

Include every church member, of every age, in building the church; everyone is necessary!

1 Corinthians 12:18-21 – But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"

Because the congregation functions as a family in the first place (and not as a company), it is essential that every person:

1. Can feel at home
2. Is needed

These two factors are related and they influence each other.

Some things to look out for with regards to the first point:

Pay attention to everyone in the church service; from the youngest to the oldest, from the strongest to the weakest, from the dedicated enthusiast to the introverted doubter. How do you do that?

1. Make contact with everyone, not just with your own comfortable little group. Sit with the elderly, play on the floor with the children, talk with teenagers about their cell phones, visit people who stay at home or are ill, invite single people, etc.
2. Manage your church service so that there is something for everyone (regularly). For example: add children songs, a Bible story for children, a catchy YouTube video for teenagers, old hymns, a play, beautiful calm rituals etc. Use your creativity to show that everyone matters! You can also ask the church members what their needs are in the church service.
3. When you preach, make sure you address different age groups and situations. You don't have to do this in every sermon of course, but regularly.
4. Teach your church members that everyone belongs and that this requires mutual love, adjustment and respect. Teach your church members that they are not consumers, but a family with responsibilities towards each other.

5. Whenever possible, take into account the weaknesses of different groups. Older people can have a problem with too much noise or loud sounds. And children are getting restless when the service goes on endlessly. Talk with each other about how you can pay attention to each other and what the weaknesses are in your congregation.
6. You can also split different groups during the service and have different services for them. This can be a good solution occasionally, but when you do this every week, you run the risk that members lose their feeling of belonging to a family, don't learn to adjust and start acting more like consumers.

How can you improve the second point; that the church members know they are needed:

1. Show appreciation for the strong points of the person and ensure him/her that this makes a difference to you and to the congregation. That can be as simple as making a comment to a child: "You are so happy, you make me so happy as well! I'm so glad you're here!" Or to an older person: "I can sit quietly with you, I love that!"
2. Invite everyone to help. Ask people personally as well. You can ask them for small things, like collecting money or doing an intercession prayer. Make clear that many hands make light work. Set the right example as leadership team in this.
3. Give everyone the freedom whether to help or not; when people have the feeling they are pressured, it will of course have the opposite effect.
4. Try to find out what the talents and strong points of everybody are. Even when people don't have much experience and are at the beginning of their development, it's good to give them the opportunity to use their talents. Explain your goal; that you don't have to be perfect before you can do something. We are all on the way.
5. Make clear that "being necessary" is not in the first place about "doing your duty", but in the first place about *who we are*. Just like a family is not complete when a family member is missing, so it works in the congregation.

Questions:

1. Which different kinds of groups are there in your congregation?

2. Are these different groups paid attention to? What is being done?
Could some things be done better?
3. Do you feel like everyone is feeling at home in your congregation?
4. Do you want to make some improvements to make everyone feel at home? How?
5. Who are doing the work in your congregation?
6. Does everyone feel involved to participate? If not, why do you think this is and how can you do something about it?
7. Do you have the feeling you have to be very good before you can do the task? Is there something you would like to do, but you think you may not be good enough to do it?
8. Do you feel you are needed for *who* you are in your congregation?