



What is integration and why is it important?

Integration is the process used for incorporating a person into the life of the church. It's to move a person from a mere visitor to becoming an active and committed member of the local body of Christ. This ministry is crucial for a healthy church because it exists to create an environment that is hospitable and friendly in the congregation. An environment in which a visitor can feel loved, welcomed, accepted, and that they belong.

Integration is not a church growth strategy but an essential part of discipleship. The church exists to proclaim that the kingdom of God is near, and followers of Christ participate with Jesus in ministry by being the church in their neighborhoods. We are spiritually formed more into the image of Christ by the power of the Spirit for the glory of the Father. It's the process of spiritual transformation that the Spirit is working in us as he is sanctifying us progressively. Integration ministries exist to provide a means through which transformation can take place; all of these create an avenue through which a visitor can find him or herself in discipleship environments.



How do we develop integration processes in the life of the church?

Our leadership structure of Hope, Faith, and Love Avenues provides a way for us to present “next step” discipleship opportunities for seekers and guests in a variety of ways.

INTEGRATION IN THE HOPE AVENUE

The integration ministry in the Hope Avenue welcomes guests and seekers, as well as ensures that they have entry points to worshipping throughout all parts of the service. Members of this team love out the great commission by fostering a hospitable environment within the body.

BEST PRACTICES FOR THE HOPE AVENUE INTEGRATION TEAM:

- » Welcoming visitors to the church, helping them find their way around, and making them feel at home.
- » Greeting members and visitors as they enter the church and providing an atmosphere of warmth and hospitality.
- » Providing information about the church, upcoming events, and any other information that will help newcomers feel comfortable and connected to the church.
- » Supplying connect cards and following up with guests, through a thank-you card, text message, or other personalized form of communication.



INTEGRATION IN THE FAITH AVENUE

One of the most practical ways for guests to integrate into the church life is by getting connected to a connect group. Connect groups are an effective way to get to know other members in the church and build strong relationships. Being part of a small group provides a safe environment to ask questions, discuss the Bible, and grow in grace and knowledge of Christ.

BEST PRACTICES FOR THE FAITH AVENUE INTEGRATION TEAM:

- » Designate a connect group host who is not the facilitator of the group. They can focus on creating a safe, comfortable, welcoming environment.
- » Develop group norms to create a safe atmosphere where individuals can ask questions and express their thoughts and opinions without judgement.
- » Prioritize relationship building by providing opportunities for attendees to share about themselves and get to know one another.
- » As the connect group wraps up, provide a next step for engaging with the congregation. For example, an invitation to a special Sunday service, an upcoming connect group, or a church event.



INTEGRATION IN THE LOVE AVENUE

The Love Avenue is a low stakes way for seekers and guests to connect with your congregation. Inviting neighbors to participate in your church's neighborhood engagement events and seeker friendly activities provides the opportunity to build relationships with members, as well as experience and become engaged with the church's mission.

BEST PRACTICES FOR THE LOVE AVENUE INTEGRATION TEAM:

- » Remember the reason for the event is to share the love and light of Christ with your neighbors. Focus on building relationships and trust.
- » Spend time in your neighborhood and research the needs and lifestyle of the community.
- » Brainstorm ways your team can meet those needs or create an event that would interest your neighbors.
- » Provide a safe and welcoming environment that encourages participation from everyone, regardless of their background or beliefs.
- » Incorporate sharing information about your congregation into the activity, as well as a way to follow up with those who attend.



The Essentials

Integration is an essential part of discipleship as it helps new guests transition from being visitors to becoming committed followers of Christ. The body of Christ is a priesthood of all believers. The Holy Spirit equips and empowers each of us with the gifts and grace we need for the good work he has prepared for us. An eventual next step for all guests is encouraging them to participate in ministry. The ultimate integration is participating with Christ in ministry.