

NET RESULTS

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ADVENT INVITING

Cafeteria Approach Generates Visitors and Members

by Mark
Miller-McLemore

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Our church offers a number of attractive activities during the Advent season as a special focus for encouraging members to invite their friends, relatives, or acquaintances who do not presently attend a church. Our "Hanging of the Greens" service the first Sunday of Advent is a good holiday-season beginning for many. Because of its

traditionally good music and performance, our choir's presentation on the third Sunday of Advent always boosts attendance. On Christmas Sunday, we incorporate our children's Christmas program into the service. And our special Christmas Eve service is always an inspiring time to worship.

Our ministries council discussed ways

We use four Advent services as "door openers" for visitors.

we might use these four Advent services as "door openers" for visitors. Members' good feelings about these events would

surely motivate them to invite. How could we increase the likelihood of their doing so?

We decided to create a written invitation, printed on good-quality paper, which we could distribute to members for their use. After generating the invitation on our computer, we printed it on our copier, using clip art for illustrations. To give the invitation a more personal look and get

Please turn to next page

What Is Your Central Purpose?

The **primary task** is what an organization must do in a particular environment at a particular time to carry out its basic mission and survive.

If the **primary task** is not working in an organization, the organization is essentially dead. The **primary task** is the core of activities that produces the core product or service of the institution.

—Ezra Earl Jones, *Quest for Quality in the Church: A New Paradigm*

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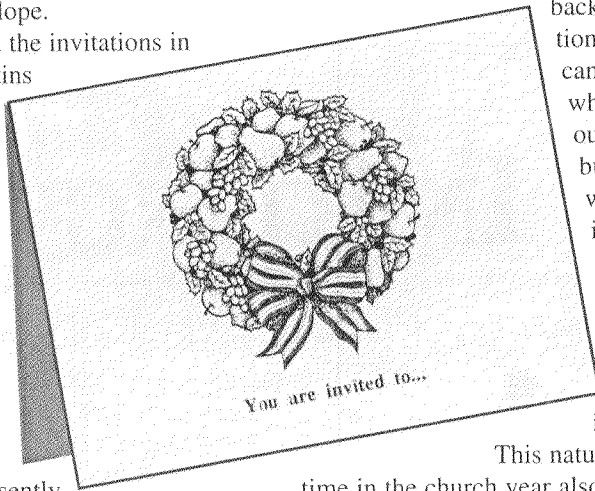
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away from an institutional size, we made it 4 1/4 by 5 1/2 inches and placed it in an attractive envelope.

We distributed the invitations in the worship bulletins on Thanksgiving Sunday. During the announcements, we drew attention to the invitation and pointed out that more were available on the narthex table. We asked people to think of friends who were not presently in a church and who might enjoy the



when they eventually joined.

As pastor, I was pleased to get feedback on the invitations issued. We cannot control who responds to our invitations, but we can work at increasing our inviting. It was good for all of us to see that we were working together.

This naturally attractive time in the church year also helped. People found it simpler to extend invitations to activities in their church's life for which they already had positive feelings. And since four good events were clustered together, our people had a choice of the events they felt best about highlighting. Those receiving the invitations had their choice of what looked best to them as well.

We tried a similar invitation with a focus on Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter, but those times were not as effective. We could not get a good reading on how many invitations members extended, and we could not as easily connect worship visitors to invitations extended. I personally sent invitations, with a short note in each, to about forty persons who had visited the church (and had not

returned) over the last five years, but we saw no response.

Perhaps some seasons are more motivational than others in terms of invitation effectiveness. In any case, we do know that a cafeteria approach to Advent inviting works. ✠

For every invitation extended, we asked members to hang a gold ball on the church wreath.

wonderful services we so appreciate during Advent. We encouraged our people to extend an invitation, either by mail with a short, signed note of invitation written inside, or by hand.

We asked people to report back on the invitations they had extended. To encourage them to do this, we hung a wreath in the narthex—with a basket of small, gold ball ornaments underneath—next to the stack of additional invitations. For every invitation extended, we asked members to hang a gold ball on the wreath.

Visitors immediately began popping up in the congregation. By Christmas, forty-five balls decorated the wreath. We received seven new members within the next three months. One member family reported that they had "just about given up inviting" another family after a number of efforts but decided to give it one more try. They were pleasantly surprised when the family came and delighted

**Christ
can be accepted;
He can be rejected;
He cannot reasonably be ignored.**

—Elton Trueblood

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