



GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study

58 - October 2015

A Royal Welcome: Some Secrets of Belonging (Update VI)

A while ago, [GEMS #3 through #9 and #15 through #18](#) explored the role of welcome and hospitality within parish life as well as specifically in adult faith formation.

In [GEMS #46 through #48](#) and #56 and #57 we took another look at hospitality in several updates to the original series. This is the sixth of the Updates.


In this Update, we'll explore:

- A Few More Concluding Practices, Thoughts and Suggestions
- A Closing Challenge: Inviting Rather than Welcoming

The essence of hospitality is a heart open to God,
with room prepared for the Guestness of the Holy Spirit,
that welcomes the presence of Christ.
This is what we share with those
to whom we open our doors.
We give them him.

Karen Burton Mains

A Few More Practices, Thoughts and Suggestions

 **Hospitality For People.** Tod Bolsinger in his blog of [January 29, 2007](#) reflects on Danny Meyer's statement (above): "How much of church life is experienced by the average, ordinary person out there as 'to' instead of 'for' them? We do stuff 'to' people all the time. We preach to them, we sing to them, we make announcements to them. (Maybe worse, we do things 'at' them. If there is anything worse than 'to' ministry, it has got to be 'at' ministry.)

How much different would our ministry be received if everything we did was "for" ministry? My preaching professor said years ago ... 'We don't

preach to a people, we preach for them. We offer the word of God to give expression to the work of the Spirit at work within a community of faith.'

A Wondering GEM: What does hospitality "for" others, rather than "to" others look like? In our ministry of adult faith formation, might

- Ministry "to" others occur when we presume what the people need; when we plan programs/opportunities based on the topics we want to share
- Ministry "for" others take place when our gatherings and resources are a response to the needs of our parishioners

What would our parishes and (arch)dioceses look like if all of us (pastoral staffs, parish leadership, all parishioners) understood hospitality as "for" others; we're in this together – rather than "to" others?

Hospitality is present when something happens
for you.
It is absent when something happens
to you.
These two simple concepts – *for* and *to* – express it all.

Danny Meyer in *Setting the Table:
Transforming the Power of Hospitality in Business*



Continually evaluate and renew our theology of hospitality.

Let's look at five ways we might do this; the possibilities, though, are endless.

#1 ... In an article in *Catechetical Leader* (December 2011) reflecting on great Youth Ministry, Jane Angha, a Youth Ministry Services Project Coordinator for Young Neighbors in Action, suggests calling together many people (youth, parents, adult parishioners) to discuss what it means to be hospitable.

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Inviting them to take an inventory of how they're doing at being hospitable, Jane suggests the following questions. (They are, of course, geared toward youth ministry; they can be tweaked to focus on any specific group and/or everyone.)

- “What does it mean to be a welcoming person?”
- How am I at being welcoming or hospitable at home, church, school, and in the community?
- What keeps me from being a welcoming person?
- How does it feel to be welcomed?
- Whom do I welcome, and how do I show it?
- What happens when we don't welcome others?
- What happens if we do welcome people?
- What do I need to do to become a more welcoming person?
- What are the unique ways we can welcome youth?
- What will it take to make every teen feel welcome in our school or parish?
- Who and what is needed to meet the needs?
- Prioritize the list.
- Assign jobs and roles.
- Create job descriptions.
- Invite the group to recruit some others to make things happen.”

#2 ... See with new eyes. As often as possible, ask newcomers what obstacles they faced when they first came to the parish. Ask someone who isn't a member of your parish to try to navigate for a weekend and give you feedback.

#3 ... In the July 2013 Parish Newsletter from the [Parish Evaluation Project](#), Tom Sweetser and the PEP Team suggest “Performing an audit might entail handing out blank cards at Mass and asking people to jot down one thing that would improve the positive image of the liturgy. Ask them ‘If you were not a member but were walking past our church before Mass, would anything entice you to come in to take a look...’”

The liturgical ministers might pay attention to one another's presence and then compare notes about what would be more ‘Francis-like.’ ...

The parish staff might do its own ‘Image Audit,’ paying attention to how people are treated when they contact the office, whether emails and phone calls are returned in a timely manner, how volunteers are affirmed and

rewarded for their work, whether the interaction with lay leaders is as co-workers and not gofers, to what extent transparency is encouraged and fostered, along with clear and concise communication.”

#4 ... Integrating Hospitality into All Facets of Parish Life. Periodically – with various parish leadership groups - look at the various areas of parish life, with two columns next to each one:

- Current: take time to name ways that hospitality currently shows up in the setting/event
- Add: Explore ways to add elements of hospitality within these settings

Some of the settings you might explore (and add all those that are applicable to your parish):

- Worship
- Faith formation programs and processes (for all ages)
- Music ministries
- Parish Pastoral Council and Commissions
- Staff meetings
- Small groups
- Parish service and outreach opportunities
- Newsletters and publications
- Website
- Social media

#5 ... A resource that suggests a process to help parishes establish and continue growing as welcoming parish communities is *Company's Coming: A Spiritual Process for Creating More Welcoming Parishes* by Dr. Richard J. McCorry (iUniverse Books, 2008).



How Compassionate Is Your Parish? The ministries within your parish? Your adult faith formation processes and programs? The Greater Good Science Center has created a free, online quiz, [Compassionate Organizations Quiz](#), to help your parish or ministry assess how compassionate it is.

The quiz is based on more than 10 years of research on compassion and organizations. In addition to receiving your parish's compassion score, you'll also receive ideas for cultivating compassion in your parish and its ministries.

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After you take the quiz, you can compare your results with other organizations at [Think Your Organization is Compassionate?](#) Check to see if churches rank number one – or two.

You can also find the compassion score by age and by the size of organization.

Compassion is certainly a significant part of hospitality!



One more reason for welcome and hospitality. A [study in the December 2010 issue](#) of the *American Sociological Review* reveals religion's "secret ingredient" that makes people happier.

In an [American Sociological Association: Press Release](#), Chaeyoon Lim, an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, said: "Our study offers compelling evidence that it is the social aspects of religion rather than theology or spirituality that leads to life satisfaction. In particular, we find that friendships built in religious congregations are the secret ingredient in religion that makes people happier."

The press release continues: "According to the study, 33 percent of people who attend religious services every week and have three to five close friends in their congregation report that they are 'extremely satisfied' with their lives.

In comparison, only 19 percent of people who attend religious services weekly, but who have no close friends in their congregation report that they are extremely satisfied. On the other hand, 23 percent of people who attend religious services only several times a year, but who have three to five close friends in their congregation are extremely satisfied with their lives.

"To me, the evidence substantiates that it is not really going to church and listening to sermons or praying that makes people happier, but making church-based friends and building intimate social networks there," Lim said.

According to Lim, people like to feel that they belong. "One of the important functions of religion is to give people a sense of belonging to a moral community based on religious faith," he said. "This community, however, could be abstract and remote unless one has an intimate circle of friends who share a similar identity. The friends in one's congregation thus

make the religious community real and tangible, and strengthen one's sense of belonging to the community."

Some Wondering GEMS

- When we have "super-charged" church friends, do we find it easier to grow in faith, in our Catholic identity, in discipleship?
- What can parishes do to facilitate and foster friendships, feelings of belonging for everyone?

Inviting Rather than Welcoming

We've spent many issues reflecting on welcoming; within our parishes and (arch)dioceses, we probably need to continue reflecting on it (and living it) - until the end times.

There are always new ways to look at things; new understandings, new perspectives, an altered emphasis, insight or comprehension which turns things around.

Thus, we end with another approach. Above (#2 in some suggestions for continually renewing our theology of hospitality) there is a recommendation to "see with new eyes." Does the following approach – which is a little different from what we have explored thus far - offer us a challenge?



Rob Moss, pastor at Lutheran Church of the Master, Lakewood, CO invites us to consider [No Longer Being a Welcoming Church](#).

How is that even possible? Rob says: "we've decided to quit being a welcoming church. No kidding. We're giving it up. It won't be easy, but we're committed to it. We'll have to do it in stages, easing our folks into it step by step....like so many churches, we've sunk an amazing amount of time and energy into becoming a welcoming church. We changed worship styles, we trained greeters and ushers, we wore name tags, we percolated coffee, we went to workshops on hospitality, we put our friendliest people in the most prominent places on Sunday mornings. But we've realized we've been displacing our emphasis. So we're no longer going to do it."

Is that it? Not really, not at all. Rob goes on to say: "Here's what we're doing instead. We are becoming an Inviting Church. That's different. You see,

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‘welcoming’ from a missional perspective is passive. It denotes waiting for visitors and guests to drop by. When they do, we attempt to treat them very well and do everything possible to make them comfortable. ...Welcoming is about us, not about them.

‘Inviting,’ however, is different. That means we leave the comfort of our congregational home-court advantage. The main activity doesn’t happen in our worship space when people drop in, but in the neighborhood when we go out. It isn’t so much welcoming them into our place, but going out into their place and meeting them there. ...

This is not just another gimmick to get people into the church. The foundation of this isn’t an attempt to bolster declining membership rolls and make a better parochial report to the bishop. No, it goes much deeper than that. It starts with who God has called us to be as church. It involves discovering our gifts and purpose. And it mandates joining God at work in the world.”

This isn't about getting the world into God's church;
it's about getting the church into God's world.

Rob Moss

As you read Rob’s first article, [We Will No Longer be a Welcoming Church](#), you will also be able to connect to parts two, three and four which further explain their approach. Every word is worth reading!

As a quick summary for you, Rob explores:

- Motivating people to invite
- Taking on invitation in bite-size pieces
- Changing the inviting environment

Some highlights from these articles (and their further amplifications) that you don’t want to miss:

- “...people in our churches are living their faith in the broader community in amazing ways! Find those hidden gems ... and highlight them.”

- “We are asking people in our congregation what they love about it. We are videoing any number of people asking that question and will be using our social media sites, as well as other ways, to share the answers.”
- “We ask people to consider one word or phrase that describes our church well. Then use that word to finish the phrase, ‘my church is ____.’ ... do this in conversation with one person per week during the month. ‘My church is *struggling* with that very issue.’ ‘School violence? My church is *hosting* a forum about that next month.’ ‘That’s a hard situation; I’ve found *my church is very supportive* in difficult times.’”
- “As our council talked through our ‘Invitation Initiative,’ it became clear to us that our environment was far from invitation-friendly. Some changes in our worship/fellowship space would be required if all those people being invited were to feel welcomed. Now I know this sounds like ‘welcoming’ instead of ‘inviting.’ And, in fact, that’s partially true. Bear in mind, we weren’t giving up on welcoming; we were just placing invitation as a significantly higher priority which would get our best energy and focus.”



This importance of inviting is also being explored by [Paulist Evangelization Ministries](#). On January 21, 2014 Fr. Frank DeSiano, CSP hosted a webinar on “Becoming an Inviting Parish.” (The full webinar can be viewed [here](#).) Fr. DeSiano answered several questions and offered many tips. A few of them included:

Who to invite? Everyone! – and especially:

- Young Adults: They have grown up with a very different sense of allegiance to institutions.
- Married Couples: They are looking for values to pass on to their children and are willing to do anything for their children.
- Seekers: People who are seeking tend to emerge with an age of information and internet.
- Baby Boomers: They are beginning to deal with many new things: empty-nesting, aging and physical limitations, as well as looking back at their lives.

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Why invite?

- “...if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others?” (Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*, #8)

How to invite?

- “...an evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral! Let us recover and deepen our enthusiasm...” (Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*, #10)
- “In this preaching, which is always respectful and gentle, the first step is personal dialogue, when the other person speaks and shares his or her joys, hopes and concerns for loved ones, or so many other heartfelt needs. Only afterwards is it possible to bring up God’s word...” (Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*, #128)
- “Clearly Jesus does not want us to be grandees who look down upon others, but men and women of the people.” (Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*, #271)

Tools to use for invitation

- Mailing
- Emailing
- Posters and bulletin boards
- Newspapers
- One-to-one

Paulist Evangelization Ministries has produced [Neighbor Reaching Neighbors Tool Kit](#) which offers many resources to help parishes imagine and implement ways to reach out to others.



Adding New Luster to an Old Gem

In [GEMS #1](#) and [GEMS #10](#), we explored adult faith formation in unique locations (rather than in the usual parish setting).

Here’s another suggestion: *A Church Takes Adult Formation into the Community – “Prayerbooks and Potables”*

<http://www.buildfaith.org/2014/09/19/a-church-takes-adult-formation-into-the-community-prayerbooks-and-potables/>

A wondering – do you do something similar: adult faith formation in places other than the parish?



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Past issues of **GEMS** are archived at www.janetschaeffler.com

Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found at:

- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation*
http://www.lifelongfaith.com/store/p25/The_Seasons_of_Adult_Faith_Formation.html
- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation website*
<http://www.seasonsofadultfaith.com/>
- *40 Tips: Getting Started in Adult Faith Formation*
<http://www.ecatechist.com/ebooks/> (scroll down)
- *Parish Leadership for Improved Adult Catechesis*
<http://store.pastoralplanning.com/iboplbeprfor.html>