



## Elder Visit Outline

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After a congregation holds its *God's People Gather* worship celebration and identifies the members who have not attended worship since the beginning of the pandemic, the pastor and elders will want to visit those members both to discover what is on their mind and hearts as well as to encourage them to return to in-person worship. An in-person visit is ideal, but a virtual meeting or phone call may be necessary in some situations.

While every elder's visit is unique and there is no way to know how the visit will proceed, it can be helpful to have a basic outline in mind. Here is one such outline. Pastors and elders should feel free to adjust as they see fit for their setting.

### Opening the visit

It is both wise and loving to begin the visit by asking questions about how the member is doing in general. How is work? School? Kids? Etc. The visitor will want to demonstrate that he is interested in the member without giving the impression he is interrogating the member. Just showing interest and concern for the member both breaks the ice and expresses Christian love.

### Transitioning the conversation

After the opening conversation, the visitor will want to turn the conversation to the main reason for the visit. In this case, the member has not attended in-person worship for some time. The visitor wants to discover why this is the case. He might transition the conversation by saying something like:

*"It's so good to be able to visit with you, especially after we've all been so isolated during the pandemic. Thankfully, we are once again able to worship together. Many of our members are back in church. But others have not yet returned. We understand*

*there are a variety of reasons for this. So, we are visiting each of our members who has not yet returned to discover what their thoughts are when it comes to in-person worship. Would you be willing to share your thoughts?"*

The visitor will want to give the member plenty of time to share their thoughts. He will likely want to ask further questions to draw out the member's thoughts and feelings so that he understands the person as well as possible.

We are all aware that there are strongly held opinions about COVID-19. The devil has used the pandemic to sow the seeds of division among our people. The visitor will want to be careful to avoid getting into a debate. Debating personal or political policy concerning COVID-19 will not be beneficial. He is visiting to encourage the member with God's Word and, if possible, encourage them to return to in-person worship.

### **Sharing the blessings of in-person worship**

Regardless of what the member shares, once they have finished, the elder will want to share some of the blessings of in-person worship. He might say something like:

*"Well, you are certainly not alone. As I mentioned, we have other members who have not yet returned to in-person worship. Everyone needs to decide what is best for them and their family. We are certainly looking forward to the day when all of our brothers and sisters are back in God's house because we know there are some blessings God gives us there that we haven't been able to experience when we could not gather. For example..."*

Here the visitor can share the four blessings *God's People Gather* highlights:

1. The in-person worship experience (The art, architecture, music, confessing together, praising together, etc.)
2. The experience of Christian community ("Rubbing shoulders" with one another)
3. Christian service (The ability both to serve our fellow Christians as well as serve alongside our fellow Christians)
4. The Lord's Supper (Both the vertical as well as horizontal communion when it is received in corporate worship)

He might wish to simply talk a bit about each. He may choose to share a Bible passage that speaks to each (for example, the passages used in the *God's People Gather* celebration worship plan). Perhaps, he would want to share the *God's People Gather* videos (on his phone, tablet, or laptop) as an introduction to each of the blessings. He could show each video and then ask, "What resonated with you when you watched that video?"

## Close the visit

After sharing some of the blessings of in-person worship, the visitor will want to close the visit in an encouraging and loving way. He might say something like:

*“Thank you so very much for spending some time with me. I hope our visit has been an encouragement for you, and I pray that you will soon be with us again in God’s house.”*

The visitor might close with a prayer such as:

*“Lord Jesus, thank you for the many blessings you shower on us. We especially thank you for the fellowship we share at \_\_\_\_\_ Church. Give us hearts that love you, your Word and sacrament, and our brothers and sisters in Christ. Help us appreciate every opportunity you provide for us to worship together, fellowship together and serve together. Amen.”*

May the Lord richly bless your efforts as you serve your fellow saints!