

## IT STARTS WITH A NAME

### Why Learning Names Is One of the Most Powerful Ministries in the Church

#### A Simple Truth We Often Overlook

There are few things more personal than hearing your name spoken with intention.

You can greet someone with a smile.

You can shake their hand.

You can say hello a dozen times.

But when you say someone's name, something changes.

Suddenly, they feel seen. Known. Remembered.

In the Church, this matters more than we often realize.

#### Why Names Matter

Learning someone's name may feel like a small thing, but in ministry, small things often carry the greatest weight.

Calling someone by name communicates:

- You matter here
- You are not invisible
- You belong

Jesus modeled this constantly. He did not just heal crowds. He called people by name. Zacchaeus. Mary. Martha. Peter. Names were not an afterthought. They were personal invitations into relationship.

If we want to build trust and community, it starts right here.

#### One Simple Moment Can Leave a Lasting Impact

When I was hired as a church secretary at just 19 years old, the chairman of the Staff Parish Committee gave me advice I have never forgotten.

He said, "Learn people's names. Anyone can say hello. But when you call someone by name, especially outside the church, it is something they will never forget."

He was right.

Years later, I was out shopping when I recognized a woman I had never met in person. I knew her name from church records and photos. I took a chance and said, “You do not know me, but I work at the church.”

She smiled and said, “Thank you. I did not think you would know my name.”

That moment cost nothing, but it meant everything.

### Practical Ways to Learn Names

You do not have to be outgoing or have a perfect memory to do this well.

Here are simple, realistic ways church staff and volunteers can learn names:

- Use church directories with photos when possible
- Study new member lists intentionally
- Repeat names out loud when you meet someone
- Associate names with details like family or where they sit
- Do not be afraid to ask again politely and honestly

“I am sorry, remind me of your name again. I really want to get it right.”

That sentence builds trust, not offense.

### What to Do When You Forget a Name

It happens. To all of us.

What matters is how we handle it.

Instead of avoiding the person, be honest, be kind, and be human.

Try this:

“I know we have talked before, and I hate that I am blanking on your name. Can you remind me?”

Most people appreciate the effort far more than perfection.

## **Names Turn Visitors Into People**

For first time visitors, the church can feel overwhelming. They do not know where to go, who to talk to, or what is expected of them.

But when someone remembers their name, even once, it changes the experience.

A visitor becomes a face with a name.

A name with a story.

A person worth following up with.

This is how belonging begins.

### **A Reflection for Staff and Volunteers**

Ask yourself:

- Who do I see every week but do not really know
- Who might be waiting to feel noticed
- How can I be more intentional this week

You do not need a title to do this.

You do not need permission.

You just need to care.

Because in the Church, ministry does not always start at the altar.

Sometimes, it starts with a name.