VISITING PREACHER...

Posted on November 15, 2010 by Eddie

Categories: Church: UK, Observations

John Hamilton has just posted his thoughts on preaching away from home. Inspired by this, I thought I'd post some thoughts from my own experience about the best way to welcome a visiting preacher (in this case, me!).

The first thing is to make sure you brief me well. There is nothing worse than turning up with a 25 minute message only to be told that you have ten minutes for your sermon. You should also let me know what else you want me to do asides from preach; I can't do kids' talks without preparation - honest. Oh, and if you want me to use a particular version of the Bible, wear a suit and tie or do anything else specific, you should tell me in advance. Every church has slightly different standards, and it is impossible to know what is expected if you are not warned in advance.

Remember that I may well have driven a couple of hours to get to your church on a Sunday morning. This meant a very early start for me. So, yes, I would like a coffee! I also need to use the loo, so please tell me where it is. Some churches seem to hide their toilets down corridors and around obscure corners, so visitors probably need to be told how to find them.

I know that you are very busy, but please take time to chat to me and to make sure that people take time to greet me and make sure I have everything I need. One of my worst experiences was trying to find somewhere to park at a city centre church. I parked the car, but wasn't too sure whether the spot I was in was legal or not. Just then, I noticed that a couple were opening up the church, so I smiled and asked them if the car was parked in a good spot. "Sorry, we are busy", came the reply and the couple went into the church and locked the door behind them. Thankfully, the owner of the local wine bar was a good deal more helpful than the Christians and he showed me a better place to park my car!

Please remember, too, that I have come representing a mission agency and I almost certainly want to display some literature on a table somewhere. Ideally, I'd like room to put up a stand. I am always surprised at how many churches are surprised when I make this request.

Please don't stick me all on my own in the front row of the church for the service. Every church stands up and sits down at different points in the proceedings and if you are a stranger and can't actually see what other people are doing it can be very disorientating. I hate the realisation that everyone else in the congregation has sat down and I'm on my own at the front, with my back to them all, standing up like a lemon. The best thing a church can do is to give you someone from the congregation to sit with during the service - it really does help.

If I am staying for lunch, please don't assume that just because I am a missionary, I want to eat my lunch with the retired missionaries in the church. You would be surprised at how often this happens. Retired missionaries are lovely people and it can be great to spend an afternoon with them, but I am visiting your church to promote the mission I work for. What I really want to do is to have lunch with a young family who know absolutely nothing about mission so that I can stimulate an interest. Either that, or it is good to have lunch with people who may be considering missionary service in the near

future.

But, even if none of these things happen, I'll still do my best to serve you and bring God's Word to you.