

3. Why might people suddenly decide to come to Sunday Worship, perhaps for the first time?

Can you remember why you started going to church?
Or, why you decided to return to church after a long break?

“I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me.” Isaiah 65v1

“Faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ”
Romans 10v17

“Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers for, by so doing, some people have entertained angels without knowing it.”
Hebrews 13v1&2

4. **Read Matthew 25vv31-46** **Reflect**

5. **Pray** for each other and name anyone you would like to have the courage to invite to church or to your small group.

Notes:

Parish of Ferndown

This booklet covers the Small Group Studies for two weeks

Study notes for week commencing 21st September 2008
St Mary’s Core Values (3) “CALLED TO WELCOME”

The Bible challenges us about welcoming

Read Matthew 25vv34-45.

Keep silence for a minute
How does the passage encourage us to respond to strangers?

Read Mark 9v37

Keep silence for a minute
Consider the ways in which we make children feel at ease when they are anxious.
How can we relate this to welcoming adult strangers who visit our church?

Discuss: Why does welcoming people matter?

Brainstorm onto a large piece of paper:
“If I visit a new church I feel welcome if...”

Read Colossians 4vv5&6

In what ways can you make the most of every opportunity when you meet someone for the first time?

Reflect and share:

Can you remember going to a new place for the first time?
It may have been when starting a new job; attending a first meeting; going to a new church or joining a club.

How did you feel beforehand?
What was good and bad about the experience?
What would have improved your experience?

Conversation openers

Some people say, "I'd like to talk to strangers at church but I don't know how to begin a conversation."

In groups of three: think about conversation openers that you could use with people at church to whom you have never spoken. Open questions usually work well. For example those beginning with: How? What? Why? Who? When? Where? It is also a good idea to begin by introducing yourself by name first.

Role Play

In the same groups of three role-play a first meeting. Take turns at being the stranger or the church member. The third person should listen and observe.

After 3 minutes the observer should feed back helpful comments.

The 'actors' should say how they felt during the conversation.

Change round.

Make a note of good conversation openers to share with other groups.

Consider your usual behaviour at St Mary's.

When you enter the church or the hall do you look for someone you know, or someone you don't know?

In the light of what you have been thinking about tonight, do you need to change your attitude or behaviour?

Pray for each other.

Notes:

Parish of Ferndown

Study notes for week commencing 28th September 2008

Do you have a passion to reach the lost and to disciple and assimilate new members and new Christians into our church?

Consider:

1. In a recent survey of 500 successful churches one of the most effective forms of outreach was found to be through the small group structure. In the majority of these growing churches small group members were **expected** to invite un-churched friends, relatives, colleagues to small group meetings.
 - What is your reaction to this idea?
Why do you think small groups could be a successful outreach tool?
 - Is this something that your small group has ever considered? Would you ever consider doing this?
 - What difficulties can you envisage?
 - What positive outcome might there be?
 - Would you allow guests to come to any of your small group meetings?

"If people in the church believe their fellowship is making a difference for the kingdom, then, they will be enthusiastic about inviting their friends to church. Likewise, if visitors sense that the church is making a difference, they will be eager to be part of it."
Thos Rainer in High Expectations

2. Are you enthusiastic about inviting your friends/colleagues/family to come with you to church? If not, ask yourself, "Why?"

- What holds you back?
- What strategies could you try? Brainstorm ideas.