

FREE RESOURCE — CHURCH STAFF BOOK CLUB

The Come Back Effect Actionable Toolkit

10 practical tools to build a hospitality culture that lasts. A companion to the book by Jonathan Malm & Jason Young.

How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit is not meant to be read or used once. Think of it as a reference you return to based on current challenges — volunteers, culture, guest experience, burnout, and more. **Progress over perfection.**

Each tool follows a simple rhythm: **Read → Reflect → Apply.** You don't need to work through the tools in order. Start where it hurts.

SOLO LEADER

Personal reflection + one tool at a time

STAFF TEAM

Discussion-based + shared ownership

VOLUNTEER TEAMS

Simplified tools + short conversations

The Shift: From task-completion to emotional impact.

Most teams are good at tasks. But we rarely pause to ask what guests actually *feel* because of those tasks. This tool helps your team move from "Did we execute?" to "How did that feel?"

STEP 1

Identify the Role

Choose 3–5 guest-facing roles to evaluate. Examples: Parking team, Greeters, Kids check-in, Worship host, Online host, Security.

STEP 2

Function Lens

For each role, answer: *What is the functional responsibility of this role?*

Example — Parking Team: Direct traffic safely · Maximize parking efficiency · Prevent bottlenecks

STEP 3

Feeling Lens

When a guest interacts with this role, what should they *feel*?

- Before the interaction, they might feel...
 - During the interaction, we want them to feel...
 - After the interaction, they should feel...
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STEP 4

Gap Question

Where are we over-performing function but under-delivering feeling? Circle one gap only. Examples: *Efficient but cold · Clear but rushed · Organized but impersonal*

STEP 5

Replace This Feeling With That Feeling

Complete this sentence: *"We unintentionally create _____. We want to create _____ instead."*

FACILITATION GUIDE

SOLO LEADER

Walk through one role you oversee. Ask: What emotional wake do we leave behind? Choose one emotional shift to focus on this month.

STAFF TEAM (45 MIN)

- Divide roles among small groups
- Each group reports: Function, Intended feeling, Gap
- Vote on one emotional "upgrade" per ministry

VOLUNTEER HUDDLE (15 MIN)

Pick one role. Ask: "What do guests probably feel before they meet us? What do we want them to feel instead?"

WHAT GOOD OUTPUT LOOKS LIKE

NOT THIS

"Be more welcoming."

BUT THIS

"Parking team will smile before signaling." ·
"Greeters will use first names." · "Kids check-in will kneel to the child's eye level."

The Shift: From insider comfort to outsider clarity.

If hospitality lives in one department, it eventually dies there. This tool helps you see whether hospitality is truly embedded — or unintentionally siloed.

STEP 1

Draw the Map

On a whiteboard, write HOSPITALITY. Draw branches to: Worship, Kids, Students, Production, Facilities, Communications, Safety/Security, Administration, Online.

STEP 2

Fill the Map

For each department: *What does hospitality look like here?*

Examples — Production: mic checks done early, volume guest-friendly. Communications: website clarity, no insider language. Facilities: clean bathrooms, clear signage.

STEP 3

Silo Question

Ask: "Where have we unintentionally outsourced hospitality?" Listen carefully.

STEP 4

Define Shared Behaviors

Create 3 organization-wide behaviors. Examples: Make eye contact · Anticipate confusion · Solve problems without escalation. These become cultural anchors.

WHAT GOOD OUTPUT LOOKS LIKE

NOT THIS

"That's Guest Services' job."

BUT THIS

"How does this feel for a guest?" — spoken by anyone, in any department.

The Shift: From acceptable to intentional.

Demographics tell you who shows up. Psychographics tell you what they're afraid of when they walk through your doors. This tool slows you down long enough to build empathy, not assumptions.

STEP 1

Choose a Real Guest

Think of: a first-time visitor last month · a hesitant returning guest · someone who left and hasn't come back.

STEP 2

Build the Profile

- They are probably **thinking**...
 - They are probably **feeling**...
 - They might be **afraid that**...
 - They **hope that**...
 - They **don't understand**...
 - They **assume** about the church...
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STEP 3

Emotional Hurdle Identification

Circle the top 3 emotional barriers. Examples: Fear of being judged · Fear of being pressured · Fear of being asked for money · Fear kids won't be safe.

STEP 4

Design Against Fear

- What do we currently do that *increases* this fear?
- What do we do that *decreases* it?
- What small shift could further reduce this fear?

The Shift: From being physically available to being emotionally present.

Most volunteers show up. The issue is distraction. Mental clutter. Guests can feel that even when no one says a word. This tool helps you reset presence before it leaks into the experience.

PART 1

Personal Presence Inventory (5–7 min)

Have leaders/volunteers answer privately:

- My mind is mostly on: Today's responsibilities · Something earlier · Something after · The people in front of me
- My emotional state is: Calm · Rushed · Irritated · Tired · Distracted · Engaged
- I feel fully available to people today — Scale 1–5
- What is one distraction competing for my presence right now?

PART 2

The Presence Reset (2–3 min huddle)

Before doors open, ask: (1) What might our guests be carrying today? (2) What do we need to lay down to show up well? (3) Who needs extra encouragement on the team?

"For the next 90 minutes, the people in front of us are the priority."

PART 3

After-Service Reflection

- Where did I feel fully engaged?
- Where did I go into autopilot?
- Who did I almost miss?

WHAT GOOD OUTPUT LOOKS LIKE

- Fewer phone-checking moments
- More eye contact
- Less frantic tone

- More intentional pauses

Tool 5

Scene-by-Scene Experience Walkthrough

Chapter 5: Think Scene by Scene

The Shift: From managing departments to designing a story.

Guests don't experience your church in org charts. They experience it as a sequence of moments. If even one scene breaks down, the story feels disjointed.

STEP 1

Identify the Scenes

Online discovery · Pre-arrival · Parking lot · Entry · Lobby · Kids check-in · Worship space · Transitions · Message · After service · Exit · Follow-up communication

STEP 2

For Each Scene, Ask 4 Questions

1. What is happening functionally?
 2. What should guests feel here?
 3. What do they probably feel now?
 4. What could break the story in this scene?
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STEP 3

Emotional High/Low Mapping

Draw a simple line graph on a whiteboard. Have the team mark: Emotional highs · Emotional confusion points · Emotional drop-offs.

STEP 4

Assign Ownership

For each scene: Who owns this *emotionally*? Not just functionally. Ownership creates consistency.

The Shift: From protecting reputation to building trust.

Things will go wrong. Recovery often builds more trust than perfection ever could. This tool prepares your team before pressure hits.

PART 1

Identify Common Failure Points

List likely breakdowns. Examples: Kids check-in line too long · Guest can't find restroom · Parking confusion · Tech failure · Volunteer gives wrong info · Guest feels ignored. Pick 5 realistic ones.

PART 2

Response Framework

For each scenario: (1) What NOT to say (2) What TO say (3) What action follows (4) Who owns the resolution?

KIDS CHECK-IN DELAY — DON'T SAY

"We're short volunteers."

DO SAY

"I'm so sorry for the wait — we'll get you through quickly."

PART 3

The 3-Step Recovery Model

1. **Acknowledge**
2. **Apologize**
3. **Act**

No defensiveness. No explaining first.

PART 4

Post-Incident Reflection

- What happened?
- How did we respond?

- Did the guest leave feeling dismissed or cared for?
- What system change prevents a repeat?

Tool 7

Everything Communicates Checklist

Chapter 7: Observe Details, Because Everything Communicates

The Shift: From assuming excellence to intentionally noticing details.

When you see your space every week, you stop seeing it. What becomes normal to you may quietly communicate something very different to a guest. This tool helps you see again.

PART 1

The Silent Walk (No Fixing Allowed)

Walk through your church as if it's your first experience. **Do not fix anything yet.** No clipboards visible to volunteers. No correcting during the walk. No defending what you see.

Use the Church Detail Walk Checklist (available separately in downloads).

PART 2

What This Scene Communicates

For each major scene, ask: What are we *unintentionally* communicating? Where are we saying "You belong"? Where might we be saying "You'll figure it out"?

PART 3

The 3-Bucket Debrief

- **Affirm** — What we're doing well
- **Adjust** — What needs refining
- **Address Immediately** — What cannot stay as-is (limit to 1-2 items)

PART 4

The Emotional Upgrade Question

Ask: *If we could change one detail that would dramatically increase dignity for guests, what would it be?* Focus on: clear signage · cleaner restrooms · warmer tone · clearer next steps · better lighting.

The Shift: From internal language to guest-centered language.

PART 1

Name the "Just Okay" Zones

Ask each department: Where are we consistently functional but forgettable? Fine, but not thoughtful? Acceptable but not compelling? Examples: follow-up email, volunteer training, signage, service dismissal, coffee station.

PART 2

Stop / Fix / Elevate Matrix

Draw three columns. Limit each team to 1 Stop, 1 Fix, 1 Elevate. Constraint forces clarity.

STOP

What should we stop entirely?

FIX

What needs improvement?

ELEVATE

What's good and worth making great?

PART 3

The Emotional Return Filter

For each idea ask: *If we improve this, will it meaningfully increase emotional impact?* If the answer is no, it's not a priority. We upgrade for emotional clarity, not aesthetics.

PART 4

30–60–90 Day Plan

For each priority assign: Owner · Budget (if any) · Timeline · Measurable shift

The Shift: From filling positions to cultivating emotional tone.

PART 1

Clarify Top 3 Hospitality Values

Have leadership define 3 guiding values. Examples: Dignity · Clarity · Calm · Generosity · Flexible · Presence. Keep it simple.

PART 2

The Real-Life Scenario Exercise

Present scenarios and ask: (1) What does policy say? (2) What do our values say? (3) If we lead with values, what do we choose?

- A guest shows up late and asks to sit mid-row
 - A parent forgot their ID for child pickup
 - A homeless individual lingers in the lobby
 - A guest interrupts service with a question
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PART 3

The Empowerment Statement

"If you choose dignity, clarity, and calm, you have our support."

This permits volunteers to act within guardrails.

PART 4

Decision Debrief Habit

After tough moments: Did we protect policy but violate value? Did we uphold value but neglect safety? What adjustment is needed? No blame. Just learning.

WHAT GOOD OUTPUT LOOKS LIKE

- Fewer escalations
- Less "let me get my supervisor"
- More confident volunteers

- Consistent emotional tone

The Shift: From running services to shaping stories.

You are not just organizing weekends. You are influencing lives. This tool helps your team connect tasks to meaning.

PART 1

Identify High-Impact Moments

Where does emotion peak? Examples: First-time kids check-in · Baptism Sundays · Guest follow-up call · Prayer response moment · First volunteer onboarding. Choose 2–3.

PART 2

Multiply the Meaning

- What does this moment mean to the guest?
- What does this mean long-term?
- How can we amplify dignity here?

FIRST-TIME KIDS CHECK-IN — INSTEAD OF

Sticker and hallway point.

UPGRADE

Handwritten note to parents next week.
Follow-up email addressing their child by name.

PART 3

Volunteer Connection

Ask volunteers: *Why does this moment matter?* When volunteers articulate meaning, burnout decreases.

PART 4

The Legacy Question

Ask leadership: *If this moment went exceptionally well for a year straight, what stories would we hear?*
Design toward the stories you want told.

Chapter-by-Chapter Leader Guide

For staff and team leaders who want to use The Come Back Effect as a shared discussion framework. Each chapter below includes a leader outcome — the shift you want to see in your team.

CHAPTER 1

Focus on Feeling as Much as Function

Help teams articulate how they want guests — and teammates — to feel.

CHAPTER 2

Create a Culture, Not a Job Title

Move teams away from "that's not my job" toward shared hospitality language.

CHAPTER 3

Know the Guest

Help teams shift from assumptions to empathy and observation.

CHAPTER 4

Be Fully Present

Increase self-awareness and reduce distracted leadership.

CHAPTER 5

Think Scene by Scene

Help teams identify where the story breaks down — and where it shines.

CHAPTER 6

Recover Quickly

Build confidence by normalizing recovery instead of perfection.

CHAPTER 7

Observe Details

Help teams see what guests experience that insiders often overlook.

CHAPTER 8

Reject "Just Okay"

Create shared clarity around what "good enough" actually means.

CHAPTER 9

Choose Values Over Policies

Empower teams to make better decisions without always asking permission.

CHAPTER 10

Reach for Significance

Reconnect volunteers and staff to why their role matters.

Recommended rhythm: Read the chapter → Reflect individually → Discuss together → Apply one tool → Revisit the following week.