

# PLANNING GUIDE

## Signage

**Signs do more than just point the way. They help visitors feel welcomed, direct people safely through a building, and communicate the culture and feel of an organization. When signs are adequately displayed and helpful to the user, they convey a positive message. Conversely, poorly designed or inadequate signs relay a negative image to the visitor.**

### Outdoor signs

When most people think about exterior signs, they often think about the main marquee or business sign in front of a facility. However, facilities typically have additional directional signs to help visitors and users park their vehicles, find a primary entrance, locate key spaces/rooms in a building and navigate around a building's exterior.

To evaluate the condition and effectiveness of a facility's signs, a church should solicit the input of a first-time visitor about the message and ease of finding their way around the property and buildings. Additionally, church leaders should be sure to walk the exterior of their facilities to make sure signs are legible and easy to see, rather than covered, faded, or obstructed.

### Indoor Signs

Similar to exterior signs, interior signs should help direct visitors and users throughout a facility. While many buildings have an initial directory or entrance area where signs are posted, they may be missing connecting signs that help people navigate further. As a congregation considers the types of signs in its facilities, it should note that the five most visited spaces for visitors are:

- Entrance area
- Church offices
- Sanctuary
- Restrooms
- Nursery

Similar to how a church evaluates its exterior signs, a congregation should

ask a first-time visitor about the type of message the interior signs convey and the ease of navigating through the building. Special attention should be given to updating and replacing aging or confusing signs that do not match ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) or commercial sign standards. Signs should always be placed in prominent places and at eye level.

### Safety Signs

Less regularly evaluated are signs that convey safety or policy information to protect building users and visitors. Examples include signs that communicate the locations of fire exits, fire extinguishers, stairs, electric panels, maintenance areas, and the address of the facility for emergency workers. For more information about the types of safety signs that your congregation should post and maintain, contact your local fire, sheriff or municipal government office.

### Signs Show the Way

As a congregation considers what signs to post inside and outside their facility, it should always be aware that signs are important components of building design and are critical to making a good first impression on visitors. Without legible and helpful signs, visitors and users may have



difficulty navigating and using a facility.

Additional considerations include:

- Is the church's main marquee or business sign easy to read by passing traffic (car and pedestrian)?
- What lighting is needed for signs at night?
- Can signs be easily identified by having a consistent theme and style?
- Can visitors easily understand the message of the sign and do they match standard signs found in other commercial buildings like hotels, restaurants and businesses?
- Do specific programs, like a day-care, food ministry or outreach program, require special signs for navigation and safety?
- Are the hours of operation and emergency contact information easily found throughout the facility?
- Since other elements of the facility, such as a steeple, help convey a message about your congregation, are they easily visible, well maintained and do they communicate the mission and culture of your church?

**For more information about signage, please contact  
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