

About “Invite*Welcome*Connect” and Mary Parmer

Have you registered yet for The Bishop’s Institute’s Lay Leadership Workshop

6: Invite*Welcome*Connect at Camp Weed & Cerveny Conference Center on Saturday, November 18, 2017 from 10:00am - 3:00pm? Haven’t you wondered how to better connect with visitors to your church? Ms. Parmer has decades of experience creating successful plans that accomplish just this goal. Welcoming visitors can be a strange and uncomfortable experience. What do you say after you’ve said, “Hello, welcome to our church”? What comes next?

During this workshop, Ms. Parmer will teach you how to make your visitors feel comfortable, how to welcome without smothering (or scaring) your visitors, and how you should follow-through with visitors after their first visit to your church. Are you a shy person? You’ll learn how to overcome that trait for the good of your church. Have you ever considered creating a “Getting to Know Us” booklet to place in the pews for new visitors?

Please continue reading to discover more about Ms. Parmer and her Invite*Welcome*Connect program and then read a selection of illuminating endorsements from people just like you who have attended this educational workshop. You’ll return to your church with specific advice and action plans that will help to grow your church. We hope to see you on Saturday, November 18, 2017 for this truly informative experience. Bring your church’s entire Welcome Committee or take copious notes and bring the suggestions, tactics and examples back to your church.

The cost for the day is \$62.00 per person with lunch provided for you. Visit campweed.org to register today. Remember to wear your church’s nametag so all in attendance know right away who you are and where you attend church.

History

INVITE-WELCOME-CONNECT was born out of Mary Parmer’s 10-year experience as Director of Evangelism & Adult Ministries at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church in Beaumont, TX, where she began creating and developing a newcomer ministry. 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. Mary has taken the work to forty (41) dioceses in The Episcopal Church, two Episcopal seminaries, University of Texas and Texas A&M college missionaries, the Anglican Diocese of Calgary, and the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe.

Inviting, welcoming and connecting people who come to our churches are critical and strategic steps for building healthy, vibrant and growing congregations. Mary developed materials, including easy-to-use check lists for each step to provide an objective assessment of a church’s

current situation. The assessment tools are supported by an extensive list of creative and concrete resources and examples to form an intentional newcomer ministry that results in a systemic and positive change to participating congregations.

In the last four years, clergy and lay leaders from congregations and dioceses across the country have attended this dynamic training and report measurable results after using the materials. This transformative newcomer ministry process has brought new energy and spirit to congregations and sustained, real growth where the essentials of INVITE-WELCOME-CONNECT are followed. Two national Invite*Welcome*Connect Summits, sponsored by the Episcopal Diocese of Texas, have taken place at Camp Allen, and in May 2017 Parmer keynoted the annual Academy for Parish Leadership Conference in Munich, Germany, sponsored by the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe.

Endorsements

“I wanted to thank you for serving as the keynote speaker for the Diocese of Pennsylvania's Clergy Conference. More than a few people have expressed how much they appreciated the ideas you brought to the table and your willingness to share your story. Moreover, a number of people intimated that they had never experienced such a focused introduction to the practice of evangelism and welcoming newcomers. As helpful as the concrete suggestions are, however, I think that the best thing about INVITE-WELCOME-CONNECT is that it provides a wonderfully helpful framework for engaging in and thinking about the all-important discipline of Christian hospitality.” The Rev. David Romanik, Church of the Redeemer, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania

“Since Mary Parmer presented INVITE-WELCOME-CONNECT to the Diocese of Western New York, people have been talking...A LOT...about being inviting, about offering genuine welcome and about focusing on ways to help people connect to their faith through our parishes and among all who walk into our doors... and stay! What was presented at INVITE-WELCOME-CONNECT is marinating among our people! And that is good news indeed.” The Rev. Cathy Dempsey-Sims, Canon for Connections, Episcopal Diocese of Western New York

“One of the great joys of my job is traveling around the diocese and meeting with congregations of all shapes and sizes. Although each of these churches possess unique gifts and face distinct challenges, one comment that I hear over and over again is the same: our congregation wants to grow. During the course of her excellent INVITE-WELCOME-CONNECT workshops, Mary Parmer explores how churches can implement practices and strategies that lead to growth. Mary's presentations are practical, thorough and thought-provoking. Her teaching style is relevant and compelling. Perhaps most importantly, however, Mary's guidance has the potential to transform your congregation. I highly recommend attending one (or several) of Mary Parmer's INVITE-WELCOME-CONNECT workshops. You will leave feeling inspired and prepared to lead your congregation with renewed energy. It is absolutely essential that our congregations learn how to effectively invite, welcome and connect newcomers into our communities. Mary has a unique gift for exploring these concepts with both a sense of depth and approachability. She is a visionary leader in the Episcopal Church and her teaching is not to be missed.” The Rev. Canon John A. Kellogg, Canon Missioner, The Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana

“We here at the Episcopal Church of the Messiah in Rhinebeck, New York, invited Mary to bring INVITE-WELCOME-CONNECT to us over a weekend last November. I had first met Mary at the CEEP Conference earlier in the year and was bowled over by what I heard. Having been a priest for almost 30 years I thought I had heard every possible church growth program there is. But Mary's workshop took me completely by surprise. It is not a program, but a ministry, based in scripture, theology, and experience. It is comprehensive and incredibly well thought out, but perhaps most importantly, exciting! Mary's ministry encourages intentional listening by both the congregation and its individual members. She invites us to hear the story that each person carries and in listening acknowledge a deeper bond in ministry. I can tell a story that for me sums up everything about Mary. As Mary was staying outside of town in the country, we decided to rent a car for her. As I stood at the counter of the rental agency which is across the street from our church, Mary asked the young woman, who I had met several times before when I had rented a car previously, what her name was and if she had ever come over to church. Answering no, Mary said to the woman, “You ought to go over, it's beautiful and a really friendly place.” When I saw the look on the young woman's face, which showed how moved she was to be invited, I knew Messiah would never be the same once Mary spoke to us. And it hasn't been. We have been changed by her words and ministry and for that we are deeply grateful. Mary and her ministry are a blessing that everyone should experience for themselves”. The Rev. Richard McKeon, Episcopal Church of the Messiah, Rhinebeck, NY

“The INVITE-WELCOME-CONNECT ministry is a theological and practical initiative, which goes beyond making “The Episcopal Church Welcomes You” a reality, but also insures those who do come to faith in our churches do not leave by the back door. It provides a theological rationale for outreach to the spiritually hungry, a means of engaging those who come into our places of worship, and a way to engage those who become a part of our community of faith. If an Altar Guild can beautifully and habitually attract a dedicated core of hard working volunteers to tend the sanctuary, similarly organized teams of well-trained laity can welcome seekers and incorporate the newly initiated into our faith communities. Simultaneously the vision of an outward focus can be preached as central to the gospel to encourage congregations to be welcoming and inviting. The Episcopal Church will continue to wallow in a high maintenance mode until it takes its outreach to seekers as seriously and happily as it does tending the Altar. INVITE-WELCOME-CONNECT is a super working model that makes “The Episcopal Church Welcomes You” a reality and not an oxymoron. Like the Altar Guild, choir, Christian formation ministry, youth ministry, acolytes, Lay Eucharistic ministers, etc. INVITE-WELCOME-CONNECT is a crucial and exciting vehicle for the faithful to fulfill their ministries of being the church.” The Rt. Rev. Claude E. Payne, 7th Bishop of Texas, Pensioned

(SOURCE: <http://www.maryparmer.com>)