

Hotel/Motel Ministry

Florida Baptist Convention

“Come unto me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt. 11:28-29, NIV).

A hotel/motel ministry is a body of believers meeting the spiritual, physical, and social needs of guests, employees and management in hotels and motels primarily located in or near a resort or leisure setting.

Why Minister?

A Christian presence in the motel setting helps to provide a sense of conscience for travelers and employees alike. Crisis is not unknown in this setting. A caring church provides a place of response to crisis situations. The traveler seeks ways to fill his time with meaningful activity; the responsive church is present with the message of Christ. Where people gather, the good news needs to be shared.

Relating in the World

As in every area of life, relationships are important in the leisure setting. The Christian must take the initiative to build meaningful relationships here. A balanced relationship with hotel personnel will open doors to ministries and build good relations between the church and community.

As you approach management, relate to *their* needs. Seek to gain an understanding of their goals and offer to help meet these through the services you can provide to guests and employees. Avoid “churchy” language and spiritual cliches; speak their language so that a clear understanding exists. For example, offer a children’s day camp rather than Backyard Bible Clubs or a service rather than a ministry. Make a list of “church words” and translate them into everyday language. Be honest, but in the language they will understand. Be accepting, courteous, and appreciative. Remember Christ’s admonition to “love your neighbor as yourself.”

Steps in Beginning:

- Elect a person, committee, or organization in the church to take leadership in this ministry.
- Survey the motels and hotels in your area noting size, location, and amenities offered at each.
- Talk with motel management to inquire if any type of service is being provided for employees or guests. Ask what needs he or she senses at the facility.
- Meet with the committee to brainstorm ideas for ministries to meet the needs.
- Determine material, financial, and personnel resources needed to carry out the ministry.
- Write a ministry proposal describing the name of the project, to whom it is directed, time allotment, and responsibilities of the motel management and the church.

- Make a personal visit with management to share the project proposal. Be sure to contact two-to-three months prior to the starting date for the ministry project.
- Recruit and train volunteers for the ministry project. Include witness training. Provide a list of Do's and Don't's for the ministry.
- Promote the ministry project at the hotel or motel with fliers at the front desk, a nicely designed poster in a location suggested by the management (this may be put on a tripod the day before the event) and through word of mouth. Promotional materials should reflect quality, telling what, where, when, and by whom.
- Carry out the ministry project as planned. Provide supervision for the volunteers. Do everything that was promised to the management. Be flexible and always maintain a positive attitude.
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the ministry project. Ask for feedback from the management and volunteers. Follow-up on any professions of faith or recommitments to Christ.
- Write thank you notes to volunteers and management.
- Make plans for the next ministry project.

Meeting the Needs

Chaplain-on-Call

Provide a trained (and certified, if possible) volunteer chaplain (may be a layperson) to be on call in the event of an emergency. Provide business cards or 5" x 7" fliers with name and phone number. The motel will usually print these to be placed in each room. Communicate that the chaplain is available to both guests and employees.

Recreation

Structured activities for children, youth, or the family may be provided one day per week during the busiest season. The activity should begin with announcing the sponsoring church and giving a one- or two-minute object lesson relating some aspect of the game to the Christian life. Following the activity, church members should initiate conversations with participants in an effort to share their faith.

Day Camp

One-to-three days each week during the busiest season provide a children's daycamp program for two-to-three hours. The camp should be kept on hotel or motel property and be for guests only. Each camp should include games, crafts, nature lesson, music, and a Bible story. The children should always have something to take with them to show their parents.

Entertainment

Once each week in the evening provide family entertainment around the pool. Use puppets, clowns, illusion, and music. Performances should be quality and 20-30 minutes in length. At the beginning announce where the group is from, what to expect, and length of performance. The content of the program should be a mix of humor, patriotism, and

spiritual encouragement. Select pieces that are familiar to the audience. Following the event, church members should initiate conversations with members of the audience.

Worship

Begin a satellite worship center at the motel site. The service should be accessible, possibly outdoors by the pool. The time for the service will vary but 8:00 or 8:30 a.m. is recommended. The length should be 30-45 minutes. The service should include hymns/choruses, welcome, prayer, scripture reading, and devotional. Audience participation is encouraged through responsive readings, testimonies, or saying the Lord's Prayer together. The devotional content should focus on the Christian life. Provide song sheets and Bibles. Do not solicit an offering. Give an invitation for individual counseling rather than an altar call. The service must be nondenominational in nature.

Child Care

Offer a Parents' Night Out by caring for toddlers and children. Utilize preschool and children's Sunday School materials to provide a learning atmosphere. The church nursery may be utilized if located near the motel or hotel. A minimal charge/child (rather than per hour) may be requested to cover expenses for materials and refreshments. Set a specific time for the services, for example 6:00-9:00 p.m. on Fridays.

Information Guide

Provide a brochure for the motel rack with information on your church or churches in the association. The brochure should give the name of the church, full address, phone number, times of services and any special events—such as an Easter pageant or specific ministries offered by the church. If the brochure is for one church, include a map with directions on the back. Communicate that everyone is welcome. Always place a scripture verse on the brochure.

Transportation

Provide a shuttle service from the hotel or motel to the church for Sunday morning services and for special events at the church musicals, plays, etc. Be sure the pick-up time, return time, and location is well advertised.

Counseling

Provide free counseling services one day each week for motel employees. Schedule according to the changing shifts. For example, most new shifts arrive at 3:00 p.m., so the counseling may be from 1:30-4:30 p.m. A conference room or empty office at the motel should be set aside for this purpose.

Employee Devotionals

Provide two 15-minute devotionals for employees on Sundays prior to and after a shift change. For example, if shifts change at 3:00 p.m., the devotional may be at 2:40 and 3:10. The devotional may include introductions, a time to express prayer concerns, instruction from the scripture on living a Christian life and closing song. Provide refreshments free of charge. A donation cup may be made available if necessary. Do not solicit funds. Always conclude on time. This should never interfere with the employees' work schedule.

Evangelism

The heart of leisure missions is evangelism. The leisure setting is secular. People's understanding of reality is what they can see and touch. Leisure evangelism is communicating the message of the gospel in common language to secular society. This requires an understanding of the hearer's thought patterns. Our words are interpreted according to his existing frame of reference.

Leisure evangelism involves being sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and earning the right to be heard. Tourists or hotel employees must realize that we as Christians care before they will be open to the gospel. Personal openness, common interests, and a listening ear help build trust in relationships.

The first step in building a witnessing relationship is to be friendly and sincerely care. Secondly, the Christian must be at ease or "laid back." Next, the Christian should listen to where the person is coming from—what do they believe and why? Once we have taken time to truly listen, the right to be heard has been earned. Then with a balance between urgency and sensitivity, the Christian shares his personal testimony. The task is to get the gospel to all who do not know Christ, recognizing not every person is at the same level of preparedness. In obedience, we share the gospel, and the outcome is left to God.

Summary

Prayerfully determine available resources and immediate needs in the setting. Do not be afraid to start small. It is of utmost importance that integrity is *always* maintained. Whatever is promised must be fulfilled. Be careful to find the balance of *all* that can be done and done *well*. Good planning is a key to success. Be overprepared, anticipating all that might occur. Remember, limitations exist only in lack of imagination and creativity. Pray for open eyes to see—then do it.

"Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you'" (John 20:21, NIV).\

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