

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

2002 DEACON RETREAT
"Cracking Our Congregation's 'Code'"
April 26-27, 2002

GEORGIA BAPTIST CONFERENCE CENTER
NORMAN PARK, GEORGIA

Cost: \$45/person

FRIDAY, April 26:

5:00 P.M.	(Eastern Standard Time) Check In
5:30 P.M.	Dinner
6:30 P.M. – 7:30 P.M.	SESSION I: "Our Welcoming System"
7:30 P.M. – 7:45 P.M.	BREAK
7:45 P.M. – 8:45 P.M.	SESSION II: "Our Nurturing System"

REFRESHMENTS AND FELLOWSHIP

SATURDAY, April 27:

8:00 A.M.	Breakfast
9:00 A.M.– 10:00 A.M.	SESSION III: "Our Empowering System"
10:00 A.M. – 10:15 A.M.	BREAK
10:15 A.M. – 11:15 A.M.	SESSION IV: "Our Serving System"
11:15 A.M. – 11:30 A.M.	WRAP-UP
11:30 A.M.	Lunch

“Cracking Your Congregation's Code”
Deacon's Retreat
First Baptist Church, Tallahassee
April 26-27, 2002
Session One

Preliminary Assumptions

- Every congregation has a _____ that distinguishes it from every other congregation.
- In a congregation's DNA is encoded its _____, its _____, how it _____, and how it handles _____.
- Once a congregation has a clear sense of who it is (_____), why it exists (_____), and where it would like to go (_____), it then is able to create a map for the future that remains true to its self, even as conditions and needs change.
- There are four key systems in the life of every church that carry, distribute, and circulate the spiritual DNA throughout the body. They are the _____ system, the _____ system, the _____ system, and the _____ system. These systems form the basis from which renewal, growth, and transformation take place.
- Congregational health is directly _____ on healthy systems. If any one system is operating ineffectively, the congregation can find itself in serious trouble.
- People today have two basic needs: _____ and _____. A healthy and vital congregation can meet both of those needs.

Your Welcoming System

- Newcomers first _____ us through our welcoming system. But how do we experience them, as _____ or _____ from God?

- True welcoming is the natural result of a heartfelt belief that we have something _____ to offer. A congregation welcomes people not because they hope to gain from it or because it is nice to be nice, but for the fact that welcoming is central to our _____.
- Most congregations consider themselves to be friendly places, but research indicates that _____ of unchurched people would come to church, if they were asked. Most congregations with few guests seldom make the effort to invite people.
- Why do people come to church?
 - (1) They are seeking a _____ to life that materialism has not provided;
 - (2) They feel a need to _____, to be a part of something _____ than themselves, and to establish meaningful _____ with God and others;
 - (3) An increasing number of newcomers with young children are looking for ways to _____ the family structure; they want to be better parents and to have their children learn positive life values.
- How do we attract newcomers? A proactive congregation doesn't wait until newcomers _____. It reaches out and invites them in.
 - (1) Your potent _____: a congregation can increase its guest-to-regular attender ratio by urging each member to invite others to join them for church.
 - (2) Special events and big Sundays: special events are really ministry opportunities designed to appeal to a specific constituency by addressing some _____. Big Sundays are those Sundays like _____ and _____ that allow congregations to invite guests to participate in planned activities.

- Visitor-friendly Welcoming

- (1) Make a good _____;
- (2) Make your church _____ stand out. Don't neglect your _____ signs;
- (3) Make your _____ a welcoming place. Consider setting aside guest spaces for the average number of guests on Sundays;
- (4) Have welcoming _____;
- (5) Give guests _____;
- (6) Don't _____ guests to give an offering;
- (7) Consider an " _____," where people have an assigned section of the sanctuary for identifying newcomers;
- (8) Offer an _____.

- Follow Up: _____ of newcomers will not return. _____ will consider returning if their first experience is positive.

- (1) Door-to-Door: the _____ of this form of contact is determined by community standards;
- (2) Phone: should be _____, with emphasis on responding to any questions the guest might have;
- (3) Return rate: the first _____ hours are critical in touching base with guests. The return rate drops dramatically after the first _____ days.

SURVEY ONE
"Scan for Our Welcoming Quotient"

Scan the current health of our welcoming system through this Welcoming Quotient (WQ) survey. Answer "Yes" if you feel we implement an item. Answer "No" if you feel we do not. If you're not sure, move on the next one. List "Yes" and "No" totals at the end of the survey.

1. Are our outdoor signs visible, eye-catching, informative, properly placed, and easy to read, especially as one drives by?
2. Is there activity outside our church on Sunday mornings that indicates a vibrant congregation to those who pass or drive by?
3. Do we have clearly marked guest spaces close to the church?
4. Do we greet people, especially guests, outside the church building prior to the service?
5. Do we distinguish between hosts/greeters and ushers?
6. Do we require training of all hosts/greeters and ushers?
7. Do we include children accompanying adults as hosts/greeters and ushers?
8. Do we have an easy-access information center that includes welcoming materials for newcomers?
9. Do we provide a thank-you remembrance for newcomers?
10. Is our Sunday program easy to follow and relatively free of church jargon?
11. Do we have a quality sound system in our sanctuary?
12. Are restrooms, nursery, Sunday School, and other rooms clearly indicated by signs, as well as listed in the program?
13. Do we provide baby-changing stations in women's' and men's restrooms?
14. Is our welcome for newcomers separated by announcements?
15. Does the sermon focus on the relevance of faith to everyday life?
16. Do trained "aisle hosts" welcome newcomers after the service?
17. Do our notices and bulletin boards reflect the life and work of our church?
18. Do we provide for physically challenged person and the hearing-challenged during our worship services?
19. Do children participate actively in the worship services at least several Sundays a year?
20. Is drama occasionally included in our worship services?
21. Do we send informational mailings to guests?
22. Do we schedule outreach Sundays to invite the larger community to join us in worship and fellowship?
23. Do laypeople make follow-up contacts within forty-eight hours to thank first-time guests for attending the service?
24. Is a card or letter, over the pastor's signature, sent out to first-time guests to thank them for attending the service?
25. Does a layperson make a follow-up contact within seven days to thank second and third time guests for attending the service?
26. Does our telephone answering machine system give directions to the church, mention the hours of service and other opportunities, and say whether we have childcare?

Total "Yes" _____

Total "No" _____

- 26-21 Our system is optimally healthy.
- 20-16 Our system is generally healthy.
- 15-11 Our system needs strengthening.
- 10-6 Our system is unhealthy.
- 5-0 Our system is very unhealthy.