

New Minas Baptist Church Visitation Ministry



**“To personally extend the love
of Jesus Christ to brothers
and sisters in need.”**

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Introduction

Whether visiting people in their homes, in the hospital, or in the local coffee shop, the simple act of connecting with others is filled with powerful possibilities. The act of love and friendship is an inroad to hearts and lives that creates trust, value, and incredible potential for ministry. Visitation lets people know you care and allows visitors to exercise their gifts.

Over the years there are always stories of times when someone had a need and nobody came to visit, or attended a church for two years and the Pastor never came to visit. These are situations that should never happen in a church. It is obvious that the Pastor may not be able get around to everyone for any of a number of reasons but a well trained group of visitors can. Therefore it is our hope that by offering the following material, outlining one way to set up a church Visitation Ministry, that your church can be equipped to meet all needs for visitation.

Perhaps not everyone will want or think they need a visit but the people who do need and want a visit will be loved and cared for in a special way. Visitors also have the potential to meet other family members who have not yet connected with Christ or His Church. The commitment shown to loved ones by visitors will be a great witness.

Incorporating this method of doing visitation at your church may require some form of modification to suit your particular situation, although the overall framework should work in any church. The target group for which this booklet is written is simply a place to begin. Once the method is working smoothly, other target groups can be undertaken.

It should be noted, at this time, that even though this material is presented as complete it is always evolving and the organizing will be an ongoing work for some time to come. Over a two year

period, visitation here has been changing from a three week blitz into a year long ministry. In some ways this has been very challenging, and there are still areas that need extra work, but the results thus far have been both positive and encouraging.

In the final analysis, if we did not visit before the method was perfected, we would never visit. We however, need to remember that the one we serve is perfect and is always perfecting us.

It is the hope that the visitation ministry outlined here will enable any church to properly care for its whole family. The goal at this time is to include everyone that attends. The end result will be spiritual and numerical growth as demonstrated in Acts 2, and a feeling that everyone matters and is an important part of the body.

We are very grateful to the Pastor of Visitation, the Steering Committee, past chairperson, visitors, office support staff and all who have worked so hard to make this ministry a reality.

The Vision

As for any ministry, there has to be vision, some reason why this is something worth doing and what it will look like some time down the road, all of which stems from a felt need and a desire to meet that need. In Scripture we find three passages that are fundamental to the vision behind Visitation Ministry.

The **first** comes from the letter of James. In the first chapter, James says, *“Do not merely listen to the Word, and, so deceive yourselves. Do what it says”*. He goes on to say, *“Anyone who listens to the Word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.”*

James says, “Don’t just be **“hearers”** of the Word, but **“doers”** also.” He says that God is looking for people who **“act”** on what they learn from Scripture. The Ministry of Visitation is one of the ways in which we try to line up with that teaching.

Another key verse is the 27th verse of James Chapter 1. “*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: To look after orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*” There is a lot in that little statement. To begin with, James says, if you don’t care for the needy in the church, you really don’t care to look after orphans and widows.

This treatment of one another was evident in the early church. We see in Acts, Chapter 6, there was a problem in the church at Jerusalem. Widows were being neglected. People were so busy that the widows were being left to fend for themselves, and the apostles were disturbed by this. So, they called the whole crowd together and said to them . . . “*We want you to choose, seven men, who are full of the Holy Spirit; men of spiritual depth; men who are deeply committed to the Lord, and I want you to give them the responsibility of caring for the neglected widows, and orphans.*”

So, this idea of “*caring for one another*” is not imported from the stratosphere: it is a biblical command. And the kind of care that God approves, and the kind of religion that God sees as pure and faultless, is a religion, or a faith, that . . .

- cares for those with needs
- cares for the widows
- cares for the orphans . . . and,
- cares for the people who are homeless.

There are **special needs** and **special situations** in our churches, and we must always be on the lookout for these kinds of

circumstances. And when the church recognizes **“need”** amongst its members, it has to **“work”** to meet these needs.

This show of concern is not a **“new concept”** for the church, this design of **“caring”** goes back to the day of Pentecost. It is recorded at the end of Acts Chapter 2, where we are told that, “*They “devoted” themselves to the Apostle’s teaching; and to the fellowship; to the breaking of bread; and to prayer.*” God began to do wondrous things amongst them. We read, that they cared for one another so much, that “anything” each of them possessed, was available, to serve the needs of others. That was the early church, and that’s the kind of pattern that’s here in the letter of James. The church must be comprised of a **“caring”** people.

Needs could be any of a hundred things, but what James is saying is that God approves a *“religion”* that expresses itself in **“love”** to others, and in **‘holiness’** before God.

James 1:27 does not give us a definition of religion. Instead, it presents a tangible way of insisting that *“genuine”* religion is a *“life-changing force”*. It springs from an inner spiritual reality that expresses itself in **‘action and tenderness towards others.’** When people are down, we are challenged to get along side of them and provide a caring, loving, and embracing atmosphere that will lift the spirits of individuals that are going through difficult times. ***That . . .*** is what the **‘Visitation Ministry’** is all about.

Secondly, the challenge for Christians and especially visitors is to have the same deep concern and love for how we relate to **one another** as Jesus had in John’s gospel chapter 13 verses 34-35, “*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*” The prevailing teaching of the day was, “an eye for an eye” and “hate your enemy” but Jesus says, “love your enemy and do good to those who persecute you”. The whole concept of how we are to treat others is turned upside down with Jesus one another statement.

Jesus has set the example when it comes to love. He paid the ultimate price in order to love us, even death on a cross. Therefore He is calling us to love as He has loved, symbolically giving our lives for others. That is precisely what we want to accomplish in a visitation ministry.

Thirdly, the mandate for a visitation ministry also comes from Matthew 25 verse 40, *“And the King will reply, tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for Me.”* Here Jesus is saying whenever you meet **“need”**, you **“meet”** Me and also whenever you serve those in **“need”** you serve Me.

Service to the needy is service for Jesus. Don't ever think of this verse in any other way. We have to be motivated by our love for Jesus which says, **“Lord, wherever there is a need, lead me to it, and help me, to meet it, as if I were meeting you.”** We are to seek the Lord's leadership in our daily lives, so that when a need arises we see it. For the Christian, service to human need, is **‘service to Jesus.’**

“The Vision” then becomes to deeply love and care for one another, in the long term, by meeting needs and through prayer. This will be accomplished by visiting each church family unit at least, but not limited to, once per year.

The Visitation Ministry then needs Spirit filled and Christ centered people who are committed to the long term ministry of loving and caring for one another and who are equipped with, **“A Plan”**.

The Plan

It is essential that the Pastor/s, church leadership and the congregation give their blessing for a lay Visitation Ministry. Once this is in place the organizing can begin. We will refer to this as form or structure. Also at this time the visitation leadership must be in place in order to direct the ministry.

The oversight and direction, depending on the church, can come from various bodies, but for this work it was to be a Steering Committee and the Pastor of Visitation. There is a chair and a secretary. This committee is in charge of the selection and training of visiting teams. They develop training material, set policy, compile records and produce reports as necessary. This committee meets quarterly, Jan, Mar, June and Sept. There are teams of visitors, (2) persons each. These persons, and how they conduct actual visits will be dealt with in detail in next section entitled **“Commitment”**.

The detailed method of assigning of visits to visiting teams, herein known as, **“The Plan,”** has to be developed and depending on the size of the church can be rather complicated. It is this methodology that will now be the focus. The plan for the Visitation Ministry must address several key questions. These will include but not be limited to; who we will visit, where will we visit, who will actually do the visiting, at what frequency will visits be carried out and over what time frame.

As discussed in the previous section it was felt that the ministry would best be served by visiting the entire church family, **members, adherents and those new to the church.** Any or several target groups can be chosen but this was simply a ministry choice so as not to exclude anyone. Also, there were many teams willing to exercise their gifts in the visitation ministry. With enough willing visitors the whole church family can be accommodated if given the whole year in which to visit. Also it

will become apparent that this will eventually overlap to include many target groups. Visitation will and can take place on the phone, in homes, in hospital, in nursing homes, at the local coffee shop, in church or anywhere convenient.

At this point it cannot be over emphasized that an accurate list of attending families with their addresses and phone numbers must be available for the ministry to function with any degree of success. The individuals in the target group must be identified in some way. An accurate membership list will be a place to begin. New people and adherents are much harder to identify. One method is to have some form of welcoming center with assigned pre printed name tags and hand written visitor tags. Visitor cards can be filled out. Once a card is filled out, the name/s with addresses and phone numbers can be transferred to the visitation list. This is updated on a quarterly basis.

Once you have the church family identified and an accurate list, the list can be organized into geographical areas and assigned to visiting teams from those areas. It was determined that to begin, the frequency of visiting would be two visits per month. By way of example, if there are 400 families (one or more persons) and 15 visiting teams then over the course of the year it would be 2.2 visits per month. Using this example each team would be assigned 26/27 names. The lists are divided and assigned each January. The teams receive packets which includes the list, visitor information cards, the visitation calling cards and cards for prayer requests (all will be explained in the next section), and if available an appropriate local area map.

One major advantage of this method of assigning visitors to certain lists of families is that it allows the Pastor to readily see who is responsible for which names. If a crisis should arise and an immediate or more frequent visit/s be necessary, it is a simple task for the Pastor to alert the appropriate visitors. Without some organizational structure such as this, the assignment of visits can be a difficult and time consuming task.

How to go about enlisting those who feel called to serve in this ministry and how they will conduct actual visits will be covered in the next section. **This ministry is all about and cannot survive without “Commitment”, both to Christ and to one another.**

The Commitment

- **What does “visitation” mean?**
 - “Personal visitation is an intentional direct encounter by an individual with another person for the purpose of getting to know them, understanding and addressing their needs, providing encouragement and assistance in the name of Jesus, and expressing through word and/or deed the constant love and care of God.” (Steve Mills)

This quote by Steve Mills really captures the true essence of the kind of commitment will be expected of those involved in the Visitation Ministry. That is why anyone wishing to be involved will have to have a genuine love for Jesus and people alike.

The following guidelines should be used in the recruitment of Steering Committee members as well as with visiting teams.

1. Are you a born-again believer in the Lord Jesus Christ?
2. Do you have a heart for people?
3. Do you have time to conduct at least two visits per month?
4. Do you have time to attend an initial 1-hour training class?
5. Do you have time to attend four meetings per year with the Visitation Team?
6. Do you have time to read correspondence (emails or hard copy mail) as necessary?

7. Are you supportive of the church; its vision, mission and leadership?
8. Do you have spiritual gifts or talents suited to this ministry? (encouragement, hospitality, helps, etc)

After a process of prayer and seeking the Lord's leading, persons are approached to join the ministry as the Steering Committee. This committee should have at least five members with one as chair and one as secretary. There should also be someone with strong computer skills, to record visit information and produce and update church family lists. Members of the Steering Committee can also be visitors.

Once this committee is in place the selection of visitors can begin. These will be teams of (2) persons, two male, two female or a husband and wife. Those with **particular gifts** suited to this ministry will be sought. Some may not know what gifts they have but would like to give it a try. This is great as long as they meet the eight criteria above and attend a training session. Training is carried out by the Chairperson and the Pastor. It is exciting to have people approach and ask if they can become visitors because the Spirit has been urging them to do so.

It is during the training session that visitors learn how to conduct an actual visit. This whole booklet could become the training material or it can be modified. After receiving the designated training and visitor packets the team can begin organizing. At some point before the first visit the team should discuss who will take the lead role at a visit and which parts of the visit each will handle. Also it should be agreed upon which of the two will do the driving. Once this is settled the designated visitor contacts the person to be visited, (from the church family list that has been assigned to their team), and offers a date and time for the visit. **It has been proven that it will be easier to set up a visit if the visitor suggests the time rather than asking when would be a good time for you to have a visit.**

Pre-Visit:

- An appointment is arranged for the visit (includes time & location), or the visit is declined.
- If the visit is declined 2 times, the Visitor fills out the Visitation Checklist Card (including the reason for declined visit). **This constitutes a visit.**
- Designated Visitor contacts the other Visitor to communicate the date, time, and location of the visit.
- Each Visitor prays to ask the Lord for guidance, discernment and sensitivity to needs during the visit.
- Visitors find an applicable Scripture to read during the visit.
- Visitors may meet and travel together to the visit location or,
- Each Visitor waits outside until the other visitor arrives if they travel in separate vehicles.
- Visitors pray together in a discrete location before they go in.
- Visitors briefly discuss the roles that each will perform during the actual visit (e.g., prayer, Scripture reading, etc.).
- Visitors then proceed with the visit.

A Checklist: What to bring to the visit.

- Directions on how to get to the visit location
- Names of the people you are visiting
- Knowledge of the purpose of your visit (as assigned)
- Your Bible marked with an applicable verses
- Visitation Ministry Calling Card (Business Card)
- Visitation Checklist Card (White Information Card)
- Prayer Request Cards (Colored Blank Lined recipe Cards)
- Knowledge of and support for the church's ministries, goals, vision and mission.
- The booklet (Steps to Peace with God) always is prepared to lead someone to the Lord.
- Hope and love of Jesus Christ

Conducting the Visit:

- Visitors introduce themselves and explain the reason for their visit.
- Visitors thank the person for meeting with them. If not wearing an official name tag, present the **Visitation Calling Card**, (business size card with the church name on the front and your names and phone nos. on the back). This lends credibility and is available for any future reference of those visited.
- Visitors can ask, “Is there any waychurch can more fully serve you and your family?” if an icebreaker is needed.
- Visitors briefly acknowledge the person’s situation (i.e., the reason for the visit).
- Visitors express empathy and love for the person.
- The content of visits is to be confidential, with the exception of the Pastoral Staff in the case of needs to be met.
- Visitors listen to the person’s response.
- Visitors mentally gather information about the person’s current state (i.e., their face, tone of voice, body language, attitude, surroundings, etc.).
- Visitors quickly assess the situation to determine how they can best serve the person.
- Trust in the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- Visitors minister to the person’s needs if possible.
- Person may need to be heard, validated, comforted, or just briefly acknowledged.
- **NOTE:** At no time are visitors to be counselors. If the situation should arise where counseling is needed then it is passed on to the Pastoral staff.
- Be supportive of and speak positively about the church and its leadership as well as its vision and mission.
- Visitor may ask the person if they would like to hear a Bible verse.

- Visitor may ask the person some questions to determine if follow-up is required and, if so, what kind of follow-up is needed.
- Visitors ask if they can pray with the person. If yes then lead in prayer.
- Visitors confirm any actions they will take to follow-up on the visit (e.g., ask permission for prayer request). Prayer requests are taken if permission is given so the church can pray. (**This is a plain 3x5 recipe card**)
- Visitors thank the person for their time/hospitality.
- Visitors leave the location where the visit was performed.

Post-Visit:

- Soon after the visit, one Visitor records information from the visit on the **Visitation Checklist Form. The information recorded on this card is vital to the ongoing visitation ministry. Information is to be clear (printed) and accurate. This will be logged by the designated computer person.**
- Visitor determines if the person’s need for follow-up action is urgent.
- If the need is urgent, the visitor will contact the Pastor.
- If the need is not urgent, the card will be deposited in the Visitation Box.
- No later than the Sunday following the visit, the Visitor puts the completed Visitation Checklist Form in the Church Visitation Box. A secure box or some such method is required for the collection of Visitation Checklist forms.
- As the Holy Spirit prompts, each visitor prays for the person they visited.
- Visitor keeps information about the visit confidential.
- If permission is given, the visitor submits a **prayer request card** to the church on behalf of the person. Place in Prayer Box the Sunday after the visit. A box or some secure method is required for the collection of prayer request

cards. These are prayed for by the church family during times organized for this purpose.

How to complete the Visitation Checklist Card

- **Purpose of Visit:**
Check the box that describes the primary reason for your visit. This will usually be the same purpose that you receive when you are assigned to the visit. Responses of “Crisis” or “Other” require a description.
- **Location of Visit:**
Check the box that describes where the visit took place. A response of “Other” requires a description of the other location
- **Is follow-up required?**
Check “No” if no actions need to be done after the visit. Check “Yes” if one or more follow-up actions are necessary.
- Then, check the box corresponding to the follow-up action(s) that are required. A response of “Other” requires a description.
- **Additional Comments: (on reverse of card)**
Use this space to record additional information that you want to communicate to the Pastor about this visit. Comments may include:
 - A secondary reason for the visit that you discovered after you arrived
 - A specific request made by the person you visited (e.g., visit from the Senior Pastor, information on a particular Ministry)
 - Issues that arose during the visit (e.g., discontent with the church’s current direction)
 - Your recommendation for follow-up visits
 - Name or address changes, family member changes, phone number changes, if the person is senior, student, shut-in, or anything else that would aid in future lists or visits. **All this information on the card and the total number of visits will again be logged by the designated computer person.**

- This person will report the number of visits per month to the chairperson and in turn the chairperson will produce a quarterly report for the Pastor.

Some circumstances may exist that could require follow-up visits. For example those in hospital, sick at home, shut-ins (do not get out to church), seniors, counseling etc. Some of these visits will be shared by the Pastor but the assigned team should be willing to meet some of this need.

The timing, (one visit per family unit), of visits is left up to the visiting team but some guidelines are appropriate, since the visiting will be carried out over the whole year. Since a large number of visits could be assigned it should be noted that they cannot be left until November to begin, they will want to be spread over the year. Visits are designed to be approximately ½ hour in duration, but visitors need to let the Spirit lead and leave when it seems appropriate, being respectful of the persons time. There should not be any more than two visits arranged for during an evening, and preferably only one.

The number and corresponding frequency of visits will be directly related to the number of visiting teams and the total number of church families. From there you do the math to arrive at the

number of visits a given team would be assigned for the year and how many per month.

In this visitation model the time line is one year. So then anyone joining the visitation team should be making at the least a commitment for one year. Once the first year is completed the Steering Committee, along with the Pastor, will make an evaluation and any modifications necessary. It should be noted that to have the greatest impact and to maintain consistency ministry should be carried out in the long term, 3-5 years.

“The Commitment” then is to buy into an organized and systematic method of visitation; with the time, energy and gifts one has been given. It is to recognize that this is front line work which will require the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and love of Jesus Christ. Those who have found their calling in the Visitation Ministry, helping to meet needs and extending the love of Christ to others, have been blessed as much or more than those receiving the visits.

Appendix

Visitation Do's:

- Make an appointment in advance of your visit.
- Ask for permission before you pray or read applicable Scriptures.
- Bring a child/pet with you when it has been cleared by the Pastor. (e.g., nursing home visit, encouragement for an elderly person at home)
- **Be aware that you represent your Church.**
- Be a good listener; spend most of your time listening.
- Respect the person's time, their personal space, and their property.
- Make all notes on the Visitation Checklist Card **only if specific follow-up is required after this visit.** (e.g., visit from the Senior Pastor, communion, etc.) in their presence. This way they know you did not forget.
- Extend the gift of touch, if you feel led. (e.g., a hug, a hand on the shoulder)
- Ask for permission to submit a prayer request and if you can include their name
- Share the hope and love of Christ

Visitation Don't's:

- Bring someone else who is not part of the Visitation Ministry (this includes spouses)
- Bring a child with you unless you have been cleared to do so by Pastor Sterling
- Conduct an official visit by yourself
- Just show-up at the person's home without an appointment
- Prepare a specific “script” before you arrive
- Make assumptions, judgments or show negativity
- Pray or read Scripture without asking for permission first
- Talk about inappropriate subjects (e.g., your personal problems)

- Be defensive (e.g., person who is complaining about the church to you)
- Push your ideas or opinions on them
- Provide counseling (**refer those situations to the Pastor**)
- Stay too long
- Make promises about follow-up actions that you cannot keep
- Complete the Visitation Checklist Form in the presence of the person you are visiting
- Gossip or share confidential information with others
- Submit a formal prayer request for the people you visit without their consent

Listening Skills:

A good listener . . .

- Ignores distractions and takes steps to remove those that become persistent
- Cuts interruptions short
- Maintains eye contact for as long as it is comfortable
- Uses facial expressions to show interest
- Uses friendly encouraging gestures
- Avoids fiddling
- Sits up straight, leans forward

A poor listener . . .

- Finishes sentences
- Is always in a hurry to be elsewhere
- Is instantly attracted to extraneous noise and movement
- Finds interruptions irresistible
- Looks into the middle distance, not at the speaker
- Their face has a 'I've heard this before' glaze
- Fiddles with pens, change etc
- Has a slumped, inattentive posture

Key Contacts in the Visitation Ministry:

Here you will at least need to list:

- The Pastor
- The Chairperson
- The Secretary
- The computer person
- The Church Office
- The Church Web site

How to Lead Someone to Christ:

Receiving Christ involves turning to God from self (repentance) and trusting Christ to come into our lives to forgive us of our sins, and to make us what He wants us to be. We receive Jesus Christ by faith, as an act of the will when we:

1. **ADMIT:** your need and be willing to turn from your sins--"*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" Romans 3:23
2. **BELIEVE:** Jesus Christ died for you on the cross and rose from the grave--"*That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*" Romans 10:9
3. **CHRIST:** We must trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and receive Him by personal invitation--"*Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.*" John 1:12

PRAYER OF SALVATION:

"Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner, and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from my sins and invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as my Lord And Savior . . . In Your Name, Amen."

Visitation Steering Committee 2009

Pastor of Visitation: Rev. Sterling Gosman

Chairperson: Bob McKay

Secretary: Ann Gosman and Carol Campbell (acting)

Member: Lynn Campbell

Members: Laurence & Kathy Coldwell

Member: Larry Peterson

Member: Laurie Levy

Support Staff: Kristen Lightfoot and Laurel Jamieson



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