



# Week of Compassion



## WE ARE ONE

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The Week of Compassion Special Offering is **FEB 16-23, 2014**

## When Hospitality Becomes Counter-cultural

*Michael T. Dunn is Senior Pastor at First Christian Church, Houston, Texas. He offers this reflection on how their congregation integrates Week of Compassion into their ministry of Hospitality. For more of Michael's reflections on church, life, and all things Houston, visit [www.vitalpastor.blogspot.com](http://www.vitalpastor.blogspot.com)*



In 2009, we started tracking how many families came to FCC, Houston, Texas, for the first time in a year who were in search of a home church. Last year we asked an additional question: *How do we best follow up with each new guest?* I read, asked lots of questions of colleagues, and thought about our context and what kind of follow up would turn a first time guest into a second time friend. Then, because we have a top-notch staff, I brought it up during a staff meeting.

I lined my plan all up, rolled it out and sought their feedback.

My idea was to be diligent in sending a welcome email each Monday morning with a heartfelt thank you for coming, inviting them back to the next message in the series and requesting that they respond to an online survey of four questions, the last of which asked what we could pray for in their life.

I felt that was pretty standard fare and *the least* we should be doing. Then I suggested as part of the regular pattern of follow up that we send each visitor a \$5 Starbucks gift card, which they would receive on Thursday of that same week. *Brilliant!* A lot of the "growing" churches do this, so it must be a good thing, right?

I hadn't even finished explaining my idea before the ministry staff pushed back. After a few times of hearing myself say, "No. This will be good. People will love it! This is what all the big churches are doing," I started listening to what they were saying. It was clear to them that a gift card smacked of consumerism, and the question they were asking me had to do with which story we wanted to tell newcomers trying to get to know us. Was Christ about consumerism? Or was Christ about giving of oneself. Is Discipleship about what I can get out of it—or is it about the “least of these”?

Our brilliant staff suggested we send something that showed what was truly important to us. So we implemented something else: On the Thursday after someone's first visit, we send a letter that says we made a \$5 contribution to a local outreach center with whom we work, and include information about the organization. For every family who returns for another Sunday, we send them a letter letting them know we made a \$5 contribution to Week of Compassion.

Both together show what we are passionate about as a congregation: putting our Compassion into Action. So we run a little counter-cultural in the process, and aren't quite like “the big churches,” but that's okay—it's who we are that's important.

And who we're called to be.

If you would like to put your Compassion into Action, consider partnering with Week of Compassion (<https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/1441205>).

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