

A Liturgy of Belonging

The following liturgy has been created to provide an opportunity to formally bring persons into the church as members during a worship service outside of a Bishop's visitation for confirmation and reception. It can be adapted to include key phrases from the congregation's core value or mission statements in order to make it very relevant to the particular church. Other adaptations could be used such as having long standing congregational members say the parts that are "Rector to the New Members". The best place to utilize it during the service is after the Prayers of the People and before the Exchange of the Peace. It is recommended that the new members come forward and face the congregation before the liturgy begins. The origins of this liturgy are Episcopal but unknown. This version came from Good Shepherd Episcopal Church in Friendswood, Texas.

Rector:

We now welcome these persons who wish to join with this body of Christ, the people of _____ Episcopal Church.

Rector to the Congregation:

I introduce to you... (names of the persons)

Rector to the New Members:

Dear Friends, I introduce to you the people of _____ Episcopal Church. Is it your wish to make this community of faith, (name of the church), your church family, and the people with whom you will share your journey of faith? Is this the place and are these the people with whom you will seek to make sense of the issues of your life; your dreams, your faith, who you are, what you are to do, who God calls you to be?

Is it your wish to make this the place where you continue your journey into greater health and wholeness; where you listen to the story of God's salvation and the Good News of Jesus Christ, allowing Jesus to be an example and teacher to you, where you are called to a life of ministry and justice; and where you are fed at the table of new life?

New Members: Yes, that is my wish.

Rector to New Members:

Will you commit yourself to seek and serve Christ in union with this community of faith?

New Members: I will, with God's help.

Rector to New Members:

Will you pledge your spiritual, social and financial support to this parish family?

New Members: I will, with God's help.

Rector to the congregation:

Will you who are members of this faith community who are witnessing these promises, share the joys and sorrows, and do all in your power to support these persons in their life in Christ:

Congregation: We will.

Rector to the congregation:

Will you welcome (name/s) into this family of (church name), embrace their gifts, their needs, and their dreams? Will you recognize that their presence and participation will change the shape of the body and help it grow in new ways? Will you support them in their journeys, and assist them in their ministries?

Congregation: Yes! Yes! Yes!

Everyone:

Loving God, send your Holy Spirit to be among us, knitting us one to another. Help us to grow with each other, to love each other, to support each other. That by our common life in this community we may come to know and serve you and all our sisters and brothers, in Jesus name, we pray.

Rector:

As rector of this parish, and speaking for the entire congregation, I welcome each of you as active members in the body of (church's name). May the Holy Spirit be with us all now and always.

AMEN