



CONNECTIONAL MINISTRIES



SESSION ONE:



KEY QUESTION:

What entry points are there into your corps?

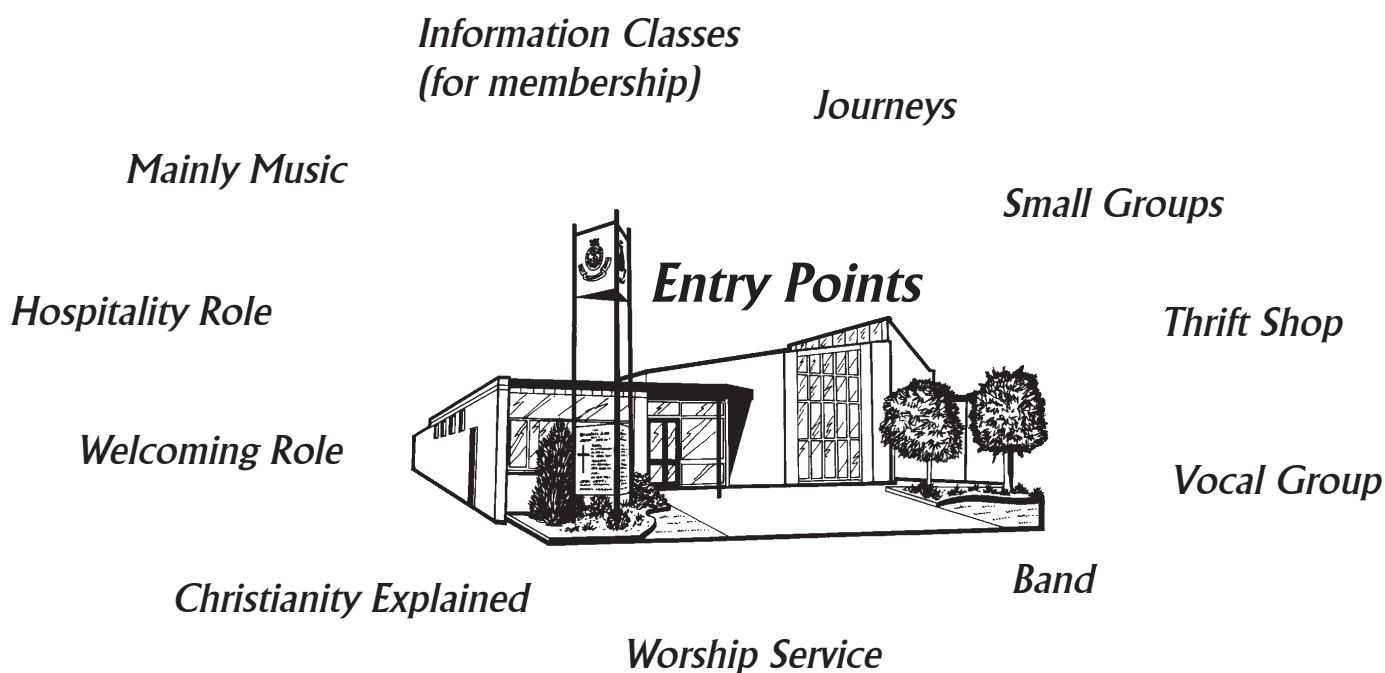
The ability for people to develop relationships with others is absolutely critical if a church is to both attract and keep newcomers. People are not merely looking for a friendly church; they are looking to make friends.

The church's ability to provide avenues for newcomers to make friends will be one determinant as to the church's potential to grow.

CAROUSEL BRAINSTORMING



Playgroups, community gardens and outreach events are some of the ways in which we build relationships with those in our community. They also provide us with opportunities to introduce our friends to Jesus, both through our witness and through invitations to come to our corps.



In small groups (3-4 people),

- * Identify the current entry points/potential entry points into your corps. Have someone write these on butcher's paper.
- * Discuss ways in which people may transition from these entry points into the life of the corps.
- * Record details of the way discipleship is facilitated within your corps.
- * Hang your group's answer sheets on the wall alongside a blank piece of butcher's paper. Walk around the room and look at the answers of other groups adding comments and questions on the blank paper.

Regroup and discuss the comments added.

Which entry point would be the easiest to initiate?

How does the current discipleship system cater to the needs of those who have just entered the corps?

How would you encourage newcomers to get involved in discipleship?

What steps need to be taken? By whom?

“The primary reason that we want people to come to church is to meet with Jesus. We want to encourage them to develop a deeper relationship with Him.”



KEY QUESTION:

What would a newcomer's first impression be of your corps?

PRE-SERVICE

Foyer - Before



CARPARK

Before/After





Fill in the flow chart below describing the experience of a newcomer to your corps.

Who/What would they experience?

SERVICE

Auditorium



POST-SERVICE

Foyer - After



KEY QUESTION:

What keeps people coming back to your corps?

- People's opinions are formed within the first seven minutes of arrival.
- People are not looking for friendliness but for people with whom they can become friends.
- First time visitors are anxious the first time they come to your corps, we need to find ways to relieve this anxiety.
- The process needs to be safe, welcoming and simple.

First Impressions will get people to visit. Lasting impressions will get people to stay and EVERYTHING speaks to first time guests!

How does your corps foster a culture of hospitality?



It is easy “to miss the forest because of all the trees” when it comes to your own corps. This is the place where you pour out your heart and energy everyday, so it is easy to be “blind” to the little things that may be broken, missing or needed. Sometimes, what you need is a fresh pair of eyes to “shop” at your corps and help you see things in a new light.

Alternatively, you could put on “guest goggles” and try to view your corps through the eyes of a newcomer. Be prepared. It takes courage to look at things for what they are without providing a reason (often valid) as to why they remain that way.

Reflect on your responses in the flowchart.

What aspects of your corps' hospitality keep people coming back to your corps?

What things could be 'off putting'?



LASTING FIRST IMPRESSIONS

People have a passion for Jesus

Visibility: Corps is easy to recognise, signage to the corps and around the corps makes it easy for newcomers to navigate. **Entry to building is well lit and signposted.** It's easy to find out information about your corps from outside sources e.g. internet, signs, word of mouth

Trained Hospitality Team: Newcomers are welcomed in a warm, pleasant manner. Team members provide helpful information and direction when necessary.

Visitor Materials: Newcomers find it easy to access information about your programmes. There is consistency across material giving the same message visually and in the content. The language is easy for everyone to understand (doesn't use phrases that are known by members only.)

Subjective Influences: these are the things experienced by the newcomer's five senses: SEE – buildings are attractive, clean, tidy, well lit, uncluttered. What are the people like? (dress, congregational demographics)

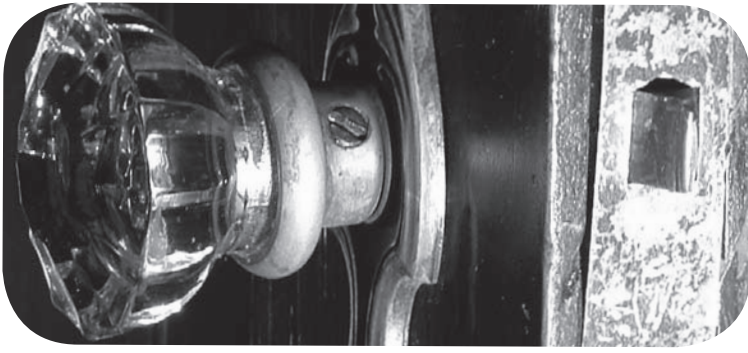
HEAR – there are happy sounds, welcoming and cheerful voices.

SMELL – clean, sweet odours. Memories can be triggered by smell.

TASTE – not necessarily a physical taste but can be associated with the phrase 'left a bad taste in my mouth'. Perception or experience. What is the relationship like between church members; between the Officer and the Corps Members?

TOUCH (feel) – The corps makes them feel...welcomed, happy, relaxed, excited, inspired...church atmosphere...

AND...



WHAT WE COULD BE DOING



WHAT WE DO WELL



Reflect on your corps. Think about the things that create lasting first impressions. Fill in the Venn diagram, identifying things that your corps already does, what your corps does well and things that could be done to create a hospitable welcome for newcomers.

WHAT WE CURRENTLY DO

It is our responsibility to provide a welcoming environment where newcomers will find a sense of belonging and make friends. Providing newcomers with this kind of environment will help them in their journey towards faith.

 In small groups, reflecting on the Venn diagram discuss the following:

What needs to happen to increase the size of the overlap?

What do you perceive as barriers to doing this?

How could these barriers be overcome?

EXIT SLIP - To end Session 1, fill in the boxes below:

Questions I have...

I am feeling...

I can celebrate...

I want to see...



SESSION TWO:



KEY QUESTION:

Why don't people come back?

Malcolm walks into a car dealership in a small country town that he has grown up in. He has come into a large sum of money through an inheritance and wants to buy a new car. He goes into the dealership of the brand of car he has always wanted to buy. After walking around for seven or eight minutes, he overhears the sales attendant say to his assistant, "Don't worry about him. He can't afford anything in here."

Malcolm immediately leaves, crossing the road to a rival dealership and after a short discussion with the sales attendant, drives away in a brand new car – paid for in full.



The sales assistant lost a \$30,000 sale because: (list 3 reasons)

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Discuss with a partner the following questions:

Which service provider/store do you return to time and time again?

What makes you return?

What things 'turn you off'?

Read the article, "*Why they don't come back*" by Calvin Ratz. (available from www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com from "Welcoming Visitors/For the Whole Church")

Compare your answers to the reasons given in the article.

What similarities can you see between good service and good church service?

KEY QUESTION:

How important is follow up (follow through)?

Imagine...

It's the bottom of the ninth inning and the scores are level. The bases are loaded and there are two outs already. The batter is nervous. The ball is pitched. "Ball." The ball is pitched again. "Strike! Strike 2, Ball 3." It's do or die. The next ball will determine the outcome of the game. The ball is pitched. It looks good. It's within the strike zone.

Now imagine...

The batter raises the bat and swings it around to the front of her body. It stops, stationary, waiting for the ball to strike. The ball hits the bat. It rolls lazily into the glove of the pitcher who throws it to home plate. "You're out, side away."

In order for the batter to use the momentum of the ball effectively sending it flying into out-field, she needed to follow through ensuring that the energy used in the beginning of the swing was carried through to its full conclusion.

NCLS surveys show that previously 'unchurched' newcomers attend their first church or not at all. This suggests that churches may not have a second chance with these newcomers.

Newcomers attend our church, but does it seem that they rarely keep coming or even return? We have been friendly, said hello, and perhaps engaged them in conversation. However, the welcome is only the beginning. Newcomers need to be reminded that people care for them. They need to be reassured that they are valued and that they have done a good thing in visiting your corps. In order for relationships to be built, follow up is required. It is important to capture personal details appropriately. This will help you utilise the momentum created in the initial welcome.

"An effective assimilation strategy will create a 'greenhouse' in which new relationships between newcomers and church members are nurtured." Charles Arn

(from 'Visitor Assimilation' Outreach Magazine:
November/December 2004)

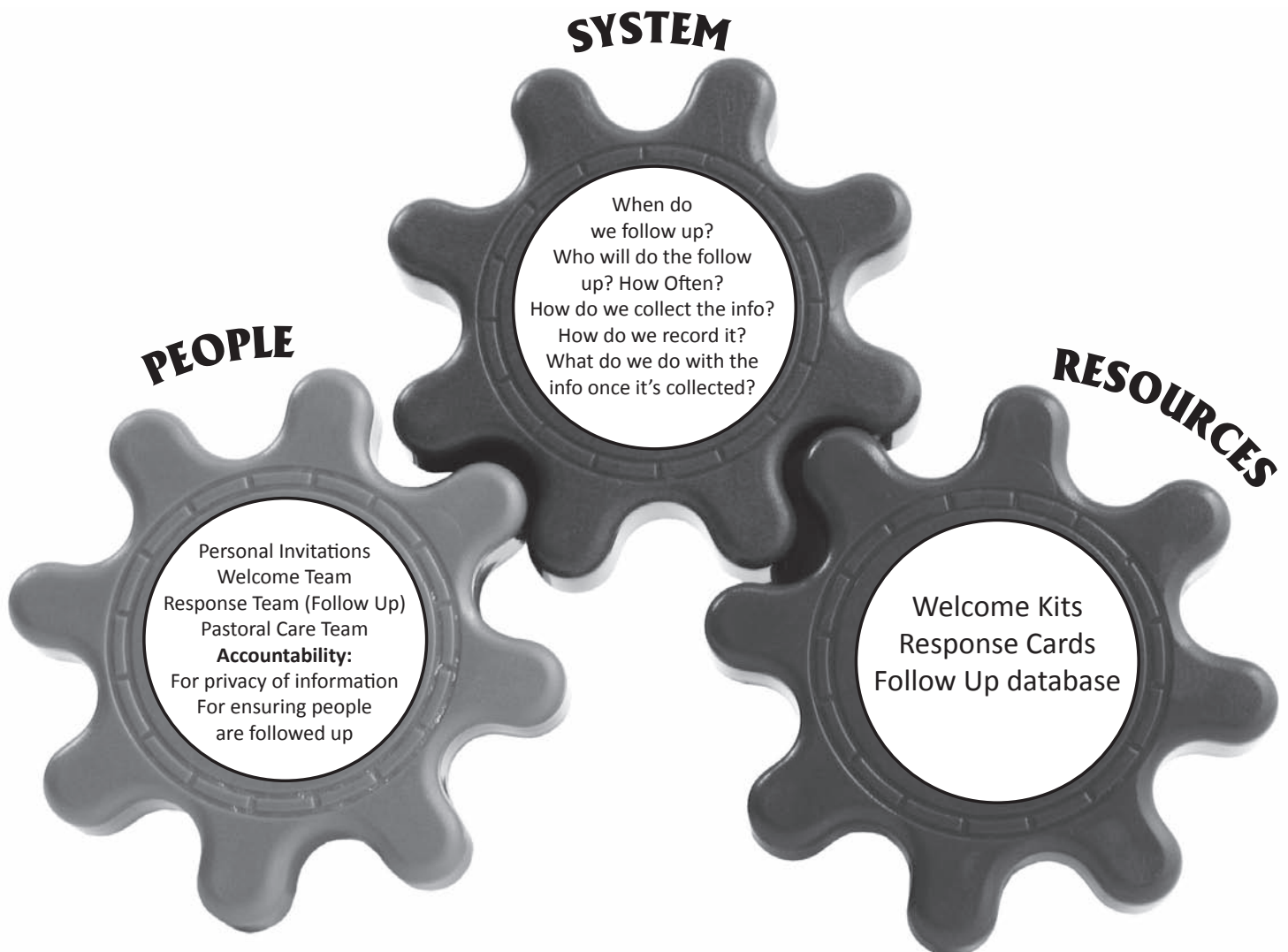


KEY QUESTION:

How effective is our current guest follow up system?

There are many approaches to follow up. Some deliver biscuits to the door on the Monday. Others send letters/emails/phone calls or conduct visits. Whatever system is in place, there are a number of things that need to be considered.

“...surveys show that previously ‘unchurched’ newcomers attend their first church or not at all...churches may not have a second chance.”





KEY QUESTION:

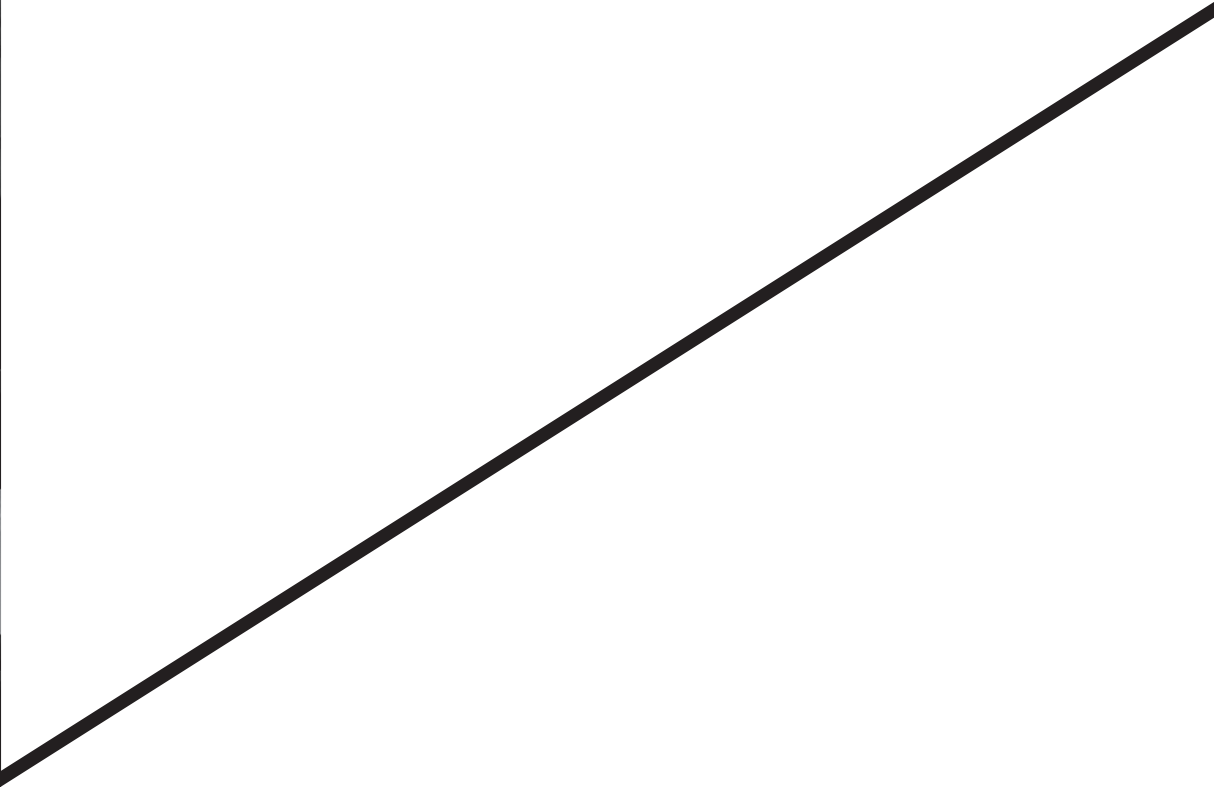
What happens after the initial hello?



Fill in the timeline indicating what happened on your journey from first visit to integration into your corps.

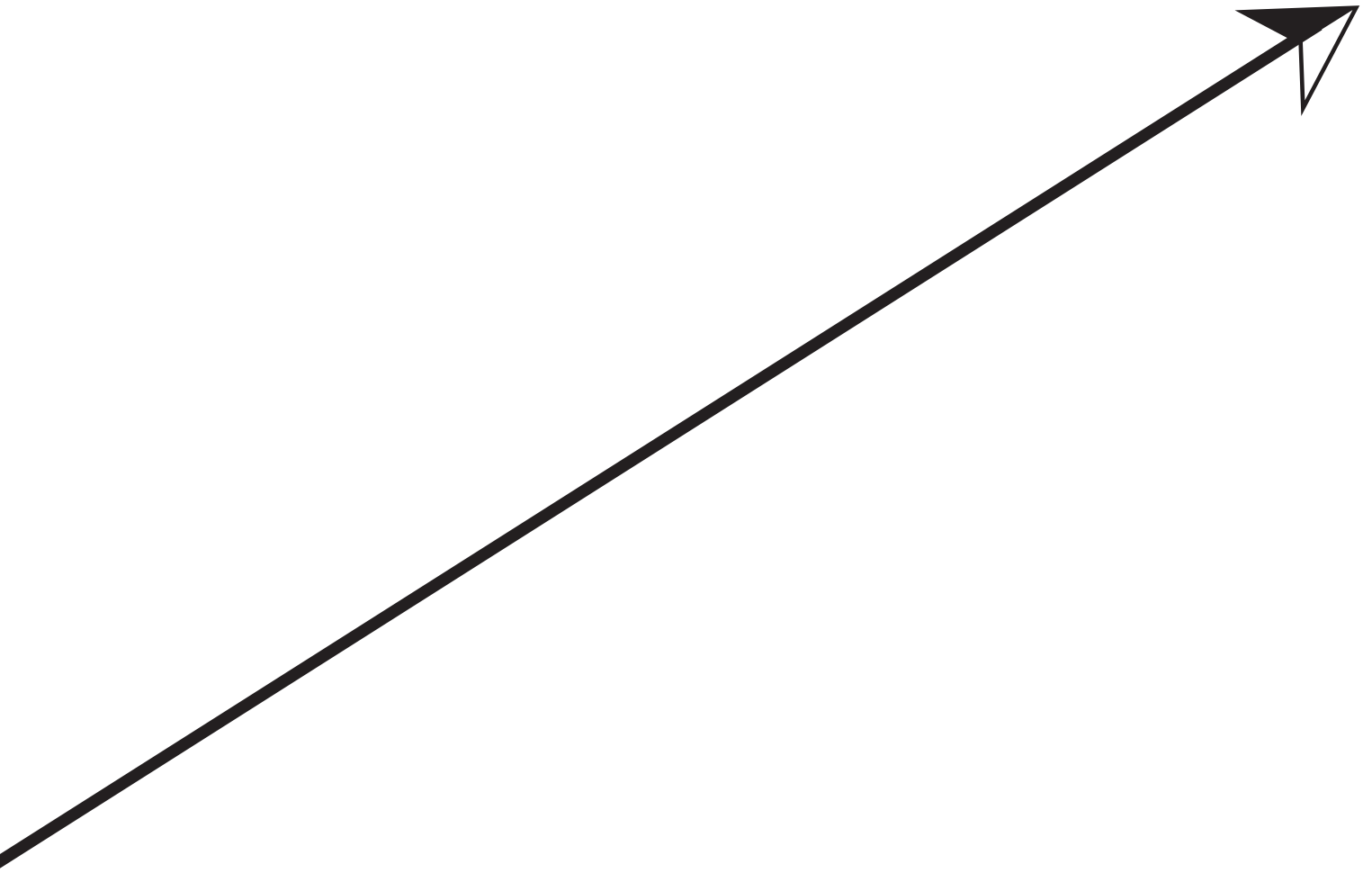
*On one side of the timeline, fill in the events that contributed to your integration into the life of the corps.

*On the other side of the timeline, fill in the resource/person that was needed to accomplish this.

A thick, solid black diagonal line that starts from the bottom left corner of the page and extends towards the top right corner, serving as a timeline axis.

How long did this process take?

What factors were absolutely essential to your integration?



Consider your corps' current integration process. Complete a S.W.O.T analysis of that process.

STRENGTHS

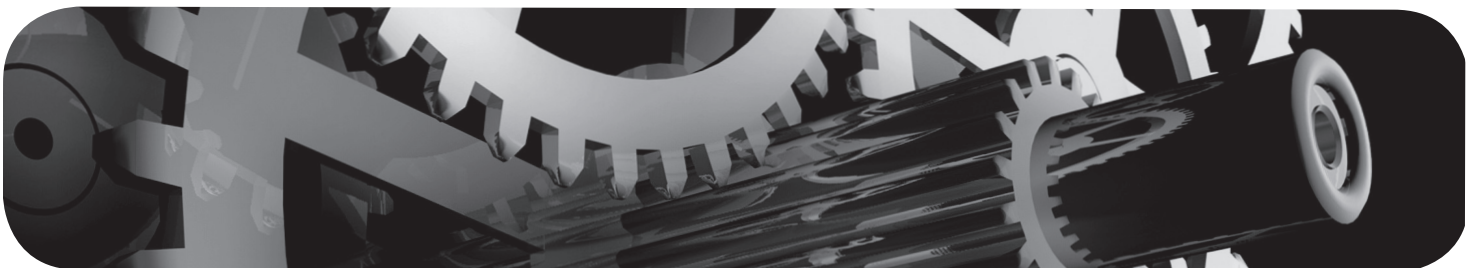
WEAKNESSES

OPPORTUNITIES

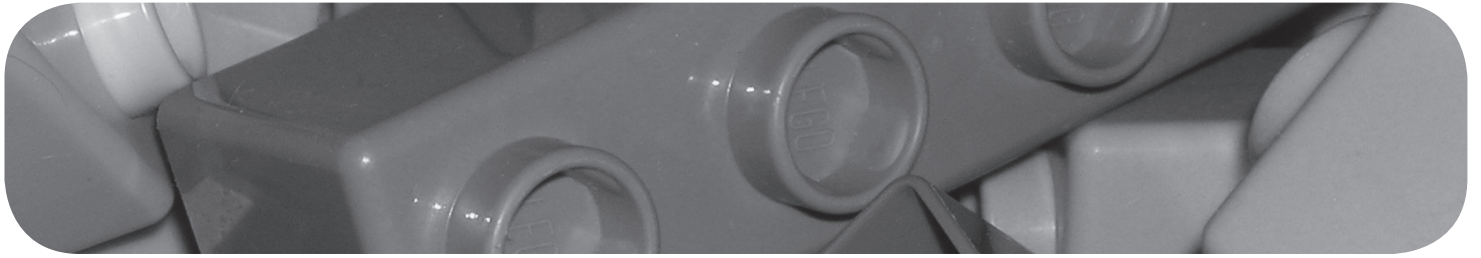
THREATS

KEY QUESTION:

What would your immediate next step be?



SESSION THREE:



KEY QUESTION:

How do we connect in our corps?

Each person will be provided with 10 pieces of lego. (Ideally, each person would have only one colour but this is not essential) Follow the instructions, pausing to consider/discuss the questions.

1. INDIVIDUALLY, BUILD A SINGLE STRUCTURE.

What was the most difficult part of building a single structure?

2. FORM SMALL GROUPS OF 4-6 PEOPLE AND CONNECT YOUR STRUCTURES TO FORM ONE LARGE STRUCTURE.

What needed to happen to connect your structure to another structure?

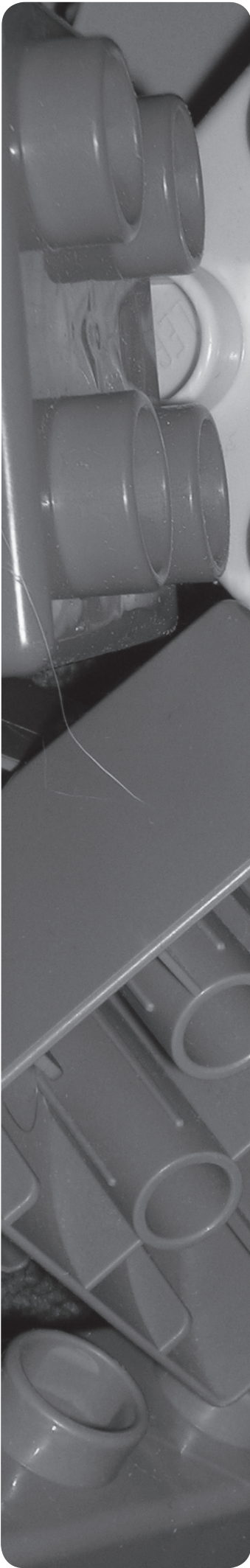
What is the impact of newcomers to the structure?

3. LASTLY, CONNECT EACH SMALL GROUP STRUCTURE WITH OTHER SMALL GROUPS TO CREATE A 'SUPER' STRUCTURE.

How was the 'super' structure stabilised?

How can we make it easier for newcomers to join the 'super' structure?

How do these structures reflect relationships/groups in the church?



KEY QUESTION:
**Why do we need to be connected
to each other?**

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

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1 Timothy 4:14

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Acts 2:42

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Hebrews 10:25

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Romans 12:4-5

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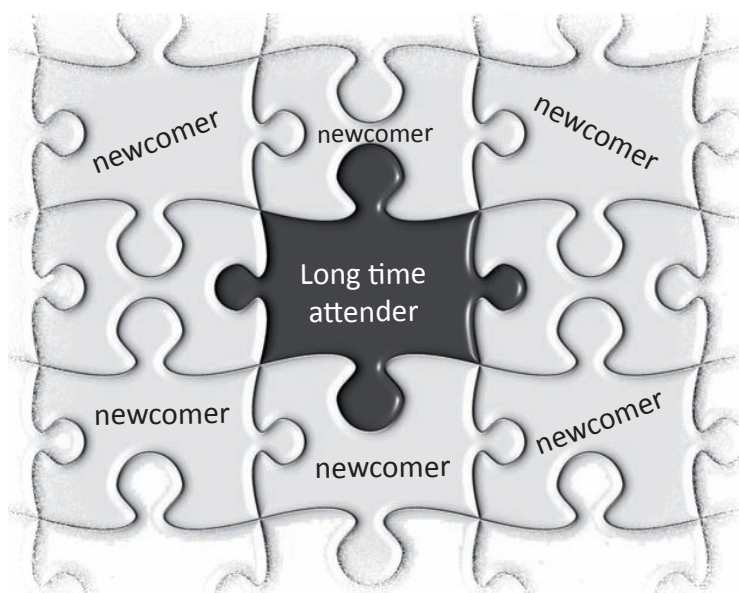
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PROBLEM: Newcomers are looking for friends, but all too often, regular attenders at the corps have little or no room left in their life for new relationships and friends. They have already well-established relationships in the church setting. Any available connecting points are already taken up with relationships with others, leaving no room for those newcomers who come to the corps desiring deep down to find belonging and friends.

A POSSIBLE SOLUTION: The corps leadership finds a brave committed couple (or individuals), with at least one of them being an extrovert. They must enjoy being with people and have a passion to see people find Jesus.

The challenge is for this couple (or individuals) to choose to 'clear out' most of their connection points and communicate to those long time friends that they will be unable to spend quality time with them for about a year. The reason is that they need to make space in their

lives to make friends with people who do not yet know Jesus but who are showing up at the corps.



When a new person comes to worship, this couple or individual befriends them, sits with them and contacts them during the week perhaps inviting them for a meal. There is an intentional choice to become friends, to spend time with them and to get to know them. When other new people show up at the corps, the same thing

happens, with the newcomers and the long time attenders spending time together during the week.

When there are between 4-6 people who are newcomers attending, being befriended by long time attenders, they are invited to the newcomers or information classes. The long time attenders attend with them and the person responsible in the corps leads the newcomer's class.

Hopefully these 4-6 people begin to connect with one another and may even form a small group or begin to attend other events in the community or corps together.

“Incorporation of newcomers may be one of the most identifiable and measurable signs of health in a church. Healthy churches assimilate new people into the life and leadership of the congregation.”¹

The long time attenders continue to make friends with newcomers. This time when there are about 4-6 newcomers ready to do the newcomers class, the long time attenders ask the previous attenders of the newcomers class if they would be prepared to sponsor these new people.

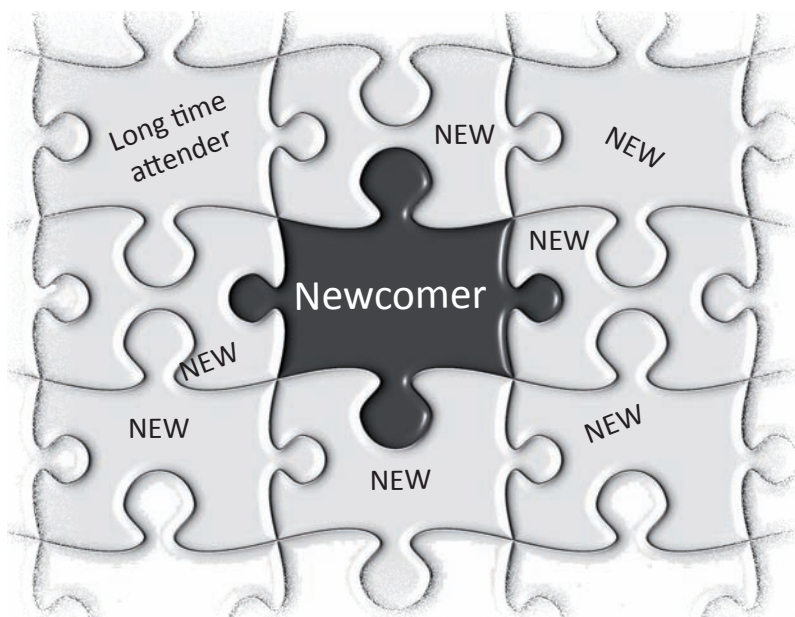
On the occasion of this second newcomers class, the previous newcomers attend with the newest newcomers, but the long time attenders do not attend. The long term attenders

keep in contact, but is increasingly connecting the newest newcomers to those who are older newcomers with some connection points still free to make friends of more newcomers.

The concept is about putting a process into place whereby newcomers are consistently connected to newcomers. People with connection points are connected to others who also have free connection points.

This is simply one way. Any process which adheres to the concept of intentionally connecting people with others will assist people to make friends and therefore be in an environment where their relationship needs can be met and their journey to faith be enabled.

Sometimes a person needs to be willing to clear off their connection points to start the process. Over time, as the newcomers connect through the newcomer's class with other newcomers, the church attenders retain the friendship with them, but increasingly the newcomers develop friendships with other newcomers who are more like them, freeing up the long time attenders to reconnect with their other friends.



Adapted from Grassroots article
by Major Winsome Merrett



KEY QUESTION:

What can I do to connect?


Individually, answer the following questions:

Many newcomers want to belong and to make friends. What does our corps provide to make this happen?

How does a corps move from just being friendly to connecting newcomers into the life of the corps?

Some churches have a '3 minute rule' where corps folk spend the first 3 minutes after a service speaking with someone they don't know. Would this work in your corps? Why? Why not?

Connection Tools/Events can be useful to connect and reconnect people into the life of the corps. These may be things that could be done as individuals, in small groups or with the corps as a whole.

 Brainstorm what tools or events could be used to connect people to the corps. Have someone write these on the whiteboard. Then, on your own chart, record 3-4 ideas for each category that you think could be implemented in your corps. Leave space under each idea to add detail as it comes to mind.

Individual	Small Groups	Corporate (Corps)

Select one idea that you could use to connect a newcomer to your corps. Write an accountability statement that provides a timeframe and accountability partner to whom you will be responsible.

My Accountability Statement

By.....(insert date)

I will.....(insert what you will do)

.....

I will be accountable to.....

(insert the name of your accountability partner – remember to ask their permission)

KEY QUESTION:

How do we know when someone has been incorporated into the life of the corps?

Win and Charles Arn provide nine characteristics of an incorporated member:²

- * Identifies with the goals of the church.
 - * Attends worship services regularly.
- * Experiences spiritual growth and progress.
 - * Becomes a member of the Body.
- * Has 5-10 new friends in the church.
 - * Has an appropriate task or role that matches spiritual giftedness.
- * Is involved in meaningful fellowship in a small group.
 - * Regularly tithes to the church.
- * Participates in the great commission by spreading the Good News to friends and relatives

“For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”

1 Thessalonians 5:9-11

EXIT SLIP - As we conclude, fill in the boxes below:

Questions I have...

I am feeling...

Things I need to try...

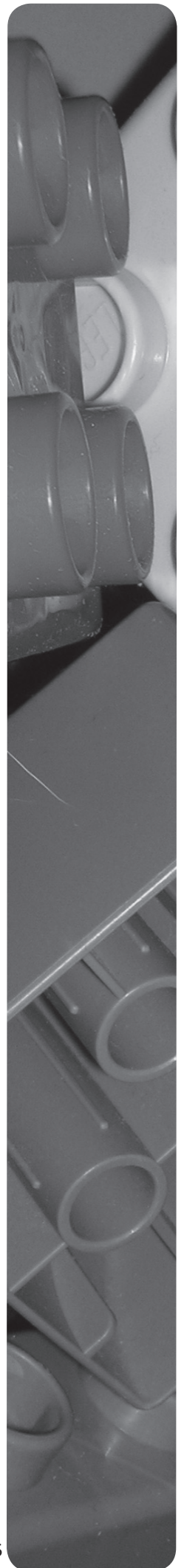
Ideas I value that I learned or were enhanced...

DISCUSSION:

Reflecting on the exit slip activities, use this time to discuss questions that may have arisen.

1 Anderson, Leith. A Church for the 21st Century. Minneapolis: Bethany, 1992. P.135

2 Arn, Win, and Charles Arn. The Master's Plan of Making Disciples. 1982. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998. P 49-55



LIST OF SOURCES:

First Impressions - Creating Wow Experiences in Your Church

Mark L. Waltz (Group: Colorado, 2005)

Fusion: Turning First-Time Guests into Fully-Engaged Members of Your Church

Nealson Searcy with Jennifer Dykes Henson (Regal: California, 2007)

A Church for the 21st Century.

Leith Anderson (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1992)

The Master's Plan of Making Disciples.

Charles and Win Arn (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998)

'Connecting Newcomers'

Presented by Major Kelvin Merrett & Major Brian Pratt (Connections 07)

'20 Tips to I-N-C-R-E-A-S-E your church's visitor flow'

www.gainsbrugh.org/20TipsToIncreaseYourVisitorFlowBackup.pdf

IDN Assimilating New People

www.intentionaldiscipleship.net/index.cfm/method/content.A48B7F79-F5DD-43CC-84A11AD154C08C7C

A Church Makes its Own Assimilation Checklist

www.prismleadership.org/inc/Assimilation_Checklist.doc

Visitor Assimilation (It's not rocket science) -What are the keys to attracting visitors and keeping them coming back by Charles Arn

http://stickychurch.com/resources-ideas/single/archive/2008/07/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=12

Portland Research

www.missionportland.org/reports_assimilation.htm

Integrating Newcomers Overview

NCLS Research - Kaldo, P., 2002 Connections for Life: core qualities to foster in your church Openbook.

Connecting Newcomers/Creating Community/Welcoming Visitors

www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com