Preparing for Christmas Eve Guests

More Unchurched Guests Than Any Other Day of the Year

A Church Answers Webinar

Thom Rainer and Sam Rainer • November 2026



Why Christmas Eve?

In our consulting and coaching work, Christmas Eve consistently brings churches more unchurched guests than any other day of the year.

How can we prepare to welcome them well?



1 Begin with the guest’s perspective

Walk through the entire visit as someone unfamiliar with your church:



1 Begin with the guest’s perspective

Walk through the entire visit as someone unfamiliar with your church:

- **finding service times**



1 Begin with the guest’s perspective

Walk through the entire visit as someone unfamiliar with your church:

- finding service times
- **arriving**



1 Begin with the guest’s perspective

Walk through the entire visit as someone unfamiliar with your church:

- finding service times
- arriving
- **entering**



1 Begin with the guest’s perspective

Walk through the entire visit as someone unfamiliar with your church:

- finding service times
- arriving
- entering
- **worshiping**



1 Begin with the guest’s perspective

Walk through the entire visit as someone unfamiliar with your church:

- finding service times
- arriving
- entering
- worshiping
- **leaving**



2 Give members a simple invitation

Ask members to

- **invite one person personally**



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Ask members to

- invite one person personally
- **share the service details**



2 Give members a simple invitation

Ask members to

- invite one person personally
- share the service details
- **offer to meet that person at the door**



3 Make essential information easy to find

Create one clear place on your website where guests can find:



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Create one clear place on your website where guests can find:

- **service times**



3 Make essential information easy to find

Create one clear place on your website where guests can find:

- service times
- **location**



3 Make essential information easy to find

Create one clear place on your website where guests can find:

- service times
- location
- **parking**



3 Make essential information easy to find

Create one clear place on your website where guests can find:

- service times
- location
- parking
- **childcare**



3 Make essential information easy to find

Create one clear place on your website where guests can find:

- service times
- location
- parking
- childcare
- **accessibility**



3 Make essential information easy to find

Create one clear place on your website where guests can find:

- service times
- location
- parking
- childcare
- accessibility
- **and expected service length on one clear web page**



4 Plan for the full room

- **Estimate attendance ahead of time.**



4 Plan for the full room

- Estimate attendance ahead of time.
- **Prepare overflow space if needed, and make sure guests can find seats together without embarrassment.**



5 Put your best hosts at the first points of uncertainty

Place helpful, knowledgeable people at:

- **The parking lot**



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Place helpful, knowledgeable people at:

- The parking lot
- **Exterior doors**



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Place helpful, knowledgeable people at:

- The parking lot
- Exterior doors
- **Children’s check-in**



5 Put your best hosts at the first points of uncertainty

Place helpful, knowledgeable people at:

- The parking lot
- Exterior doors
- Children’s check-in
- **Auditorium entrances (with people who can give clear directions)**



6 Make children’s ministry especially reassuring

For first-time families, leaving a child with people they don't know can be a major source of uncertainty.

Clearly explain:

- **Check-in and pickup**



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Clearly explain:

- Check-in and pickup
- **Where children go**



6 Make children’s ministry especially reassuring

For first-time families, leaving a child with people they don't know can be a major source of uncertainty.

Clearly explain:

- Check-in and pickup
- Where children go
- **What parents should expect**



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7 Welcome guests without singling them out

- **Acknowledge that some people are visiting and briefly explain what will happen during the service.**



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- Acknowledge that some people are visiting and briefly explain what will happen during the service.
- **But don't ask guests to identify themselves publicly.**



7 Welcome guests without singling them out

- Acknowledge that some people are visiting and briefly explain what will happen during the service.
- But don't ask guests to identify themselves publicly.
- **Allow them to participate without being singled out.**



8 Explain church language

Don't assume people understand what is happening.

Briefly explain things such as:

- **Communion**



8 Explain church language

Don't assume people understand what is happening.

Briefly explain things such as:

- Communion
- **Candle lighting**



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- Candle lighting
- **Giving**



8 Explain church language

Don't assume people understand what is happening.

Briefly explain things such as:

- Communion
- Candle lighting
- Giving
- **Other elements**



9 Preach the Christmas message clearly

- **Tell the story of Jesus in language a person with little church background can follow**



9 Preach the Christmas message clearly

- Tell the story of Jesus in language a person with little church background can follow
- **Give people a clear invitation to respond.**



10 Offer one easy next step

Give guests one simple way to:

- **Request prayer**



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Give guests one simple way to:

- Request prayer
- **Learn more about Jesus**



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Give guests one simple way to:

- Request prayer
- Learn more about Jesus
- **Plan another visit.**



10 Offer one easy next step

Give guests one simple way to:

- Request prayer
- Learn more about Jesus
- Plan another visit.

Avoid overwhelming them with a long menu of church programs.

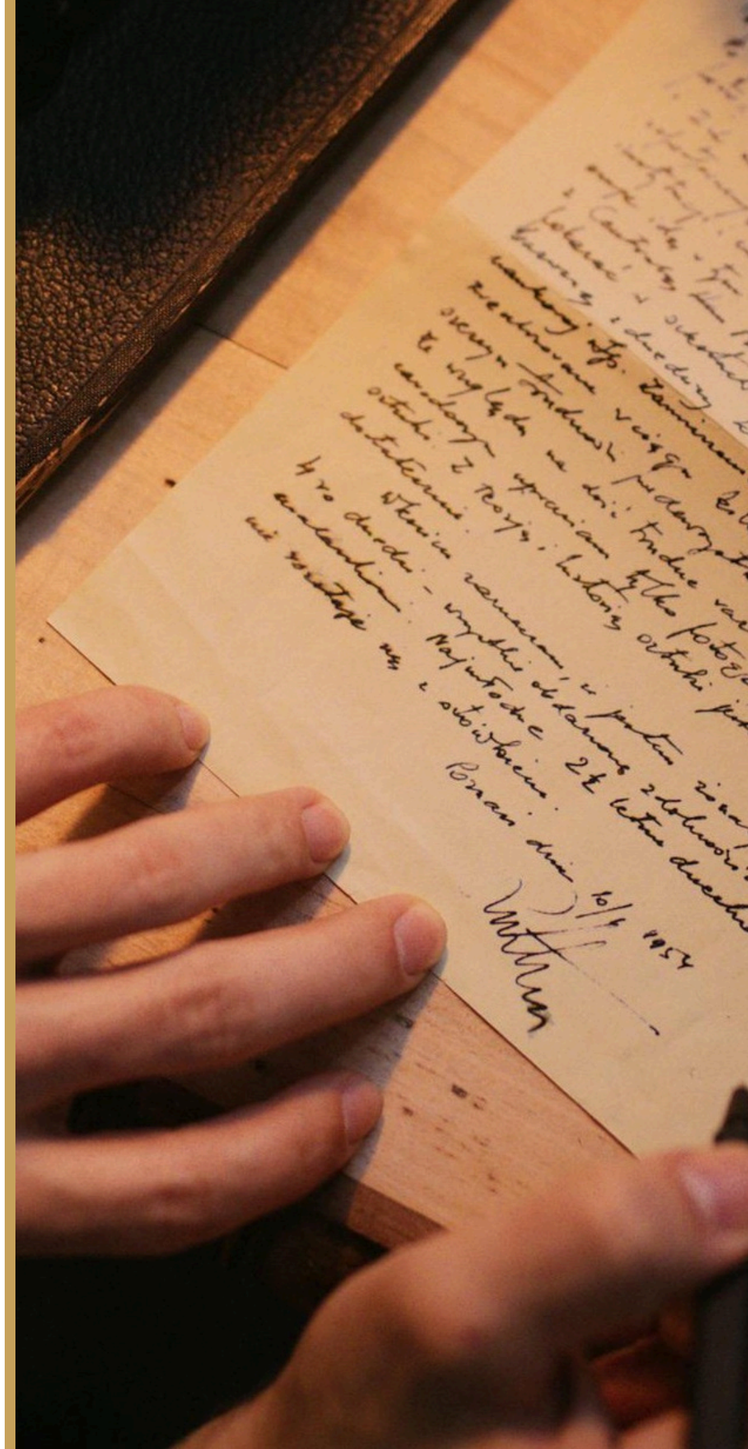


11 Prepare the follow-up before Christmas Eve

Don't wait until December 26 to decide what happens next.

Determine beforehand:

- **Who will respond to guest requests?**

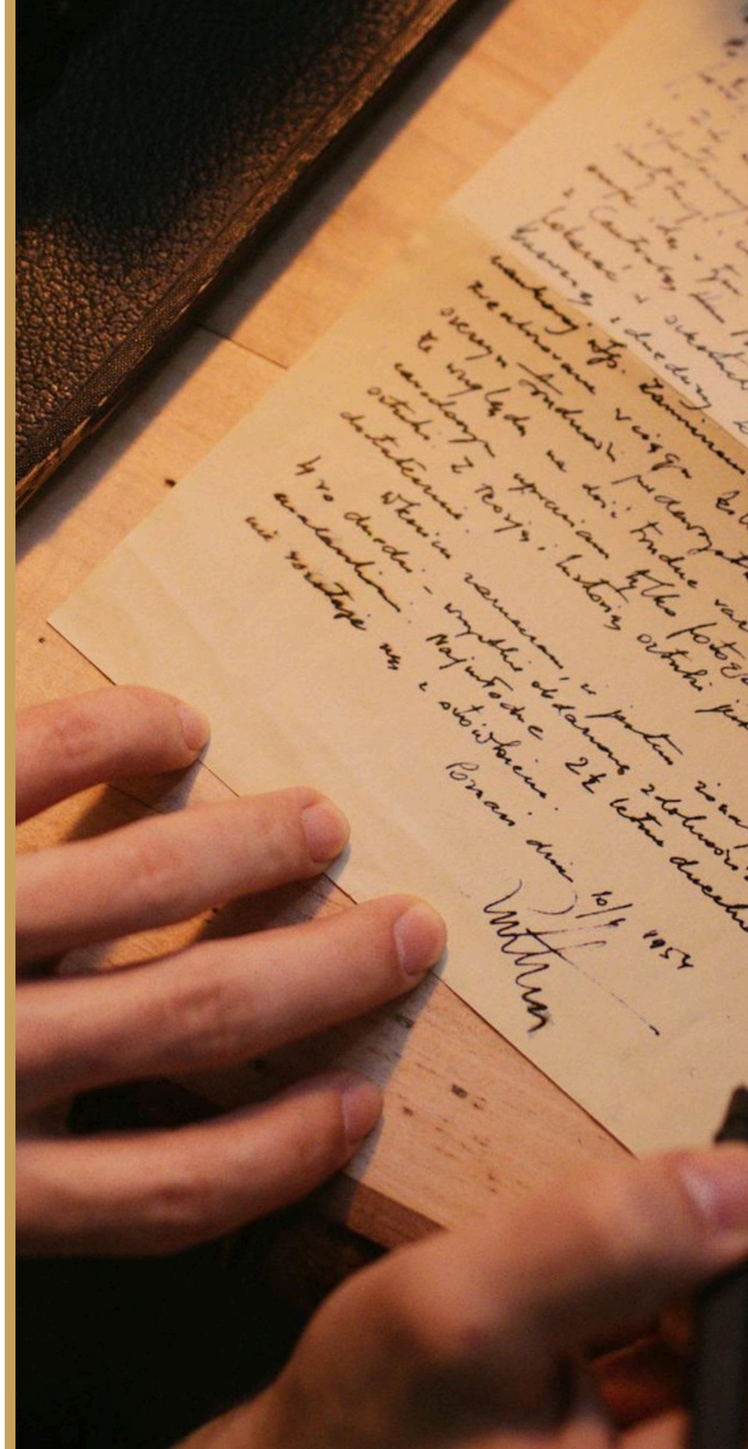


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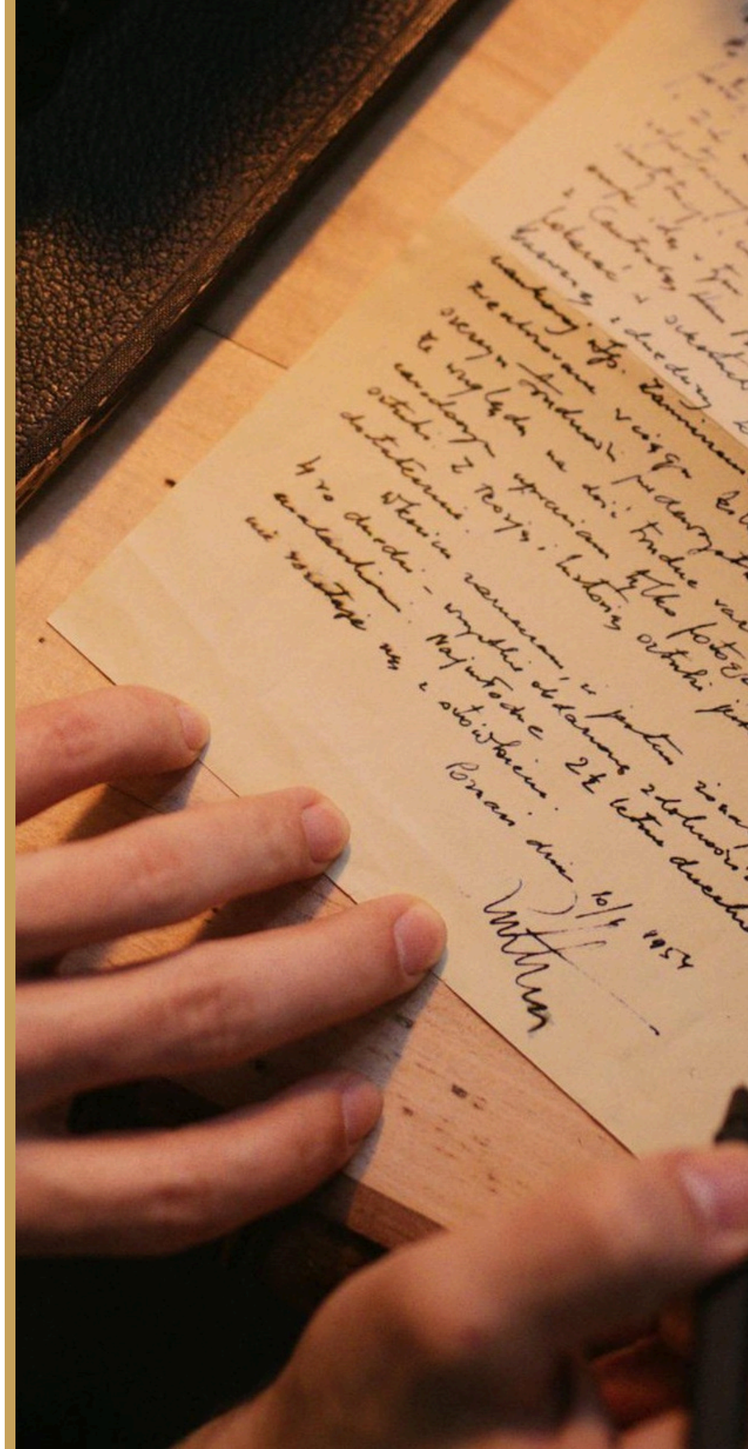


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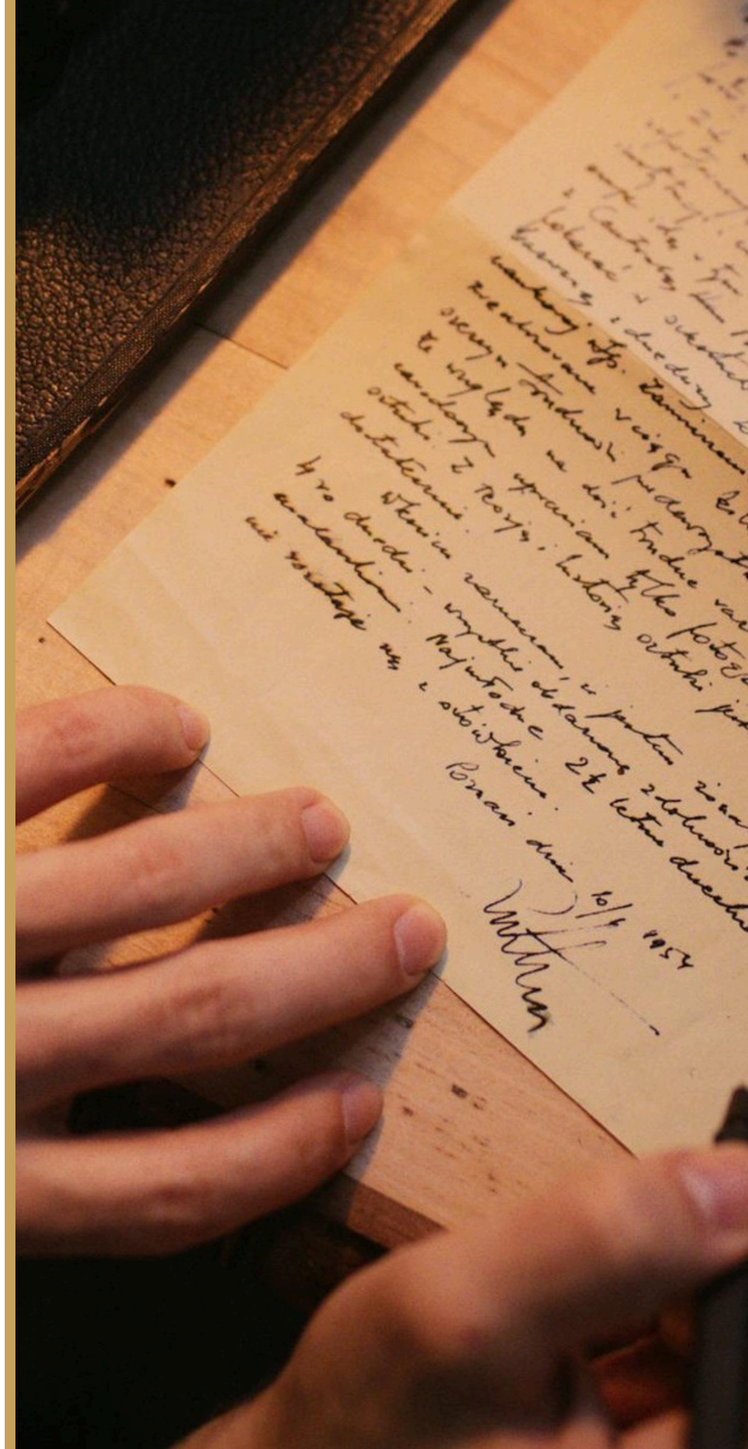


11 Prepare the follow-up before Christmas Eve

Don't wait until December 26 to decide what happens next.

Determine beforehand:

- Who will respond to guest requests?
- What will they say?
- When will they reach out?
- **How will you keep the contact personal and relevant?**



12 Measure connection, then learn

After Christmas Eve, review:

- **Guest feedback**



12 Measure connection, then learn

After Christmas Eve, review:

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- **Children’s check-in**



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- **Next-step responses**



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- **Return visits**



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After Christmas Eve, review:

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- Next-step responses
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- **Feedback from volunteers**



12 Measure connection, then learn

After Christmas Eve, review:

- Guest feedback
- Children’s check-in
- Next-step responses
- Return visits
- Feedback from volunteers

Ask your volunteers where guests encountered confusion—and fix those points before next year.



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Questions?

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Thank You

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