

Organising Visiting Teams

At times, the local church may host visiting teams for seminars of various kinds, from outreach, music groups to parenting seminars etc. These visits are usually most effective when organised in partnership with other churches and groups. Such collaboration can encourage the participating churches, lead people to Christ, and strengthen unity within the Body of Christ, provided it does not encourage people to move from one church to another.

Visiting teams can be frustrated when they arrive to find poor organisation. Likewise, team members with administrative experience may be discouraged if local arrangements fall short of normal community standards. Pastors and leaders should work closely with capable administrators in the host church and delegate responsibilities where appropriate. Well-organised programmes inspire confidence and build a sense of expectation.

Planning and procedure

1. Once an invitation has been extended and accepted by a visiting team, find out exactly what is required to organise the visit and write it down. Record all dates in your planning calendar.
2. Inform all participating churches about the visit at least two months before the team arrives. Write to them and include the dates of the visit.
 - a. Include any available publicity material and references. If you have videos about the group, distribute those as well.
 - b. Mention any requirements for churches that want to be involved, such as billeting, counsellors, and financial support.
 - c. Let them know that you will contact them again in one month to confirm their interest and commitment.
3. One month before the visit, send another letter or phone each church to confirm its interest and commitment. If a church is interested, record the contact person's name and follow up promptly with details about any requirements, such as billeting and the need for counsellors.
 - a. Encourage each church to publicise the visit well, especially in its newsletter. Send a sample notice if that would help.
4. Two weeks before the event, contact all church coordinators and record the names of counsellors and those who have committed to billeting. Arrange extra people as backups in case anyone withdraws at the last moment.

5. Throughout the preparation, cover the event in prayer and ask God to work powerfully through the visit. Many churches have been transformed through such occasions.

On arrival of the team

1. Be there to welcome the team warmly and serve them with a willing heart.
2. Prepare a detailed list of billets and hosts for every team member, including addresses and phone numbers. This will help if people need to contact or visit one another.
3. Earlier provide each host with a letter explaining exactly what is required, such as where and when billets should meet when needed, and whether the team need to bring a packed lunch etc.

After the visit

1. Send a letter of appreciation to the team and, if possible, include a monetary gift. Encourage the team in its ministry.
2. If necessary, gently point out weaknesses, but do so constructively.
3. Follow up on any matters that need attention. For example, counsellors may need to follow up with new converts, and outstanding accounts will need to be paid.
4. Do not hesitate to evaluate the team's ministry in your church three or six months later. This may be helpful if you are considering inviting the group back.