

Helpful Tips for Smiles

(These tips accompany “Smiles at St. Peter” at <http://www.theequipper.org/profiles/smiles.asp>)

Logistically

Barb and her team have three project areas firmly established: photography, coordination (Barb), and implementation (running the slide show). Barb is working on a fourth (a photo database) and is looking for a volunteer to organize and tag all the slides they have used.

- **Tip:** Barb wants to eventually have a team of nine people (two for each service, alternating weeks, and a substitute) who will work out scheduling among themselves. It’s also easy for people to cover for the volunteer doing the next service, because they just need to stay 15 minutes longer.
- **Tip:** If other churches replicate *Smiles* and have staff or volunteers already in place to run AV equipment for church services, additional *Smiles* volunteers may not be necessary. At Saint Peter, volunteers are needed to run the slide show through a computer in the balcony. Ushers raise and lower a screen behind the altar. Barb points out that “technology is going to make this project easier and easier. In new churches, all this is going to be incorporated already.”

Barb spends about an hour each week on the slide show. New photos go in, some old ones go out. It’s an art; some photos have been used since day one, others are obviously seasonal. Barb collaborates with one of the staff at Saint Peter, though it can be done solo.

- **Tip:** Barb uses Microsoft Powerpoint, one of many software programs available. Barb recommends showing each photo for three seconds. The number of photos can vary, though Barb has found approximately 60 to be optimal. They have used as few as 52 photos and as many as 68. Their presentation “loops” a few times so people can see photos they may have missed the first time through.
- **Tip:** Getting people to send in photographs was one thing. The “how” was another. At Saint Peter, the church and school “shared” drives weren’t compatible, so they learned that teachers need to give photos to Barb on portable USB drives. Some people can easily burn photos onto CDs, others don’t know how. One photo can be e-mailed. It’s harder to e-mail 20. Barb says that “though it was a job getting the original slide show in order, now it’s easier to keep up with the new ones.”

Decisions

Saint Peter found that there were some timing and editorial decisions to make. Barb definitely wants the slide show stopped, and the screen down, before the service actually starts so that people can see the stained glass and to avoid distracting them from worship. At Saint Peter, they decided that *Smiles* would not be a forum for announcements or other information. In fact, the only “words” are uplifting smile quotes (seven words or less) which she found using Google. She recently made an exception for a very special reason. Saint Peter is featuring guest preachers monthly for their 150th anniversary year. These guests will be “named” in the slide show.

