

IMAGINE IF YOU WILL . . .

How do visitors perceive us? Do we always come across the way we intend to?

Consider the following scenario:

You are visiting Xenos with a friend for the first time. You have brought along your two children, ages 6 months and 2½ years.

You walk in the lobby and are handed a map describing the location of your children's classrooms. Your friend helps you determine the infant nursery first and you make your way to the room. "We're not taking any children for the next meeting," says the woman behind the counter. "The workers aren't here yet. Come back in a few minutes."

Your friend leads you to the next room, both children still in tow. There are two people in this room, but neither seems to know the check-in system. As they fumble to figure it out, you notice a piece of tape on a child's back that proclaims "I BITE". There is a cup of hot coffee on the counter, and your 6 month old grabs for it. It teeters but doesn't spill, as the worker lifts your crying 2½ year old over the gate and passes you a tag. "Don't worry, he'll stop crying in a minute," the worker says as he puts the child on the slide and turns to the next parent.

Back to the 0-6 month nursery, a worker has finally arrived. "Is your child crawling yet?" she asks. "Yes," you say, "just a little." "Well, we can't take her in here! You'll need to go next door."

Next door, the woman is very friendly checking your child in, and there are quite a few workers in the room. Your ears tune in to the conversation in the back of the room - "Yeah, I guess they're checking out other churches. They are really just running from the Lord, if you ask me." "Too bad, they always did have that sin issue!" Another worker is blowing her nose, complaining how tired she's been feeling. The woman at the counter hands you a pager and tells you that you will be paged if your child needs you.

So you ask yourself:

- Will I get paged if my child needs me?
- Am I comfortable with the care I perceive my children will receive?
- Will I be able to concentrate on the teaching?
- Do I think I'll be back? How much will the quality of the teaching be a factor in my decision?
- What might have happened differently to improve my experience?

--Jeannie Seabrook