

January 2004, *Equipping*



Lifting the Vision

While visiting one of our congregations recently I noted several ways they were making visitors feel welcome. There were clear signs to all the essential places, greeters at each door, a warm welcome from the pulpit, and many people who greeted visitors and introduced themselves. In the pew I noticed a visitor card, as I have seen in other of our churches that could be filled out and returned with the offering.

Reading through the visitor card I noticed the options to mark after writing your name and contact information:

- I am a newcomer in the community
 - I'm just visiting
 - I'm interested in more information about the congregation
 - I desire a church directory
 - I would appreciate a visit
 - Other
- I am interested in Children Youth Young Adults Adults.

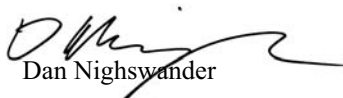
This is a helpful list. But, on second reading, it occurred to me that all the options are focused on local congregational life and meeting the perceived personal and family needs of the visitor. Should we also invite visitors (and regular attenders) to learn about and express interest in the life and work of the church beyond the congregation?

If your congregation has visitor cards, and I encourage you to do so, how about including questions like these (examples).

- I want to learn more about Mennonite missions around the world
- I want to know how to give time and energy in voluntary service
- I'm interested in giving financial support to Mennonite ministries
- I want to receive the *Canadian Mennonite* to learn what the church across Canada is doing and saying
- I want to learn how Christian Peacemaker Teams intervene in dangerous situations
- I'm interested in learning about the lifestyle implications of Christian discipleship
- I want to participate in promoting peace and justice in my community and in the world
- I'm interested in helping to plant a new church in my neighbourhood
- I want to know about the majority of Mennonite churches that are located in Asia, Africa and Latin America
- I am interested in reading about Mennonite beliefs, witness and inspirational writings
- Visit www.mennonitechurch.ca and /or (your area conference/congregation website)

One of the responsibilities of pastors and congregational leaders is to lift people's vision beyond their own needs and beyond their local setting to see the world as God sees it. That includes helping them to understand your area conference, MC Canada, Mennonite World Conference, Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Disaster Service, our church schools, camps, Christian Peacemaker Teams, Mennonite Voluntary Service Adventure and all the other wonderful connections that people have through their involvement in your congregation. I commend all of you for every effort you make toward this goal.

Sincerely,



Dan Nighswander