

Dear Family at Christ Community,

Last Sunday we heard from Romans 12:9-21, and the call that God has placed upon us to be generous in love and hospitality. Knowing that a house is one of the metaphors God uses for the church, one of the first ways we can begin in obedience to this command is to be welcoming to those who visit with us on Sunday mornings. We praise God for the growth in this area that we have experienced as you have been intentional to look out for and welcome those who are new. We want to continue to cultivate this spirit and to capitalize on what we heard from Romans 12.

One of the ways we all can do this is to remember what it was like when we began attending CCC. Didn't it make a big difference to have someone greet us with a warm smile and a friendly handshake? Wasn't it nice to have someone learn and know our name? Remembering our own experience will help us to think more intentionally about how we can welcome others into our family and communicate to them that our desire is to serve and love each other well. To this end, here are 10 practical steps we can begin to take to grow in our hospitality as a body:

- 1) **Take a few minutes before or after the service to talk to someone you've never met or don't know very well.** It doesn't have to be a lengthy conversation; sometimes a simple hello or good-bye will do. If you are intentional to look for one or two people you don't know each Sunday, learn their names and a little bit about them, it will not be very long before you'll have met all the regulars and will more easily recognize visitors. This also means you have to get to worship with enough time to meet others and stick around long enough when the service ends to talk with folks.
- 2) **Wear a name-tag.** On the Connection Table, you'll find name-tag stickers and sharpies so that you can easily create a name-tag for yourself. This will help us to remember names more easily and for visitors to be able to learn yours.
- 3) **Welcome people to sit with you.** It's easy to navigate to our "spot" on Sunday mornings, and unintentionally neglect to offer space to people who may be new and looking for somewhere to sit. If you typically sit nearer one of the aisles, consider moving in towards the center so that people coming in after you can easily find a seat. If you see someone looking for a space, speak up and offer them a seat by you.
- 4) **Get to know people by asking them about themselves.** DON'T ask if this is their first time at CCC. DO say, "Hey, my name's _____. I haven't met you before. What's your name?" You could also ask: How did they find out about the church? What sort of work do they do? Where do you live? How long have they lived in the area?
- 5) **Ask visitors if there's anything they need.** This can be an easy way to break the ice after introducing yourself. Ask if they need coffee or water, directions to the bathroom, a bulletin or children's sheet, a question about the service—these are things we all can help with.

- 6) **Introduce people to your friends.** Is there a group of people you typically catch up with before or after the service? Invite visitors into your circle and include them in your conversation.
- 7) **Invite people to lunch.** If you have made a connection with someone new, ask them to lunch with you after church. Don't let rejection or concern about logistics keep you from asking. Pick somewhere affordable where it's easy to converse.
- 8) **Invite people to a small group or discipleship group.** If you have made a connection with someone new, ask them to come to your small group or discipleship group to get to know and engage others.
- 9) **Remember that your identity is in Christ.** Will some conversations be awkward? Maybe, but so what? Will you sometimes struggle to think of something to say? Maybe, but so what? Will people sometimes think you're odd, over-eager, too quiet, or too loud? Maybe, but so what? What is all this to you? You belong to Jesus! The more self-forgetful we discipline ourselves to be, the more loving of others and aware of opportunities to bless and encourage we will also be. We live in an age of rampant self-centeredness, with the ironic result that we are prone to be constant critics of ourselves and each other. Jesus calls us to a better way.
- 10) **Pray.** Without the Spirit's help, every effort we make to be hospitable, warm, and friendly will not make the sort of impact for eternity that truly makes a difference. Moreover, our efforts to love others well will often miss the mark, or be perceived the wrong way. We can't know ahead of time what people visiting with us are thinking, or the best way to make them feel comfortable. But we do know that nothing happens by accident. Pray for the people God brings our way on Sunday mornings. Pray that their experience would confirm that God is really among us. Ask the Lord to bring the broken, the seeking, and the hurting our way and ask His help as we seek to love them and each other well, to His glory and our joy.

Let me know if you have other great ideas that could help add to or modify this list to be a help to the church as a whole. Help to make our church a more hospitable place for those who take the time to worship with us on Sundays!

In Christ,

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