




Invite • Welcome • Connect

Newcomer
Ministry
Project



As followers of Jesus Christ, we are **One Church within the Anglican Communion and The Episcopal Church. All are sought and embraced in worship, mission and ministry in a spirit of mutual love and respect.**
Vision Statement, The Episcopal Diocese of Texas

As a response to the Vision and Mission of the Diocese of Texas, a newcomer ministry project was initiated in the spring of 2010. Assessment tools for systematic, intentional structures of invitation, welcome, and connection were researched, designed, and implemented in four pilot congregations. In addition, ongoing consultation with these churches provided accountability for progress and data collection to measure the results of this new work.

Specifically designed with clergy, vestries, staff and congregational leadership in mind, the primary objective of the newcomer ministry project is the creation of a tangible, transportable product supporting the development of effective newcomer ministry. This product includes assessment tools for newcomer ministry, and information about systems and processes for congregations of various sizes, creative materials and concrete resources.

Inviting, welcoming and connecting persons into our congregations are vital steps toward building healthy and vibrant churches, and the Newcomer Ministry Project is one of the most important diocesan initiatives we have underway for this critical work of the church. **Over 75 congregations in the Diocese of Texas are currently using the newcomer ministry assessment tools, and positive, encouraging results have been reported.** Training for clergy, staff, and laity who are significantly involved in newcomer ministry is currently being offered at the Houston and Austin diocesan offices.

Project Vision Statement

Cultivating new practices of invitation, welcome, and connection that are rooted and grounded in the Gospel of Jesus Christ will gradually change our congregations and help shape an authentic culture of effective newcomer ministry.



Project Core Values

- 🌱 **Prayerful:** We pray that God will give us the hearts to reflect God's gracious invitation and welcome. It is not our table to which we welcome people—it is God's table!
- 🌱 **Intentional:** We must intentionally nurture a commitment to effective newcomer ministry.
- 🌱 **Relational:** Relational ministry is critical. The way to close the back door and empower folks for ministry at the same time is to be in relationship with them!
- 🌱 **Accountable:** We are accountable to God, the Gospel, and to each other. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. *Matthew 25:35*

The **challenge** for Episcopal congregations today centers on two key points:

- 🌱 **Complacency:** Complacency around newcomer ministry is our prevailing sin. We think of ourselves as a “friendly community” when in reality we are truly just a “community of friends.”
- 🌱 **Action:** At the end of the day...our actions speak louder than our words. It is not what we say, teach, or preach...it is what we do! At the end of the day...did we see Christ in the newcomers who walked in our doors? More importantly, did they see Christ in us?

Three Essential Elements of Newcomer Ministry

🌱 **Invite** a.k.a. Evangelism

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. *Matthew 28:19-20*


🌱 **Invitation** is not only about inviting people into a relationship with you and others in your congregation, but rather it is about inviting them into a relationship with God through Jesus.

🌱 People need a language with which to talk about their faith. We need to help them “spell Episcopalian with the alphabet of their own soul.”¹

🌱 **Welcome** a.k.a. Ministry of Hospitality

Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. *Romans 15:7*

🌱 **Welcoming** the stranger is welcoming Jesus. Jesus paid attention to what was going on around him and especially to those people he encountered on a daily basis. He modeled for us a new way of seeing the other -- the way of love, compassion, and forgiveness.



☝ Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place...We cannot force anyone to such a personal and intimate change of heart, but we can offer the space where such a change can take place. Henri Nouwen

☝ **Connect** a.k.a. Assimilation or ‘Closing the Back Door’

For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them. *Romans 12:4-6*

☝ **Connection** is giving meaning to membership, discovering the gifts of the people, and encouraging them in their journey of faith.

☝ Connection helps the newcomer answer these questions: Where do I fit in? Can I make friends in this church? Is there room for me relationally? Does this church need me? Can I find a place to belong and serve? Am I safe here? How can I live into my giftedness?

For more information and/or questions, contact [Mary Parmer](#), project consultant or [Mary MacGregor](#), director of evangelism & Congregational development.

★ The **Episcopal Dioceses of Texas**

¹Roy Oswald, Speed B. Leas. *The Inviting Church*, Alban Institute, 1987