

CHURCH VISITOR FOLLOW-UP TEMPLATES

Thanks for visiting today!
How can I be praying for
you this week?

DELIVERED

Six word-for-word messages that turn
first-time guests into family

THOMAS COSTELLO

FOUNDER OF REACHRIGHT

Make every guest feel known by Day 9

1

Swap in your details.

Every template uses Faith Church and Pastor Thomas as stand-ins. Replace them with your church and your name.

2

Personalize each message.

FNAME and the highlighted fields are yours to fill. A first name and one specific detail is the difference between a form letter and a note from a friend.

3

Send in order, on schedule.

The sequence is built to escalate: gratitude first, invitation later. Stick to the timing.

4

Count what happens.

The four numbers near the back of this guide tell you which message to fix and which to leave alone.

AUTOMATE IT OR DO IT BY HAND

These messages work whether you send them by hand every week or load them into your church management software as an automated sequence. The words matter more than the tool.

A NOTE FROM THOMAS

Nothing in this guide is theory. These are the actual messages I sent to first-time guests as a lead pastor, refined over years of Sundays and then across hundreds of REACHRIGHT client churches. They work because they're personal, not because they're clever. Make them yours and send them like you mean them.

6

READY-TO-SEND MESSAGES

9

DAYS FROM VISIT TO NEXT
STEP

3

CHANNELS: TEXT, EMAIL,
MAIL

Nine days, six touches

25–30%

 of first-time guests
come back and stay
at growing churches

vs

5–8%

 is all that declining churches
manage to keep

 Source: Gary L. McIntosh, *Beyond the First Visit* (Baker Books)

Most churches send one email and hope. Gary McIntosh's research puts numbers on what that costs: growing churches keep 25 to 30 percent of their first-time guests. Declining churches keep 5 to 8 percent. Same worship, same coffee, same friendly greeters. The difference is what happens Monday through Saturday. Six light touches across nine days keep your church present in a guest's week without crowding them. Each message has one job: gratitude, feedback, warmth, invitation, reminder, next step. By Day 9 a stranger has a relationship, not a brochure.

Day 1 SUNDAY	○	TEXT MESSAGE	<i>The Thank-You Text</i>	p. 5
Day 2 MONDAY	○	EMAIL	<i>The Survey Email</i>	p. 6
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No name, no number, no sequence

Every message in this guide needs two things: a first name and a way to reach someone. That's the entire entry fee, and most churches never collect it. A guest can slip in late, sit in the back row, and be gone before the last song. Fix the capture problem first. The templates handle the rest.

THE 20-SECOND ASK

say it from the stage, word for word

If you're visiting today, we are so glad you're here. And no, we won't make you stand up or wave. I'd love to send you a quick thank-you this week, no strings attached. Grab the card in the seat back, jot down your name and number, and drop it in the basket as it passes. That's it. You being here is the win.

The gift swap

Trade something for the card. A mug, a local coffee gift card, a small book at the welcome table. People hand over contact info in exchange for something, rarely for nothing. It's the best five dollars your church spends.

Four fields, max

Name, phone, email, and 'How can we pray for you?' Every field you add costs you cards. You're welcoming a guest, not underwriting a mortgage.

The QR code

Put a QR code on screen and 'Text NEW to **[YOUR NUMBER]**' in the bulletin. Same four fields, thirty seconds on a phone. Many guests will do this who would never touch a paper card.

Kids check-in

First-time families already gave you everything at check-in. Flag them in your system and drop them into this same sequence. It's the highest-intent list you have.

WHO OWNS SUNDAY AT 2 PM?

The Day 1 text goes out the same afternoon, which means someone has to get the pastor a list of new guests before lunch. Name that person. If nobody owns the handoff, Day 1 quietly becomes Day 4, and Day 4 is too late to feel personal.

Day 1

SUNDAY · DAY OF VISIT

SEND 2-5 PM, SAME DAY

TEXT MESSAGE

The Thank-You Text

WHY THIS WORKS

Texts get read within minutes. Sending it the same afternoon, from the pastor personally, breaks the big-church anonymity barrier. The prayer question invites a reply without asking for anything.

Text message · Sunday, day of visit

Hey **FNAME**! Pastor Thomas here from Faith Church. I just wanted to say thanks for visiting today. How can I be praying for you this week?

DELIVERED

ADAPT IT

- They checked in kids? Add it: 'It was great to meet your family today. I hope the kids had a blast in **[KIDS MINISTRY NAME]**!'
- They came with a member? Name the friend: 'So glad **[FRIEND NAME]** brought you along today.'
- Second-time visitor? Swap the opener: 'Great to see you again today' beats pretending it was their first time.

PRO TIP Send between 2 and 5 PM, while the visit is still fresh. If they reply with a prayer request, actually pray, then follow up on it next week. That follow-up is the moment trust is built.

Day 2

MONDAY · 1 DAY AFTER VISIT

SEND MONDAY, 9-11 AM

EMAIL

The Survey Email

FROM Pastor [YOUR NAME] <you@yourchurch.org>
TO **FNAME** — your first-time guest
SUBJECT **Thank You for Joining Us! What Did You Think?**

Hey **FNAME**,

This is Thomas - Lead Pastor at Faith Church. It was so great to have you at church yesterday and I hope you enjoyed your time and got to meet some of our church family! ①

I know we didn't get much time to chat, but I hope we can have you back sometime soon and we can get a chance to talk a little more.

So as you probably guessed, we are in a series learning **[SERIES TOPIC]** over the next several weeks. It is a great time to jump in at Faith Church. ②

I will be praying for you this week. Please let me know if there is anything we can do for you.

Blessings,

Thomas Costello

Lead Pastor at Faith Church

P.S. - We have a leaders meeting later this week to evaluate our Sunday service so that we can try to make the experience better for you and everyone who attends Faith Church. Something you could do to help me out would be to complete a very short survey. (It shouldn't take more than a minute) at **[SURVEY LINK]**. ③

WHY THIS WORKS

Asking for feedback does two things at once: it shows humility, and it gives the guest a low-stakes way to engage. The P.S. carries the ask, because the P.S. is the most-read line in any email.

① Names the pastor and the church in the first line. Visitors remember faces, not org charts.

② One soft plug for the current series gives a concrete reason to come back this Sunday, not someday.

③ The P.S. carries the survey ask. Framing it as helping the pastor makes saying yes easy.

MORE SUBJECT LINES

One quick question about Sunday

It was great to have you, **FNAME**

PRO TIP Keep the survey to 3 questions or fewer. One open-ended question ("What's one thing we could do better?") outperforms ten checkboxes.

Day 2

MONDAY · 1 DAY AFTER VISIT

MAIL MONDAY MORNING

HANDWRITTEN CARD

The Handwritten Card

WHY THIS WORKS

Nobody gets real mail anymore. A handwritten card lands midweek, sits on the kitchen counter, and says what no email can: a real person took five minutes for me. If you only have a mailing address and nothing else, send this.

FNAME,

I just wanted to say thanks again for visiting on Sunday. I'm praying for you this week and hope we have a chance to get to know each other better soon.

God Bless,

Thomas

ADAPT IT

- They shared a prayer request on Sunday? Add one line: 'Praying about **[THEIR REQUEST]** this week.' Specific beats general.
- You met their kids? Name them. Parents notice when their children are remembered.
- No mailing address? Skip this touch entirely. Never ask for an address just to send a card.

PRO TIP Mail it Monday so it arrives Wednesday or Thursday, right before your weekend invitation lands. Hand-address the envelope. Stamps beat postage meters.

Day 5

THURSDAY · 4 DAYS AFTER VISIT

SEND THURSDAY, 4-6 PM

EMAIL

The Come-Back Invitation

FROM Pastor [YOUR NAME] <you@yourchurch.org>
TO **FNAME** — your first-time guest
SUBJECT I'm Saving a Spot for YOU this Sunday

Hey **FNAME**,

I hope your week has been great so far.

I just wanted to take a second to invite you to church again this weekend. It's not that you need an invitation or anything; I just wanted you to know I hope to see you there. ①

I will be looking for you. If I don't see you first, please come find me. I'd love a chance to connect. ②

Hope to see you Sunday at **[SERVICE TIME]**.

Blessings,

Thomas Costello

Lead Pastor at Faith Church

WHY THIS WORKS

Thursday is when families plan their weekend. This email lands the invitation right when the decision gets made, and 'come find me' converts a generic invite into a personal appointment.

① No guilt. The invitation explicitly removes obligation, which lowers the barrier to actually coming.

② A specific meeting request turns attendance into an appointment with a person.

MORE SUBJECT LINES

Any plans this weekend, **FNAME**?

Come find me on Sunday

PRO TIP If your church has multiple services, name the one they attended. 'Sunday at 9:00' feels like their service, not a schedule.

Day 7

SATURDAY · 6 DAYS AFTER VISIT

SEND SATURDAY, 5-7 PM

TEXT MESSAGE

The Saturday Nudge

WHY THIS WORKS

A Saturday text is the gentle tap on the shoulder after Thursday's invitation. It is short on purpose. No guilt, no pressure, just 'I hope to see you.' Low-key messages get high-key results the day before a decision.

Text message · Saturday, 6 days after visit

Hey **FNAME**, Tomorrow is Sunday! I hope to see you again at church. Let's make a point to connect if you are able to make it. Talk soon!

DELIVERED

ADAPT IT

- They replied to your Day 1 text? Reference it: 'Still praying about your mom's surgery. Hope to see you tomorrow.'
- They already said they are coming? Switch the message: 'See you tomorrow, **FNAME**! I will save you a seat.'
- They have not responded to anything? Send it anyway. Saturday texts get replies the others never got.

PRO TIP Send it Saturday evening, 5 to 7 PM. Late enough to land near the decision, early enough to stay polite.

Day 9

SECOND MONDAY • 8 DAYS AFTER VISIT

SEND MONDAY, 9-11 AM

EMAIL

The Next-Step Invitation

FROM Pastor [YOUR NAME] <you@yourchurch.org>
TO **FNAME** — your first-time guest
SUBJECT Join Me for Growth Track This [DATE] - Discover Your Place at Faith Church

Hey **FNAME**,

I hope your week is off to a great start!

One question most new people have at Faith Church is "How do I get connected?" ①

Well I wanted to take a second to personally invite you to Growth Track. It's the place where anyone who is new to our church or new to faith can learn all the ins and outs of why we exist as a church and how you can grow in your faith.

It's the next right step for anyone who is looking to make a connection.

We have one coming up on **[DATE AND TIME]**. I will be there and would love for you to join me. ②

We have the signup form and all the details laid out here: **[LINK TO YOUR NEXT-STEP PAGE]**. ③

If you have any questions before you get signed up, let me know.

Blessings,

Thomas Costello

Lead Pastor at Faith Church

WHY THIS WORKS

By Day 9, gratitude and warmth have done their work. Now you answer the question every newcomer is quietly asking: 'How do I actually get connected here?' Naming a specific event with a specific date turns a vague welcome into a concrete next step.

① Opens with the question every newcomer is already asking themselves.

② A named event with a date converts goodwill into a calendar entry.

③ One link, one action. More options means fewer signups.

MORE SUBJECT LINES

How to get connected at Faith Church

Your next step (it's easier than you think)

PRO TIP Swap 'Growth Track' for whatever your next step is called: newcomer lunch, connect class, coffee with the pastor. The structure works for any of them.

Don't fumble the reply

The sequence exists to start conversations, and a conversation is won or lost in the first reply. When one starts, everything else in this guide can wait. Answer within a few hours if you can, within 24 always. Here is what to say to the four replies you'll actually get.

The prayer request

Please pray for my mom. She has surgery on Tuesday.

Thank you for trusting me with that, **FNAME**. I just prayed for your mom, and I'll keep praying this week. Mind if I check in Wednesday to hear how the surgery went?

Set the reminder and actually check in. That Wednesday text is worth more than every template in this guide.

The compliment

We loved it! The kids haven't stopped talking about it.

That makes my whole week. Our kids team will be thrilled to hear it. See you Sunday? Come find me. I'd love to meet the kids' biggest fans.

Pass the compliment to the team it belongs to, out loud, at the next meeting.

The critique

Honestly, we couldn't find the nursery and nobody offered to help.

FNAME, thank you for being straight with me. You're right, and I shared it with our team this morning so the next family doesn't have that experience. I'd love a second chance to get it right.

No defending, no explaining. Own it, fix it, invite them back. A well-handled complaint builds more trust than a flawless Sunday.

The gracious no

We've decided to keep looking for a church closer to home.

FNAME, I'm genuinely glad you told me. Finding the right church home matters more than it being ours. If we can ever pray for you or help you land somewhere, I'm one text away.

Release people warmly. Guests you release well send you their friends.

The long game

Most guests will not reply to anything, and plenty won't return within nine days. That is normal, and it is rarely a no. It's usually 'not yet.' Here's what to do with the three ways a sequence can end.

If they come back

Do not restart the sequence. A second visit means the decision is live, so move to a real relationship: one coffee, then the next-step event.

THE SECOND-VISIT TEXT

FNAME! So good to see you again today. If you're up for it, coffee is on me this week. I'd love to hear your story. Twenty minutes, any morning that works for you.

If they go quiet

Move them to one monthly email from you. One story from the church, one invitation, nothing else. Not the announcement list, not the newsletter, nothing they didn't ask for. After six months of silence, let them go with grace and keep them on the prayer list.

When the holidays come

Christmas and Easter re-open doors that closed in June. Quiet contacts wake up for candlelight. Text every past guest ten days out.

THE HOLIDAY RE-INVITE

Hey **FNAME**, Pastor Thomas here. Christmas Eve services are at **[TIMES]** this year and I'd love to see your family in the room. Want me to save you seats?

WHERE TO KEEP THEM

A 'past guests' tag in your church software, or one extra tab in the spreadsheet. The tool doesn't matter. What matters is that someone can pull the list in October when it's time to send the Christmas text.

Six guests who don't fit the script

The nine-day sequence fits most first-time guests. These six need a tweak, not a new system.

Easter and Christmas guests

They came for the day, not for you yet. Aim the Day 5 email at whatever is next: 'We're starting a new series this Sunday.' Expect slower returns and run the sequence anyway. Big days fill the top of this funnel.

Online-only guests

A digital connect card starts the same nine days, minus the handwritten card. Let them pick the room: 'Join us in person Sunday, or say hi in the live chat.'

Out-of-town visitors

Vacationers and visiting family get Day 1 and nothing else. A nine-day sequence aimed at someone who flew home Tuesday reads like a mailing list, not a pastor.

Second-time guests

Skip the sequence. They already said yes twice. Send the second-visit coffee text and put your next-step event in front of them this month.

Email only, no phone

Turn Day 1 into a three-sentence email with the same words and keep everything else as is. Never ask for a phone number just to complete the set.

The crisis visitor

Someone who came because of a funeral, a divorce, or a diagnosis gets the highest touch and the lowest pitch. Send the card, make a phone call, and hold the event invites for a month. Care first.

WHEN IN DOUBT

Send less, warmer. One human message beats the full sequence on autopilot. You can always invite someone later. You can't un-send five messages they didn't want.

Do this, not that

Do

- ✓ Send from a real person, with a real name and a way to reply
- ✓ Reference something specific: their kids, a conversation, a prayer request
- ✓ Keep Day 1 and Day 7 short. Texts are taps on the shoulder, not letters
- ✓ Follow up on prayer requests the next week. That is the trust moment
- ✓ Let the sequence end at Day 9. If they have not engaged, one monthly email keeps the door open

Don't

- ✗ Ask for anything in the first 48 hours except a prayer request
- ✗ Send from info@ or noreply@. Anonymous senders get anonymous results
- ✗ Stack three asks in one message. One message, one action
- ✗ Guilt-trip non-responders. Warmth converts; pressure repels
- ✗ Add visitors to every church email list they never signed up for

THE ONE RULE THAT MATTERS MOST

Every reply gets a reply. A visitor who answers your text and hears nothing back learns more about your church than any sermon could teach them.

Four numbers that tell the **truth**

You don't need a dashboard. You need a spreadsheet with five columns (name, date visited, contact info, touches sent, came back?) and ten minutes a month. Count these four things and you'll know more about your follow-up than most churches ever learn about theirs.

1 Capture rate

- COUNT THIS** Contact cards collected, divided by the new faces you spotted. Estimate the faces. Precision is not the point.
- IF IT'S LOW** The problem is the ask, not the templates. Rework the 20-second ask and the gift swap before touching a message.

2 Reply rate

- COUNT THIS** Guests who replied to anything, divided by sequences started.
- IF IT'S LOW** Check the sender. Messages from info@ and noreply@ get ignored. Real name, real number, real reply-to address.

3 Return rate

- COUNT THIS** Guests who came back within 30 days, divided by sequences started.
- IF IT'S LOW** Look at Days 5 through 9. Are you inviting people to something specific, this Sunday, by name? Vague welcomes don't move calendars.

4 Next-step rate

- COUNT THIS** Guests who joined your next-step class, a group, or a serve team within 90 days.
- IF IT'S LOW** Your next step may be invisible. One named event, one date, one link in the Day 9 email.

PUT IT ON THE AGENDA

Fifteen minutes with these four numbers at your monthly staff meeting will do more for your back door than any conference session on assimilation. Numbers turn 'we should follow up better' into 'fix the Day 5 email.'

QUALITY CHECK

Before you hit send

Run every message through this 60-second check. One leftover 'Faith Church' in your email tells a visitor they got a form letter.

- ☐ Replaced every 'Faith Church' with your church name

- ☐ Replaced 'Thomas' and 'Thomas Costello' with the sending pastor's name

- ☐ FNAME merge tag tested with a real contact (send yourself a test)

- ☐ All [BRACKETED] fields filled: series topic, survey link, service time, event date

- ☐ Sender email is a real person's address, not info@ or noreply@

- ☐ Survey is 3 questions or fewer and mobile-friendly

- ☐ Texts come from a number that can receive replies

- ☐ Someone owns the replies: every response gets answered within 24 hours

LAUNCH IT IN ONE WEEK

Monday: personalize all six messages. Tuesday: load them into your texting and email tools. Wednesday: buy cards and stamps. Thursday: pick who owns Sunday at 2 PM and who owns replies. Sunday: your first guest enters the sequence.

More free tools for your church

77 AI Prompts Every Pastor Needs

Save hours every week on sermon prep, social media, and communication.

reachrightstudios.com/lp/ai-prompts-for-pastors/

Social Media Calendar

52 weeks of content ideas for churches, mapped to dates.

reachrightstudios.com/lp/social-media-calendar/

Local SEO Audit

See how your church ranks on Google in 60 seconds.

reachrightstudios.com/lp/local-seo-audit/

Church Budget Calculator

See how your spending compares to healthy benchmarks.

reachrightstudios.com/lp/church-budget-calculator/

Church Salary Calculator

Benchmark pastor and staff compensation in two minutes.

reachrightstudios.com/lp/church-salary-calculator/

Grant Eligibility Checker

See if your church qualifies for \$10K/mo in free Google Ads.

reachrightstudios.com/lp/grant-eligibility-checker/

ABOUT REACHRIGHT

REACHRIGHT helps churches reach more people and grow through digital strategies that actually work. Founded by Thomas Costello - a pastor with over 20 years of ministry experience - REACHRIGHT combines deep understanding of church culture with proven digital marketing expertise. We've helped hundreds of churches improve their online presence, connect with their communities, and grow their congregations. Whether it's website design, local SEO, Google Ad Grants, or social media strategy, everything we do is built on one belief: the local church is the hope of the world, and it deserves world-class digital tools to fulfill its mission.



ONE MORE THING

Visitors found you once. Let's make sure they keep finding you.

This sequence works after someone visits. Getting them to visit in the first place is the other half. We'll audit your website, your Google presence, and your social media, then walk you through a custom growth plan. Completely free. No sales pitch. Real strategy from people who understand ministry.

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reachrightstudios.com/lp/free-church-growth-review/

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