

Invite them to the visitors' section after the meeting: *"We'd love to meet you and treat you to some delicious cake and coffee."* Note: do not say anything that will come on too strong, like 'We'd love to get to know you better'.

3) Find the least intrusive way to get the Guest information to newcomers.

Perhaps it could be handed out along with the offering baskets so that new people need not stick up their hands. If not possible, make sure you tell the people what you want to give them before you ask them to put up their hand!

"For those here for the first time, we'd love to give you a mini-booklet that serves as a window into the life of this community. If you'd like one – please raise your hand – and someone will pass one to you. If you wouldn't mind. Please also fill in the form in that booklet and hand it in at the Guest Lounge – this is so we can best serve you."

Note: do not say, *"So we can contact you"* – that's threatening, and we don't always contact everyone anyway.

4) Be sensitive to new people's vulnerabilities throughout the meeting.

Unchurched visitors tend to feel most vulnerable when:

a) People start worshipping. They think to themselves, 'Do I have to stand? Do I have to sing along? Do I even believe this stuff? Why are those people lifting their hands? What is happening here – it all seems so emotionally intense? How long will this singing thing go on for?'

It is useful to call people to worship in a way that explains what is going on here so that unchurched people understand what's going on.

b) Someone prophesies. They may think to themselves, 'Wow – what is going on here? Is God literally speaking through that person?' Without detracting from the moment, you may need to offer some explanation to help them understand what's going on. Also, be ready to apply certain prophetic words to non-Christians too.

c) The offering happens. A kind of religious instinct can kick in when new people somehow feel obliged or pressurised to give – but a part of them can feel a little resentful about that. Perhaps say something along the lines of, “*Guests, please feel no pressure. This is an opportunity for our members to be generous.*”

5) If you so choose, pray a prayer at the beginning or end of worship that helps unchurched people to connect with God and the Gospel.

In other words, be mindful of them as you pray. The focus of your prayer is obviously God – but factor in both Christians and not-yet Christians as you pray.

6) Look for opportunities to attractively reinforce that we’re a family.

Usually after welcoming people, and before the announcements is a fantastic time to, with clear forethought, call someone up or draw attention to someone in the crowd – eg weddings, babies, visiting pastors, 50th anniversaries, etc. These family moments can serve two purposes simultaneously. They send a message that we’re a family, and they also offer the opportunity to reinforce one of the values of the family.

7) Think of something inspiring or challenging you can say about giving in no more than 30 seconds.

Remember, you’re not up there to preach, but to underline core family values and kingdom principles.

8) Run through the wording of what you know you’re going to say before-hand.

If you try wing all of the above aspects, you no doubt will not do as well as you could at covering some key bases. So practise beforehand, perhaps even writing it all down as a way of clarifying exactly what you want to say. Obviously as you speak, you will say it in a fresh unrehearsed way.