

WHAT IS WELCOMING?

Welcoming is intentionally preparing to receive others where they are and helping them feel accepted through authentic caring and kindness that anticipates their needs. Welcoming is not the task of a committee or individual, but rather a lifestyle shared by each member of a congregation. Welcoming is not a technique to find more choir members, to increase your church's budget or to grow your church. Welcoming others is just part of who we are as Christians, a gift we offer to others with no strings attached.

WHAT IS WELCOMING CERTIFICATION?

Through its Welcoming Certification program, Igniting Ministry celebrates and recognizes the efforts of local congregations that actively and intentionally prepare to welcome newcomers and change the congregation's lifestyle. When churches attain Welcoming Certification, they receive a wooden plaque recognizing the congregation's efforts and gain a special designation in the Find-a-Church database, which newcomers can access through www.UnitedMethodist.org.

In the first four years of the ministry, almost 200 churches fulfilled the Welcoming Certification requirements, submitted their applications, and received certification. In the second four years, Igniting Ministry will offer a more challenging, targeted approach to Welcoming Certification. The enclosed worksheets suggest tasks and activities for churches to accomplish as they strive to become welcoming-certified each year. The basic worksheet provides many options, and each successive worksheet builds upon the basics to help transform a church's welcoming lifestyle in the course of four years. Churches that successfully complete requirements for all four years will become welcoming models that demonstrate how churches are living our promise of "Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors."

For more information and to view a list of certified churches, go to www.IgnitingMinistry.org.

WHO ARE WE TRYING TO REACH, ANYWAY?

Igniting Ministry advertising messages and resource materials are designed to help churches reach out and connect with unchurched seekers, ages 25-54. The definitions below may help better define that audience for you and your church.

UNCHURCHED

Igniting Ministry defines the unchurched as a person who has not attended a church activity, other than a wedding or funeral, in the past six months; may not be seeking spiritual fulfillment anywhere outside the church.

SEEKER

Igniting Ministry defines a seeker as a person who is not currently involved in a congregation; is actively seeking spiritual fulfillment and is open to a message of hope.