

## Is it Your Time to be Radical?

You may have heard recently about a book that many church leaders are studying. *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*, by Robert Schnase, Bishop, Missouri Conference, details practices considered by many to be critical to congregational success. Described as keys to “health, vitality and fruitfulness,” these practices are:

- ❖ Radical Hospitality
- ❖ Passionate Worship
- ❖ Intentional Faith Development
- ❖ Risk-Taking Mission and Service
- ❖ Extravagant Generosity

Radical Hospitality sees Christ in everyone. Radical Hospitality intentionally invites and welcomes all people and lets them know they are *important*. Radical Hospitality is not a program or a committee – it’s a lifestyle.

Several conferences and thousands of churches have turned to Igniting Ministry, the denomination’s Advertising and Welcoming Ministry at United Methodist Communications, for tips and tools to implement Radical Hospitality. Through the language of television, United Methodist Communications offers messages with the identity promise of “Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.” In addition to these public invitations, the ministry also encourages churches to embrace this lifestyle of intentional welcoming of all people.

### Consider this:

Newcomers may decide whether they are going to return to the church within the first 10 minutes of contact. That’s before the pastor even preaches! Our opportunity to connect newcomers to Christian hospitality begins in the parking lot and extends along their journey for the next 10 minutes and beyond. Do we make others feel they are noticed, welcome and a valued child of God in all places at all times?

When we truly *welcome* people, we’re doing more than greeting them at the door. We’re connecting them to a community of believers and letting them know they are noticed and valued. We’re receiving them as if we’re meeting Christ.

Get started on the Radical Hospitality pathway with Igniting Ministry resources. Use the attached worksheets to assess your church, teach your people, and become radical.

**Need help or information? Call 877-281-6535 or visit [RethinkChurch.org](http://RethinkChurch.org)**

# Is your church a welcoming certified congregation?



*The people at Wesley were really genuine because it wasn't just "hello, how are you" then they walk away. I mean they actually sat down and attempted to get to know me and know what I was about and what my family was [about]. It wasn't just a handshake; it was a hug a lot of times, which was really good – to me that's really friendly.*

-Linda W., Wesley UMC, Minneapolis, MN  
Welcoming Certified Congregation

## **There are more than 800 Official Welcoming Certified Congregations**

**Welcoming is intentionally preparing to receive others where they are and helping them feel accepted through *real* caring and kindness. Welcoming is not the task of a committee or individual, but rather a lifestyle shared by each member of a congregation. Welcoming others is part of who we are as Christians, a gift we offer to others with no strings attached.**

For the past eight years Igniting Ministry has recognized and celebrated the efforts of local churches that actively prepare to receive newcomers. When a church attains certification, it receives a nice plaque to display the efforts and a new seal to add to the plaque each year from then on.

In addition to the plaque, the church is recognized in the Find-a-Church database on the denomination's web site, [www.UMC.org](http://www.UMC.org), and at [www.RethinkChurch.org](http://www.RethinkChurch.org).

For more information about how your church can become a "Welcoming Certified Congregation" call 877-281-6535 or visit [www.welcoming.rethinkchurch.org](http://www.welcoming.rethinkchurch.org).

## **Join the movement and live out the promise of "Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors."**

*First UMC is as much about making our congregation into a group of welcoming Christians as it is about advertising and telling the community the story of First Church... The checklist of Igniting Ministry helped us to see specific areas where being a welcoming congregation becomes specific and concrete.*

-Rev. Charles Tobias, First UMC Mansfield, OH, Welcoming Certified Congregation

**RETHINKCHURCH**



# RETHINKCHURCH

## RETHINK WELCOME

Does your welcome extend beyond the doors of your church? Does church only happen on Sundays? We can no longer wait for the unchurched to find us. We must prepare to receive others where they are and help them feel accepted through authentic caring and kindness that anticipates their needs. Our neighborhoods are not just down the street, but around the world. Seekers will find welcome messages on our social networks, aired on our media and carried by our missionaries. Welcoming others is just part of who we are as Christians, a gift we offer to others with no strings attached. Together we can open hearts, open minds and open doors because we are the people of The United Methodist Church.

### WHAT IS WELCOMING CERTIFICATION?

The Welcoming Certification program celebrates and recognizes the efforts of local congregations that actively and intentionally prepare to welcome newcomers; and in doing so, create a lasting impression and identity. 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, [www.find-a-church.org](http://www.find-a-church.org).

In the first eight years of the ministry, more than 750 churches fulfilled the first year of certification requirements and significant numbers of churches have finished years 2, 3 and 4. 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 opening hearts, minds and doors.

For more information and to view a list of certified churches, go to [www.welcoming.rethinkchurch.org](http://www.welcoming.rethinkchurch.org).

### WHOM ARE WE TRYING TO REACH, ANYWAY?

Advertising messages and resource materials are designed to help churches reach out and connect with unchurched seekers. The definitions below may help better define that audience for you and your church.

#### UNCHURCHED

Persons who have not attended a church activity, other than a wedding or funeral, in the past six months; who may not be seeking spiritual fulfillment anywhere outside the church.

#### SEEKER

Persons who are not currently involved in a congregation; are actively seeking spiritual fulfillment; are open to a message of hope and possibly willing to engage in activities that make a difference in the world.

# WELCOMING DEFINITIONS AND TIPS

First impressions are lasting ones. People make up their minds about your church within the first ten minutes of contact. Long before the preacher preaches, people most often will have decided if they plan to return. These ideas and definitions may help your church make a life-changing impression on those who are new to your congregation.

## TWO TIPS FOR THE WHOLE CONGREGATION TO DO EACH SUNDAY:

**CIRCLE OF 10:** Greet anyone, member or guest, who comes within ten feet of you. Make a special effort to greet the people you don't already know within your Circle of 10.

**RULE OF THREE:** Try not to talk to other members for the first three minutes after the service. Talk only to those you don't know and to people that you know are guests. It takes guests about three minutes to exit the church after worship so it's important to make sure someone has made contact with them before they leave.

## SOME EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE YOU WILL ESPECIALLY WANT TO WELCOME:

Remember that welcoming is a lifestyle that extends well beyond shaking hands at the door of the Sanctuary on Sunday. As your church grows a more welcoming lifestyle, you will probably want to design different ministries and follow-up activities for these and other groups of people.

### VISITORS

Visitors are people who attend a worship service or event at a church but are not likely to be regularly connected to the congregation (they live out of town, they have another church home, etc.). Remember, welcoming is not about growing your church, so visitors deserve special attention even if you never see them again.

### GUESTS

Guests are people who attend worship or another event, perhaps at the personal invitation of someone from the church, who may reasonably be expected to return and get involved in the congregation. Those treated as "honored guests" are likely to return.

### NEWCOMERS

Newcomers are people who are relatively new to a congregation—not yet members; no longer first-time guests; interested in connecting with the church and its members. Newcomers are trying to find a way into the life and ministries of your church, so it's important to remove barriers and serve their needs.

For more information, go to [www.welcoming.rethinkchurch.org](http://www.welcoming.rethinkchurch.org).

# WELCOMING CERTIFICATION AWARD

All appendix references relate to The Welcoming and Media Planner. **YEAR 1**  
www.RethinkChurch.org

## HOW CAN MY CHURCH BE MORE WELCOMING?

A good place to start is with this worksheet. Please choose from the following list of tasks or functions that are permanently placed within your church's structure. To qualify for the award the first time, you must reach a total of 100 points during the year and **provide documentation (required)**. We'd love to see photos if possible...this gives us an opportunity to see what you are doing, as well as help us when building features for our Web site. By submitting photos, you give us permission to use them in various ways. **(Please note: Documentation submitted will not be returned)**. There are **NO** deadlines for submitting this worksheet. Once the worksheet has been submitted and certification approved, the church will receive a special plaque recognizing the congregation's efforts and gain a special designation in the Find-a-Church database.

Church Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Conference: \_\_\_\_\_ District: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_ Year applying for: (please circle one) 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> 4<sup>th</sup>

Church Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Web site: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

TASKS/FUNCTIONS with suggested documentation	Point VALUE	Points EARNED	Date COMPLETED	Documentation ATTACHED
1. Welcoming coordinator/team e.g., team roster	25			
2. Church brochure e.g., copy/sample	10			
3. Welcoming training using IM resources (at least 1 annually) such as Beyond 30 Seconds/Welcoming and Media Planner/Trainers' Toolbox/IM Training event e.g., list of attendees (provide actual count)	25			
4. Participate in September Open House Month e.g., sample articles/photos	15			
5. Hold a community-wide event e.g., sample articles/photos/flyers	20			
6. Guest material packet e.g., sample packet	10			
7. Welcoming Center e.g., photos/sample literature	10			
8. Church cards e.g., business cards/invitations	5			
9. Designated guest parking e.g., photograph	5			
10. Greeters e.g., team list/photo/bulletin	5			
11. Quarterly greeter/usher training (refresher) e.g., promo materials/handouts/list of attendees	10			
12. Intentional seating of guests e.g., explain procedure or instructions given to ushers/bulletin if listed	5			
13. Name badges for congregation (optional for guests) (Worn for any on-site event/Worn at least one Sunday a month e.g., photo of board/sample tag	10			
14. Guest register (not registration of attendance) e.g., photo of area	10			
15. Add newcomers and guests to Church newsletter mailing e.g., sample	10			
16. Clergy follow-up – first week e.g., sample letter or card	5			
17. Clergy follow-up – second week e.g., sample letter or card	10			



<b>TASKS/FUNCTIONS</b> with suggested documentation	<b>Point VALUE</b>	<b>Points EARNED</b>	<b>Date COMPLETED</b>	<b>Documentation ATTACHED</b>
18. Laity follow-up - first week e.g., sample letter or card	5			
19. Laity follow-up - second week e.g., sample letter or card	10			
20. Guest Welcoming gift e.g., photo of mug, church magnet, bookmark	5			
21. Facility tours for guests e.g., photo, promo article, announcement, script	5			
22. Map of facilities posted e.g., photo/sample	5			
23. Classes and groups for children and youth e.g., list of attendees, newsletter article, photos, etc.	10			
24. Invitational program ("Fran Plan"/door hangers) e.g., samples, photos, promo pieces	25			
25. First-impression renovation (i.e. landscape/entry) e.g., photo of area(s)	10			
26. Welcoming sign with Open hearts brand promise at street e.g., photo	20			
27. Mystery Guest Audit (appendix C2) e.g., send copies	20			
28. Interior signs (i.e., classrooms, restrooms, nursery) e.g., photos	5			
29. Newcomer participation in small groups or Sunday school class e.g., list or group name, etc.	5			
30. Conducted Friendliness Audit (page 6A.12) e.g., copies of audit	20			
31. Yearly documentation of first-time attendees (goal: 10% of average worship attendance) e.g., list	20			
32. Join and add a social networking link to your website e.g., Facebook, Myspace	30			
33. A welcoming message on your home page e.g., URL provided	15			
34. Include "Open hearts" promise on all printed materials, resources, and website e.g., business cards, letterhead, newsletter	30			
35. Weekly hospitality time (refreshments) e.g., photos	20			
36. Transportation to church provided e.g., mention in bulletin/photo of bus	10			
37. Utilized IM resources (Planning Kit/Beyond 30 Seconds, banner, etc.) e.g., promo materials/handouts/group roster	25			
38. Accessibility/Inclusivity (i.e., hearing devices, ramps, parking) e.g., photos/bulletin articles, etc.	15			
39. Newcomer-friendly worship bulletin e.g., sample	15			
<b>(100 points minimum) TOTAL POINTS =</b>				

**Note: District Superintendent signature required for certification.**

I have reviewed this application and supporting documentation for welcoming certification.

\_\_\_\_\_  
District Superintendent (print name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
District Superintendent (signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address

**Those churches certified as welcoming congregations will receive an honorary plaque and a special designation in the Find-a-Church database, [www.find-a-church.org](http://www.find-a-church.org).**

**RETURN SIGNED FORM & DOCUMENTATION TO:  
United Methodist Communications  
Igniting Ministry - Attn: Welcoming Certification  
P.O. Box 320, Nashville, TN 37202  
877-281-6535**



# 10 Welcoming Ideas for Any and Every Church

**1** Request a **Mystery Guest Audit** sheet from Igniting Ministry (or download it from the Igniting Ministry Web site – [www.ignitingministry.org](http://www.ignitingministry.org)) and invite people from other churches to visit your church and provide feedback about how welcome they feel. Use the results to help you see your church in a new way.



**2** Do a **walk-through assessment** of your church building to see how easy it is to find your way around with signs, open doors, etc. Here are some resources to help you:

- ▶ “Take an Honest Walk: Do your church’s area and attitude say ‘welcome?’” by Jane Follmer Zekoff, director of ministry and outreach for the Wisconsin Conference, appeared in the May 2002 *Interpreter*. It offers some helpful ideas and checklists to help you see your church building through fresh eyes.
- ▶ The *Igniting Ministry Planning Handbook* Appendix includes several assessments for signage, church jargon in publications, and friendliness of church facilities.

**3** **Use the phrase** “Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors. The people of The United Methodist Church.” on all your printed materials to help people connect the theme of the television messages with your congregation.

**4** **Welcome guests** during Sunday announcements or joys and concerns every week to remind the congregation to expect and welcome newcomers.

**5** Implement **two welcoming tools** in your congregation – starting this Sunday:

- ▶ **Circle of 10:** Have each member of the congregation talk to and learn the names of everyone they don’t know within 10 feet of where they are sitting.
- ▶ **Rule of 3:** Have the congregation talk only to the people they don’t know for the first three minutes after worship. That’s a prime time for newcomers to slip out without being greeted and this tool helps address that issue.

**6** **Teach the congregation** this simple phrase for starting welcoming conversations: “Hi. I don’t believe we’ve had the opportunity to meet. I’m \_\_\_\_\_. And you are? I may be newer than you, but is this one of your first times at this church?” Try a welcoming role-play or drama in worship to show them how to find common ground during those welcoming conversations.

**7** **Remind your congregation** of the times the national television advertising is running (Lent, Back-to-School and Advent). They are key times to do your own local advertising and have your members concentrate on inviting people to worship or special events. It’s also when they can especially be on the lookout for newcomers.

**8** Watch for **WAKT (We All Know That) thinking** and phrasing in your announcements, publications and conversations. Remember that newcomers won’t know the elements you take for granted, so explain them.

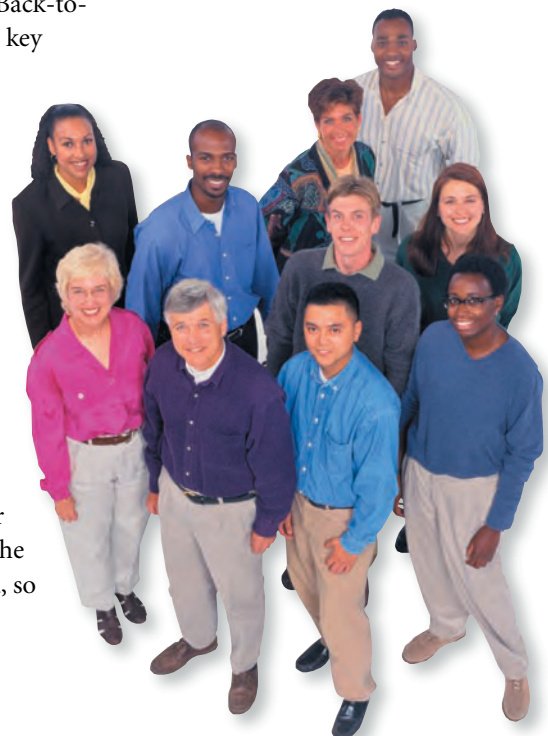
**9** **Add instructions** about where to find the key liturgical elements of worship (Lord’s Prayer, Apostles’ Creed, etc.) in the hymnal. Or print them in the bulletin. (Consider calling it a “program” instead to better communicate to unchurched people.)

**10** Include your worship times to your **voice mail/answering machine greeting** and to **outside signs**, so that, even if your building is closed, people can still access and use that important information.

Additional information can be found at the official Igniting Ministry Web site or by calling the Igniting Ministry offices. Or contact your local conference communicator.

## RETHINK CHURCH

United Methodist Communications  
P.O. Box 320  
Nashville, TN 37202-0320  
Toll free: (877) 281-6535  
Web: [www.IgnitingMinistry.org](http://www.IgnitingMinistry.org)  
E-mail: [IM@umcom.org](mailto:IM@umcom.org)  
Fax: (615) 742-5777



Use this form to help another church identify its welcoming and hospitality strengths and limitations.  
Please write an explanation after each item.

	Needs Improvement	Average	Great
Your experience the first 10 minutes of contact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remarks _____			
Your impression received from the signage (indoor/outdoor)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remarks _____			
Your impression received from greeters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remarks _____			
Your impression received from ushers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remarks _____			
Your experience from individual members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remarks _____			
Your experience during social time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remarks _____			
Your experience aided by helpful bulletin contents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remarks _____			
In your experience, people are warm and generous	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remarks _____			
If I were seeking a spiritual home, I'd choose this church.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remarks _____			

## Friendliness Audit

**S**ometimes we aren't even aware of how we view people, either positively or negatively. As a personal assessment of how welcoming you and your church already are, put an **O** by the descriptions that best convey the people you would like to attend your church, and put an **X** by the people you don't think would receive a warm welcome at your church.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Female who is not fashionably dressed      | <input type="checkbox"/> An overweight female                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Single male under 30                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Articulate, well-educated person           | <input type="checkbox"/> An interracial couple                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Person mentally handicapped                | <input type="checkbox"/> Person who sings in a monotone voice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male with earring in one ear               | <input type="checkbox"/> Retired persons                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Someone especially talkative               | <input type="checkbox"/> An overweight male                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lower-income male                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Lower-income female                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Older female                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Middle Eastern                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A smoker                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Musician                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bible reader                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Person with cancer                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Native American                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single male over 30                        | <input type="checkbox"/> New Ager                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single female over 30                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Agnostic                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Political liberal                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family on public assistance                | <input type="checkbox"/> Teenager                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed male                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Immigrant                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Person very quiet and meek                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Banker                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family with crying baby at worship service | <input type="checkbox"/> Person with bad breath               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> African-American                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Older single male                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unmarried pregnant teenager                | <input type="checkbox"/> Homosexual or lesbian couple         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced female                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-English speaking person          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Former felon                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Person with unkempt hair             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handicapped person in wheelchair           | <input type="checkbox"/> Political conservative               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Persons with hygiene problems              | <input type="checkbox"/> Blended family                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Couple living together, not married        | <input type="checkbox"/> Charismatic                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A recovering alcoholic                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Woman who dresses provocatively      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Person testing HIV-positive                | <input type="checkbox"/> Person who sings operatically        |

Adapted from *Making Your Church More Inviting: A Step-by-Step Guide for In-Church Training* by Roy M. Oswald.

## Walk-through Assessment

*Instructions: take a walk through your church building to see it through a newcomer's eyes.*

**How could the worship space be made more welcoming?**

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**Is our church welcoming to people who have difficulty getting around, including disabled and elderly people?**

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**Is it welcoming to families with children and youth and to the children and youth themselves?**

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**What are the kinds of things that can be done immediately to make the space and the culture more welcoming?**

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**What will take a little more time and planning?**

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## What's Your WQ (Welcoming Quotient)?

1. **When I see new people at church, I:**
  - a. Avert my eyes so they don't think I'm staring at them.
  - b. Elbow the person next to me and point out the newcomers, so that person will acknowledge the new people.
  - c. Nod and smile to show the people that I recognize their presence.
  - d. Make a bee-line for them during the service or hospitality time to say hello, find out their names and introduce them to others.
  
2. **When new people start working at my office, I:**
  - a. Hope they enjoy working there more than I do.
  - b. Say hello when someone brings them around for introductions.
  - c. Send a note or e-mail to say hello and welcome.
  - d. Take a welcome gift to them when I introduce myself and all of my teammates.
  
3. **When people I don't know sit next to me on a bench or pew, I:**
  - a. Scoot away from them a little so we have more space between us.
  - b. Smile and say hi, then go back to what I'm doing.
  - c. Shake hands, introduce myself and ask about them.
  - d. Everything in "c" plus introduce them to others sitting nearby.
  
4. **When people stop by my home when it's a mess, I:**
  - a. Ignore the doorbell and hope they go away.
  - b. Speak to them through a crack in the door and try to wrap up the conversation quickly.
  - c. Join them to chat on the front porch and hope they don't look back inside as I close the door behind me.
  - d. Invite them inside, regardless of how the place looks, tossing things off a chair so they have a place to sit.
  
5. **When new people join a group I'm in, I:**
  - a. Hope they don't come sit next to me. I'm horrible at small talk.
  - b. Shake hands, say hi and sit back down.
  - c. Make it a point to sit next to them so I can get to know them better.
  - d. Call them in advance so I can introduce them to everyone else at their first meeting.

### Just for fun . . .

Take this quiz to test your Welcoming Quotient, a measure of how welcoming you are in several aspects of your life. There are no right or wrong answers here, only your preferences for interacting with people. Use the scoring key at the end to assess your WQ.

**6. When others look lost at church, I:**

- a. Step into the nearest restroom or classroom, hoping they don't look to me for help.
- b. Grab a greeter or pastor and encourage her/him to help the people.
- c. Go up to them and point them in the right direction.
- d. Offer to escort the people where they need to go.

**7. When I'm expecting guests at my home, I:**

- a. Shake the dust off the "Welcome" mat and haul it down from the attic.
- b. Write myself a reminder to check the toilet seats to be sure they're down.
- c. Clean the place from top to bottom, change the sheets in the guest room, lay out fresh towels in the guest bath, and turn on the outside lights.
- d. Do everything in "c" plus bathe the kids and the pets.

**Scoring Key:**

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	SCORE:
Every "a" = 1	1. ____
Every "b" = 2	2. ____
Every "c" = 3	3. ____
Every "d" = 4	4. ____
	5. ____
	6. ____
	7. ____

**Total**

**What your score means:**

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- 7–13: Welcoming might not come naturally to you, maybe because you're introverted or don't have to use those skills much. You're trying to raise your awareness of how others respond to you and how you interact with them.
- 14–20: Welcoming comes fairly easy to you. You try to be friendly to people and let others know you're interested in them.
- 21–28: Welcoming is high on your priority list. You look for ways to make others feel at home and try to raise the awareness of those around you so they become more welcoming, too.