

Should churches be more like Starbucks?

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My local Starbucks—and probably yours too—has a large sign on each door that proclaims, "Take comfort in rituals." When I'm being cynical, I read it as a multinational company preying on our cultural longing for meaning by suggesting we can buy happiness with a \$4 cup of coffee.

But when you know at least six local Starbucks employees, it's harder to be cynical once you're through the door, especially when they greet you by name, ask how your day is going and even give you free drinks from time to time just because. . .well, just because. As Beau Weston [observes](#), these Starbucks employees are at least acquaintances if not on the way to being friends.

So maybe we in the church could move on from our cynical first reactions and take Starbucks's advice and run with it.

Starbucks seeks to be a welcoming place where community can thrive. A Friday business meeting or sermon-writing time can be especially enjoyable at a coffee shop. Book groups meet at our local coffee shop, as does a knitting group, bicycle club and countless university study groups.

There are plenty of rituals in our congregations too, but many of them fail to welcome as well as some coffee shops. Do our churches judge visitors before they walk in the door? Do our congregations offer rituals that feed and connect to the present day or ones that merely echo past significance?

Are we seeking to make new rituals in our sacred places of worship, welcoming folks by name, hosting groups, sharing free meals? Or are we selling God short?