

## CDM Virtual Conference

### **Developing a Vision for Visiting Families – Justin Huensch and Lisa Young**

**Mt 28:19** *make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Often, we have found that people need to have a sense that they belong before they believe in the gospel. And for families, from the parents to the children, a visit to your church may be a way seeking that sense of belonging.

#### **Recognize:**

- a. Getting to church can be difficult for young families! Many family breakdowns have happened from walking out the door of the house and into the door of your church. Coming in “hot”!

***Discussion:** What are the challenges for young families before they ever get to your door?*

- b. Often, these new families may be coming to church for the first time or returning after a long “break” from when they used to go to church. Why this sudden interest?
  - **For the parents:** realizing being a parent is very difficult. Dream of life/family may not be coming to fruition as they thought. They want something more: more direction, more hope, and maybe more help. [Mt 11:28]
  - **For the kids:** parents may not be that interested in the things of God, but they want something “good” or “spiritual” for their kids. The world is scarier now that they have children. These parents may have gone to church when they were younger, now returning. [Heb 10:23]

***Discussion:** What are some of the other reasons you have seen new families visit your church?*

#### **II. COMING IN**

Visiting a church may be difficult even before they get to your doors, so how can we as a church/ministry, from staff leaders to volunteers, lower the barrier of entry for families and children to come into the church?

***Discussion:** What impressions do you think (or you heard) new families have when they visit your church?*

##### **a. CHURCH LOBBY**

One of the most challenging moments for new families is walking through the front door and  
1. NOT KNOWING ANYONE and 2. NOT KNOWING WHAT TO DO.

***Discussion:** Do the staff/volunteers/greeters of your church know what happens in Children’s Ministry on a Sunday Morning? Can they help inform new families and guide them to where they need to go?*

##### **b. CHECK-IN:**

An easy and secure check-in system: gives confidence to parents and ease to the Sunday scramble.

##### **c. CLASSROOM:**

###### **i. Welcoming the Child**

- **At the door:** Leader/Volunteer introduce themselves to the parents and children. Let them know the schedule, and what they can join in on doing as they walk in.
- **In the classroom:** Depending on your ministry and the child, large public introduction of quieter introduction.

**ii. Including the Child**

- Pair the visiting child with another child. Sometimes we just need **one** person to connect with to feel welcome and that we belong.

**iii. Remember their name**

- Remember the visiting child's name that day and for future visits.

**iv. Recruiting:**

- Recruit volunteers and leaders who love kids [enjoy them, value them, can talk to them, etc.]. Children, even visitors, will notice this and be drawn to it!

**Discussion: What other qualities do you look for in your leaders/volunteers?**

**d. COMMUNICATION:**

- Be aware that visitors in the room may not know the vocabulary of the church, Bible, and/or the gospel. Define those "church words". Help them find the Bible verses for that lesson, song lyrics, etc.
- Use a Bible, even if you have verses on a screen. It is good for them to see how you treat the Bible, as real, good, and true.

**III. GOING OUT**

**a. Equip Families to Invite**

- Parents:** Encourage them to pray for other families and invite them to church and events. Equip them with training on how to do engage with their neighbors and coworkers.
- Children:** Encourage the children to invite their friends to church and special events. Teach them how to pray for their friends and neighbors and join in with the mission of our Great God. [John 1:40-42]

**Discussion: What are ways you might improve or encourage parents & kids to play a role in God's mission?**

**b. Encourage Outreach through Events**

- Children's Ministry Events: Movie Night, Bike Night, Board Game Night, Pool Party, Field Day, VBS
- Churchwide Events: Church Picnic or BBQs, Christmas Events, Church-wide Gatherings with families in mind.

**Discussion: What are some of the events you do? What are new ideas for events with visiting families in mind?**

**c. Engage the Community**

Consider leaders/volunteers attending child's special events in the community (games, plays, shows, etc.). This is meaningful to the children, and encouraging/surprising to other families in attendance

**d. Follow Up:**

Make a plan on how to follow up after an event or a Sunday morning visit by a new family. A letter or postcard, an email to the parents, even possibly a phone call.

**A Couple of Notes:**

We know everyone is coming from different communities and churches, so how you approach some of these things will be different for you in your context. Hopefully this workshop is an encouraging place to either begin developing a vision for visiting families or discuss and brainstorm more creative ways to engage visiting families in your community!