reminder

> **"I shall always be ready to remind you of these things…"**
> **2 Peter 1:21**

CABOT WESTSIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1017 S. 2nd St. (Old Hwy. 367)
Cabot, AR 72023
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facebook.com/cabotwestside

When We Meet

Sunday
Bible Classes – 9:00 am
Worship – 10:00 am, 5:00 pm
Wednesday
Bible Classes – 7:00 pm

Our Elders

R.D. Hopper
Norman Kemper

Our Deacons

Troy Hunter
Kelly Kendall
Tony Ramick

Our Preacher

Alex Hale

Attending to the Visitor
by Alex Hale

We've all been there. Maybe you were with your family on vacation. Perhaps you had just moved to the area. It could be that you were on a business trip. You make the right decision that even though you are in an unfamiliar place, you are going to worship with a local church. You (perhaps with the help of GPS) find the church building. As you walk across the parking lot, a family walks right by you without speaking. You walk in, not really sure where to go, and no one is around to help. You finally hear noise coming from the auditorium, so you head in that direction. You find the one pew in the building that is not littered with books and blankets, only to later discover that, indeed, it also belonged to someone else. The worship service may be spiritually uplifting, the preaching may be powerful, and the doctrine may be biblically accurate, but as you leave, only one or two people speak, and you walk out thinking, "That wasn't a very friendly church."

What about visitors who walk in here? As we prepare for our gospel meeting, it might be a good time to give some thought to how we attend to the visitor.

Have a place ready for them. James 2 speaks of sitting a poor man in a less-desired place. While I would hope that we would not show partiality in that way, do we consider our visitors? Or, do we treat the church building as if it were *our* personal domain? Look at things through the eyes of a visitor. Is the auditorium clean and tidy with accessible seats that look like they are available for someone to sit in? We need to recognize something: just because we may feel comfortable here does not mean that a visitor will feel comfortable here. If we are not careful, our "comforts of home" can be off-putting to a visitor. Pick up after yourself. The chair back is not an appropriate place for old bulletins and Bible class workbooks. Keep toys and books for children to a minimum. Whether we like it or not, the way we maintain the building is likely the first impression a visitor will have of us. Are we making a good first impression?

Welcome them. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, *"If you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?"* Harold Comer writes, "Tax collectors were a despised, tight, closed group of covetous self centered people. Christ was teaching His followers to be a warm, loving people to everyone." Some churches are tight and closed. It is great when someone comes in who is known by many. But what about the visitor who may not know anyone? Do we allow our attention to the former to cause us to neglect the latter? Certainly a New Testament church welcomes fellow believers (Romans 15:7). However, we are also to welcome strangers (Matthew 25:35).

Follow up with them. Though it may seem awkward to you, this could include inviting them out to eat with your family. It could involve sending a card or email. Perhaps you make a phone call or send a text message thanking them for their attendance and checking on them. If you build a relationship with a visitor, that will provide you an opportunity to have a spiritual conversation with them. Are there any better prospects for evangelism than people who have already walked through our door to worship and study?

In the Greek, the term "hospitality" means "love of strangers." Do we have that love for people? While we might be quick to say, "Of course we do," do we *show* that love for people? When God provides us an open door of opportunity, let us take advantage. For a visitor in our assemblies, it could make an eternal difference.