



HARVEST CHURCH
ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN

FAMILY VISITATION AT HARVEST OPC

"You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house." Acts 20:20

WHAT IS FAMILY VISITATION?

Family visitation is an important ministry of the Session in which the elders visit the members and families of the church in their homes. In order to help you understand what to expect and how to prepare, here is some information about in-home shepherding visits.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE VISIT?

- To develop the spiritual life of the members.
- To challenge the lives of believers to service and witness.
- To promote the communion of the saints.
- To encourage the believers in the church's worship and the means of grace.
- To build confidence in the authoritative, prayerful, and instructive care of the elders called by our Lord to shepherd his sheep.

WHO WILL TAKE PART IN THE VISIT?

Your shepherding group elder will visit you, accompanied by another elder, deacon, or pastoral intern, if appropriate. They are interested in all the members of your covenant home and ask that every member of your family be present.

WHEN WILL WE BE VISITED?

A couple of weeks in advance, your shepherding elder will call to set a date and time for a visit. The elders strive to visit each family once a year.



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FAMILY VISITATION IS...

BIBLICAL The Apostle Paul describes his ministry: "You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house" (Acts 20:20).

OFFICIAL Your elders are lawfully elected, ordained, and installed "to keep watch over themselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made them overseers," and to be "shepherds of the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). They are accountable to Christ (Heb. 13:17).

PASTORAL The elders come as shepherds, quite literally representing the Chief Shepherd, who is deeply concerned for all of our needs (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:2,4; Heb. 4:14-16). Family visitation is not primarily "social" but "pastoral".

PRAYERFUL Your elders are called to pray for you (Acts 6:4; James 5:16), and they do so throughout the year. Be ready to make particular requests for their prayer for you. They also desire your prayers for them (1 Tim. 2: 1,2; Eph. 6:18,19).

EDIFYING The elders take seriously the mandate of Scripture that we are to be "speaking the truth in love ...what is helpful for building others up," to "strive after" and to "work hard to attain" peace with all men (Mat. 5:23-24; Eph. 4:15, 25-32; Heb 12:14-15; Jam. 3:1ff). Family visitation gives you opportunity to express your encouragements and concerns to the Session.

REGULAR The elder who oversees your shepherding group views this visit as an important part of his responsibilities, and is committed to visiting you once each year (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:14).

A TYPICAL FAMILY VISIT

- Scripture Reading and Prayer
- Discussion of Personal and Family Matters
- Discussion of Church Matters
- Questions for the Elders
- Closing Prayer



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SAMPLE DISCUSSION TOPICS

PERSONAL AND FAMILY MATTERS

- In what specific areas have you grown in your understanding and practice of Christianity this past year? In what areas have you been disappointed?
- Do you personally and regularly read the Bible and pray? Do you do so also as a family?
- What have you found helpful for devotions?
- What encouragements do you find in the life and ministry of the church for you personally? As a parent? As a family?
- Are there any areas of need in your life or in your family's life of which you would want the elders or deacons to be aware?
- What has helped you to be a more faithful witness to Jesus Christ? What has prevented you?
- Do you believe you and your family understand what we call the "Reformed Faith"?

CHURCH MATTERS

- Are you faithfully participating in the worship services and the sacraments?
- Are you participating in the church's ministry of education, mercy, and fellowship as one who serves as well as benefits?
- Are there some areas in the church's life where you have a desire to serve or participate but do not at present?
- Are there areas of need in the church's life or ministry of which you believe the elders or deacons should be aware?
- Do you have suggestions for subjects or passages of Scripture for sermons or lessons in Sunday School or Bible studies?



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PREPARATION FOR FAMILY VISITATION

Feel free to jot down ideas in advance of the visit

Encouragements and Concerns to Discuss with the Visiting Elder:

Questions to Ask the Visiting Elder:

Prayer Requests for the Visiting Elder:

Prayer for the Pastor and Elders:

Other Thoughts for the Visit:



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