



Invite • Welcome • Connect

Origins & Development

Invite*Welcome*Connect was born out of my 10-year experience as Director of Evangelism and Adult Ministries at St. Stephen's, where The Rev. Patrick Gahan taught me the importance of relational parish ministry and empowering laity for ministry. I began creating and developing a model for newcomer ministry, and in 2000 I introduced the original core content of this work at a Diocese of Texas Cluster Conference at Camp Allen. From there I began presenting the work at various diocesan clergy and lay leadership events. This initial framework, entitled "Sacred Connection" and then "Invitation, Welcome, Connection" was piloted in 2010 in four Diocese of Texas congregations through the Newcomer Ministry Project. Encouraging and immediate numerical growth was recorded and the project spread to more than 100 congregations in the Diocese of Texas over the next three years. In addition to an encouraging growth in numbers, the congregations reported a renewed sense of energy and enthusiasm in their parishioners.

In April 2013, The Rev. Frank Allen, rector of St. David's, Radnor, Pennsylvania, invited me to take Invite*Welcome*Connect outside the Diocese of Texas for the first time, and I facilitated a workshop for St. David's and a number of other Pennsylvania congregations. Word spread quickly and by Winter 2016 I had taken the ministry to 39 dioceses of The Episcopal Church, two Episcopal seminaries (Seminary of the Southwest & General Theological Seminary), University of Texas and Texas A&M college missionaries, and the Anglican Diocese of Calgary.

Two national Invite*Welcome*Connect Summits were sponsored by the Diocese of Texas in April, 2015 and 2016, and Bishop Michael Curry preached at the opening Eucharist of the 2015 Summit. At last summer's General Convention in Salt Lake City he

invited me to keynote the Diocese of North Carolina 200th Annual Diocesan Convention held in November, 2015, and in April, 2016, I returned there to facilitate a diocesan wide Invite*Welcome*Connect day-long workshop. Bishop Curry's endorsement is a huge opportunity for this ministry, and I am immensely grateful to him. During his recent trip to Rome, Bishop Curry was taped for a promotional video to promote my visit to Munich in May 2017, where I will keynote the annual Academy for Parish Leadership conference sponsored by the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe. The text of his video message follows:

Hello to all my friends, brothers and sisters of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe. Your bishop...tells me that you're about to embark on Invite*Welcome*Connect, a program and effort developed by Mary Parmer of Texas to help us as Episcopalians engage the deep work of evangelism, which comes down to inviting someone, to welcoming them, and helping them to grow as a part of the community of faith. I participated in this program as the Bishop of North Carolina and we in our diocese were very much involved and I believe are still growing in that involvement. It's a wonderful program, but it's more than simply a program, it helps to inculcate a way of life that actually reflects the way of welcome of Jesus of Nazareth, the Jesus who said "Come unto me all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Invite*Welcome*Connect is something we as Episcopalians can do. It's a way of evangelism that meets with who we are, that doesn't have us trying to be somebody we aren't, but actually calls us to be exactly who we are in Jesus Christ, and to Invite, and Welcome, and Connect others to that life-giving reality. God bless you, God keep you, and let's keep this Jesus Movement going!

The VISION of INVITE*WELCOME*CONNECT is...

**"To change the culture of The Episcopal Church to move from
maintenance to mission"**

Invite*Welcome*Connect is a transformational ministry that equips and empowers congregations and individuals to cultivate intentional practices of evangelism, hospitality, and connectedness rooted in the Gospel imperative to, "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). The work is designed to accommodate congregations of all sizes and crosses all social, economic boundaries. The assessment tools, surveys, checklists, and all ministry materials are designed to be adapted based on the interests and needs of a particular locale.

CORE VALUES

"I was a stranger and you welcomed me." Matthew 25:35 The core values undergird Invite*Welcome*Connect. Participating congregations and those carrying out this work are reminded to keep these values at the forefront of ministry.

- **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, and we do this by organizing the work in a systematic, creative way.
- **Relational:** Relational ministry is critical to this work.
- **Accountable:** We are accountable to God, the Gospel and to each other.

DIOCESES where Invite*Welcome*Connect has been presented in various workshop-conference formats:

- Texas
- Pennsylvania
- Bethlehem
- Northwest Texas
- Alabama
- Rhode Island
- Mississippi
- West Texas
- West Missouri
- Arizona
- Missouri
- Atlanta
- Kansas
- East Tennessee
- Oklahoma
- West Tennessee
- New York
- Indianapolis
- Louisiana
- Lexington
- Rio Grande
- Upper South Carolina

- Ohio
- Pittsburgh
- Dallas
- Olympia
- North Carolina
- Fort Worth
- Los Angeles
- California
- Virginia
- Central Gulf Coast
- West Virginia
- New Jersey
- Wyoming
- Rochester
- Western New York
- Western Louisiana
- Georgia
- Minnesota