

**CMBA Holds Virtual Guest Services Dialogue**

Our One Priority is to “start and strengthen congregations to serve as vital and vibrant missional communities.” The CMBA offered a live virtual dialogue Sept. 24 with guest services specialists Mary Ann Sibley and Rebecca Carlisle, of Stoked Workshops, on the needs of first-time visitors and those returning to ReGathered worship. These resources are important to CMBA churches as they consider ways to engage their communities with the gospel.

“We have the opportunity as a church to welcome people so that they can hear the message of Jesus Christ,” says Mary Ann of this ministry’s value.

The discussion was the first in a series to help churches with a variety of guest services topics including how to start the ministry, discipling volunteers, critical campus issues to consider and engaging visitors in meaningful ways. Since leading a workshop in the Midlands last fall, Mary Ann and Rebecca have gone on to formally launch Stoked Workshops which also offers consulting services directly with churches. The monthly CMBA series will work through topics and questions submitted by participants and [recordings](https://columbiametro.org/guest-services-dialogue-09-24-20/) of the sessions will be made available online.

In the September discussion, Mary Ann and Rebecca touched on two important reasons churches should be intentional with a guest services ministry. First, it is an opportunity to engage key member volunteers while intentionally discipling them through the ministry of welcoming guests. Secondly, welcome ministries should be viewed as having the opportunity to prepare a guest for a meaningful encounter with God, starting as early as an informational engagement online or when the guest drives on to the church campus. The job of door holders and worship center greeters is important, but so is their empowerment to minister through those acts of service.

Among churches that have ReGathered, Rebecca points out that greeters are experiencing a renewed sense of energy and excitement. “It’s also a perfect time for a ‘reset,’ and to collaborate with other churches, volunteers and health experts from the community. Make volunteers feel valued, connected and included, not just showing up to do a task but empowered to carry out what they feel led to do.”

To reengage volunteers, Mary Ann suggests meeting with two or three active leaders to learn their thoughts on what the ministry is doing well, what areas need improvement and identifying potential new leadership from within the congregation. For building Sunday morning excitement on campus while being considerate of physical distancing, Mary Ann suggests creative ideas like waving long pool noodles to welcome children instead of using hands to “high-five.” Rebecca suggests letting volunteers have fun too, by dressing up as superheroes or wearing fun masks to build excitement from the parking lots.

For more information about Mary Ann, Rebecca and their ministry visit [www.stokeworkshops.com](http://www.stokeworkshops.com) or send questions to them at [info@matterspark.com](mailto:info@matterspark.com). The September [dialogue](https://columbiametro.org/guest-services-dialogue-09-24-20/) is available online at [www.ColumbiaMetro.org](http://www.ColumbiaMetro.org)