

All You Need to Know About Talking to Guests in Your Congregation

It's not scary...it's fun. You can learn something new, and reach out to someone who's exploring your congregation!

The Before-Church Conversation

Good morning, are you a visitor?

Yes, actually this is my first time.

Well, welcome, we're happy to have you. I'm Vickie Trott.

I'm James Dolittle..

Have you been to a Unitarian Universalist church before?

Well, no.

Well, let me explain that our services are pretty traditional. We have hymns, readings, and a sermon. The service is about an hour. And afterward we serve coffee and cookies. Please do stay for that if you can.

Thank you.

Oh, and let me get a packet of visitor information for you. (*Goes and gets it from the visitor desk.*) How did you find us?

On the internet.

Wonderful. That's happening more and more these days. Well, it's almost time for the service. It was good talking with you. If I don't see you afterward, please come back again.

THE AFTER-SERVICE CONVERSATION

Good morning, are you a visitor?

Yes, actually this is my first time.

Well, welcome, we're happy you're here. I'm Vickie Trott.

I'm James Dolittle...

Welcome. Have you been to a Unitarian Universalist church before?

Actually, no.

Do you have any questions about the service?

No, I don't think so. I enjoyed it.

It was a pretty typical service. (OR: Once a month our services are led not by the minister, but by the members. They're a little different in style, than when the minister is here.) Would you like some coffee?

Sure.

(Both of you go and get coffee.)

May I ask how you found us?

On the internet.

We have more and more people who find us that way. Do you live close by?

In Lenexa.

We have a lot of members from there. Is there anything in particular that brought you here this morning?

No, I'd just been meaning to come for some time. And we've got a small child who is starting to ask questions about religion.

We hear that quite a bit. My husband and I drove by this place for years and just finally decided to come. We've been here now about 5 years and we love it. We don't have small children but a lot of our friends and members did begin coming for the reason you just mentioned. And we've got a great children's religious education department.

What do you like about this church?

We like the variety in the church services. And that the people are friendly. And that we can be spiritual without having to believe in creeds. And that people can hold different viewpoints and still worship together. This is a church which permits us to develop our own beliefs and where we learn from each other about religion.

I think that's what I'm looking for.

One way to learn more about us is through our newsletter. If you'd be interested in receiving it, I'd be happy to help you sign up for it.

Sure.

And let me get you a visitor's packet also.

Sure.

Goes and gets the New Visitor Sign-Up Sheet plus a packet of First-Time Visitor Information from the Visitor's Desk.

If you'd fill this out we'll get you on the list.

Okay

(Waits while the person fills out the sheet and then takes it from him.)

Well, I'd better be going.

Okay. It was good talking with you. Please come back.

Thanks. I think I probably will.

Note: Please do try to introduce each new visitor to one other person so they will have at least met two people. And if the minister, president, or lay service leader is close at hand, make an introduction to her/him as well. If the visitor seems shy, you can forgo this. There's a fine line between being welcoming and being smothering. It's different for every person. If you sense that the visitor just wants to race out of there, let her. But give him a smile and a friendly word if you can. And see that she gets a packet of information which she can read when she's in more private surroundings.