



One of my working assumptions as a worship leader—the presence of outsiders who lack familiarity with Episcopal worship. People who enter an Episcopal Church for the first time, with no background in liturgical worship often find themselves lacking enough hands. They must hold the prayer book in one hand, the hymnbook in the other, and the bulletin in the third. And, keeping up with the progression of the worship also can be challenging.

Worship in many Episcopal churches proves difficult for newcomers, especially if the primary guide is *The Book of Common Prayer* along with a bulletin that only supplies page numbers. A seeker sensitive church remains focused on the worship of believers as its primary concern, but it also stands on tiptoe with sensitivity to those who attend with little or no church background. And, a seeker sensitive church seeks to remove as many obstacles as possible to the full inclusion and involvement in worship of those seeking faith.

In our church, several features reveal our seeker-sensitive approach. For one thing, we have a greeter outside whose sole task it is to welcome by name those whose faces they do not know. We seek to welcome them at their level of comfort and take the responsibility on ourselves to recognize the seeker without putting them on the spot to self identify as new.

Also, the entire service, except for the texts of most music, gets printed in the bulletin. I announce the next aspect of worship and the appropriate page numbers in *The Book of Common Prayer*. And, I explain the process of Holy Communion so that newcomers will understand what's going on and get some sense of how they may participate.

Our main goal with seekers is to be certain that they meet at least three people by name and that they feel welcomed without being “put upon.” If someone returns a second time to worship, the odds of their staying with us double. We hope to see people meaningfully engaged with the church and connected to God in Christ by faith. Some will worship here and settle elsewhere, which gives us cause for rejoicing.

Regular worshippers can prayerfully support these seeker-friendly moves by understanding that basic assumption—the presence of newcomers in each service—and by being alert for faces you do not know. Introduce yourself by name to those people with something like, “Hi, I am David. I don't think we've met before.” Best to avoid lines like, “You're new here, aren't you.” Newcomers normally feel put on the spot with that kind of language.

God's peace,

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