



Attracting New Members

with Effective Signage

By Wayne Hebert

Advertising for new members is one of the most important functions of a church. New members bring vibrancy to a church. They bring in new life. They make the church more interesting. They bring in new faces to see and new hands to shake. They bring in new arms to carry the many programs that you support. And, they bring in their wallets to help fund the various church functions.

Since attracting new members is so vital to the livelihood of a church, what is a cost-effective way to add new people to your congregation?

Your signs on the street, around your grounds, and in your buildings are vital to attracting new members and keeping existing new members proud of your congregation and your facilities. How many times have you driven down a street and don't see

anything new? You've made the trip hundreds of times, and it is the same view each time.

Then, an existing business changes their sign, or a new business moves in and adds a new sign, and you notice it immediately.

Your mind is trained to see differences. Differences are what keep us safe. Differences are what keep us interested. The new sign is different, and you immediately notice it and register that there is something new there. The same thing happens with your church sign. You need to update your sign to make it new and different. That way, it and your church will be noticed.

Signs are crucial for establishing instant credibility. Here is an example: You are on a trip driving down the expressway and are hungry, so you pull off at an exit you've never visited before. At the end of the ramp, there is a fast food restaurant and an independent burger joint. The

fast food restaurant has a big flashy sign, the parking lot is clean, and the building looks great. It has a great first impression.

The burger joint has paint peeling on the siding, the sign is old and decrepit, and there aren't many cars in the parking lot. You decide to eat at the fast food restaurant. You just missed out, and so did the new owner of the independent burger joint. You could have had a fantastic burger with all the fixin's and great fries served to you at a nice table for less money than at the fast food restaurant. The new owner worked on the food and the interior first, while working on the exterior was next on the list. You just didn't know because the exterior provided such a poor first impression that you chose the "safe thing."

Perhaps you need to work on the credibility of your church building and the church grounds. Consider how well your inside signage communicates about your beliefs and programs and how well it provides way-finding to help new people move around. Everything about your signage should communicate that when a new family or a new individual attends

your service that they have chosen the “right and safe thing” for them.

Your entrance sign should serve as an advertising attraction, as well as a source for additional information. The sign should include your website and phone number, and many churches like to include service hours and



Bible class/study hours. Make sure your website address is easily seen by the passer-by.

Outdoor advertising works and is a great way help the potential new member find out more information about your church. The road that our manufacturing plant is on has over 10,000 cars drive by daily. That is around 416 cars per hour. Over the course of a year, that is a potential 3,650,000 impressions each year. It doesn't really matter how many cars drive by your church. If it is only 50 cars per day, that is still 18,250 chances each year in which to make a great impression and attract potential new members. The better the attraction you present, the more potential impressions you will garner.

Signs are a good investment. Many things that a church buys are good investments, such as new handbells for the wonderful handbell choir you have, or a new organ or piano to help you all sing God's praises in time and in tune, or new carpeting to make the place look fresh and new.

While many of your purchases may add to the overall good experience of a new potential member as a whole, there isn't an easy way to determine that you can get a quick return on your investment. An entrance sign is both a good investment, and it can give you a quick return. It can literally pay for itself in a short period of time.

Here is some simple math to show you how an engaging new church entrance sign

will pay for itself...and fast. If your new sign creates new impressions on the street and helps inform potential prospects about your church and entices new prospects to attend services; if it can attract only two new members per year and they attend services 50 weeks out of that year and contribute \$20 to the collection plate; that will add \$2000 in revenue! Many beautiful signs can be purchased for far less than \$2,000. Only two new members should help pay for your new sign in a year. This is how a sign is one of the best investments that a church can make to attract new members. The sign, when coordinated with all of your other messages, is the beginning of the attraction; it is the starting point of all of your marketing.

The first question to ask when looking for any new church sign is if it is maintenance-free. Will it require expensive (hard to find) bulbs and ballast when they burn out? Is there any wood or paint used in the construction? (Paint peels when used on wood, and wood warps, cracks, and degrades over time.)

While we believe it is important to change the look of your signage on a regular basis (remember that differences are important), it is crucial that the sign look fabulous the entire time that it is on the street attracting attention. The sign industry today offers numerous low-maintenance, durable aluminum, PVC, and various composite materials to ensure that the signs are beautiful the entire time you intend to use them.

Many churches like to have a changeable copy message board as an important design element on their entrance sign. Much like a supermarket changes the “end cap aisle” displays regularly so you see the new products each week (they don't want you to miss them), the same goes for a fresh new message on your sign that is changed regularly. This can be the difference your eye notices that we were discussing above.

This being said, don't write a book on your message board. Remember the average driver in a car only has a couple of seconds to read it. Keep it short and change it regularly; this draws attention to you and your message. In addition to weekly announcements, you might consider making your message funny, inspirational, or thought-provoking. Give someone a reason to watch for your new message every week. Make it fun and keep the readers' interest in mind. Consider-

ing using your message board as a community sign, perhaps thanking the local fire department or welcoming the new coffee shop next door.

For churches on a tight budget, look into all your sign lighting options first. Low profile exterior lighting and a front-lit sign can save you hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars over purchasing a back-lit cabinet style sign. Most hardware stores now sell inexpensive high-quality low wattage outdoor lighting that can easily be installed by anyone. Two or three small lights on each side can light a sign or building beautifully without hot-spots. Just plug in the lights and you're done; no need to fuss with expensive specialty bulbs or ballasts that are hard to find and expensive to maintain.



And, don't overlook smaller “coordinating signs.” Perhaps a few signs strategically placed down the street with directional arrows. For larger churches, you may also need coordinating directional signs in your own parking lot or buildings. When added to your entrance sign, your interior signs, your website, and other marketing collateral, this all helps you make huge strides towards building your brand and community awareness.

New members mean your church is growing. Attracting new members is your daily challenge. Build your brand. Make your message known and make the message cohesive throughout all of your marketing campaigns. Make it easy for new members to find you and then make it easy for them to stay. **RPN**

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