



*Walking the Way of Love Together
in Small Congregations*

Invite • Welcome • Connect

Evangelism

Hospitality

Belonging

invitewelcomeconnect.com



The Ministry of Connect in Small Churches

Today's Objectives

- ❖ **Core values of Invite Welcome Connect**
- ❖ **Small Church Facts, Common Characteristics, Size Dynamics**
- ❖ **Epidemic of loneliness and the importance of emphasizing relationships**
- ❖ **Why people come to small churches**
- ❖ **Holy listening**
- ❖ **Spiritual gifts, talents, empowerment of newcomers**
- ❖ **Tools for Connection**
- ❖ **Resources**



Invite Welcome Connect
CORE VALUES



Prayerful



Intentional



Relational

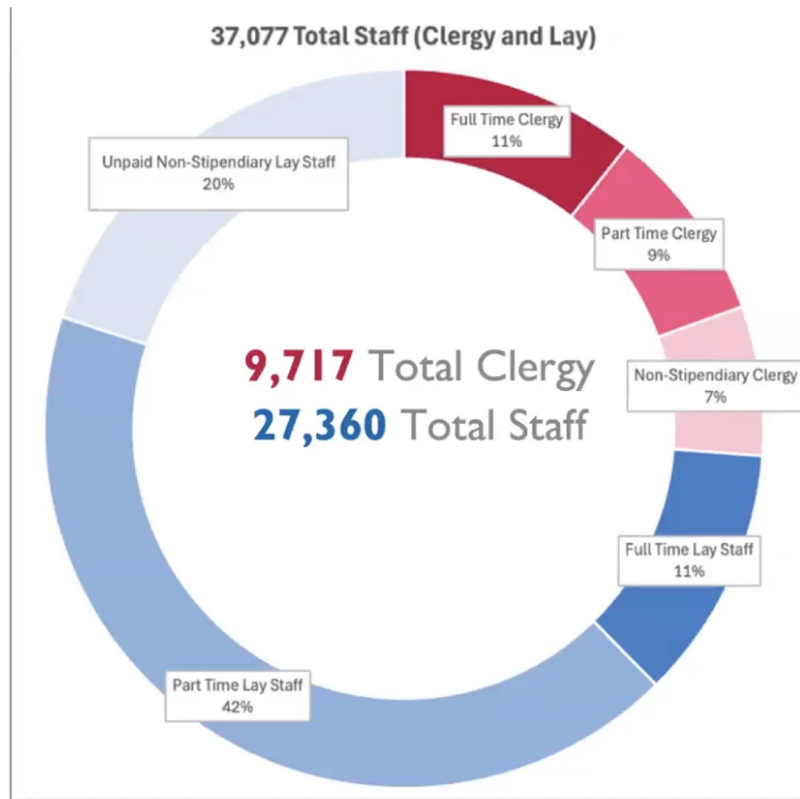


Accountable



SMALL CHURCH FACTS

1. 70% of churches (all denominations) are under 100 members*
1. In 2023, 56% of Episcopal congregations were NOT served by a full time priest, meaning they were either lay-led, had a PT priest or relied on a retire/inactive priest**
1. In 2024, the average Episcopal congregation attendance was about 51.



*2020 Survey by Center for American Life

**2023 CPG data



Sizing Up a Congregation*

The Family Church: 0-50

The Pastoral Church: 50-150

The Program Church: 150-350

The Corporate Church: 350-500+

of congregations of 200+ **316**

of congregations of < 50 **3984**

Median ASA **38**

Median Seating Capacity **138**

For the sake of our conversation today, we are defining “small church” 0-75



***book by Arlin Rothauge**

***book by Arlin Rothauge**

Common Characteristics of Small Churches:

- A warm and family-like atmosphere
- Opportunities for deep involvement in the mission and ministries of the church
- Children are known, loved and “raised up” in the church
- Often times more adaptable with less organizational structure than larger churches
- Welcome is often very informal without a systematic approach
- Connection may be hard for a newcomer because of strong internal relationships



The Epidemic of Loneliness

“At the heart of loneliness is the absence of meaningful social interaction, an intimate relationship, friendships, family gatherings, or even community or work group connections.” Brene Brown

The importance of CONNECTION and forming relationships in an increasingly isolated world.



Why Do People Come to Church? Especially a Small Church?

Connection!



Three Types of Connection



Fellowship



Spiritual



**Ministry Beyond
the Walls**





Nurturing Spiritual Growth

- **Provide regular formation opportunities**
- Bible study and and topical or themed adult forums
- **Book studies are ideal for community invitation**
- People come to a church to build their spiritual life

As a general rule, churches that are not offering any kind of biblical formation are not growing.



Formation



Connection to a Community of Believers

- Provide regular fellowship opportunities
- **Include a diversity of activity**
- Be intentional about planning for a variety of ages
- **Empty chair opportunities**



Monthly Dinner Out
Quarterly Celebrations



Spiritual Hikes
Game night



Trunk or Treat
Invite a newcomer into a
Altar guild, choir, etc

Small churches offer something that larger churches struggle with: a church family where members are known and loved

Fellowship



Connect with the Wider Community

- Every church needs some kind of outreach for new members to connect with
- Engage in prayerful discernment as an entire community about how to best move outside the walls of the church

Where is the community hub?

Ask yourselves, “how can we be present there?”

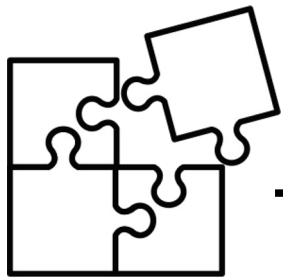
Is there a need in your community that your church can meet? Assess what’s happening and what is needed.

Join together in a book study or regular gatherings to pray for God’s guidance

A question every small church should ask themselves: Does the community even know you are there?

Outreach





Completing the Puzzle: Tools for Connecting with the Visitor

**Be prepared.
Be intentional.**

Spiritual

- ★ Holy Listening
- ★ Spiritual Gift Survey

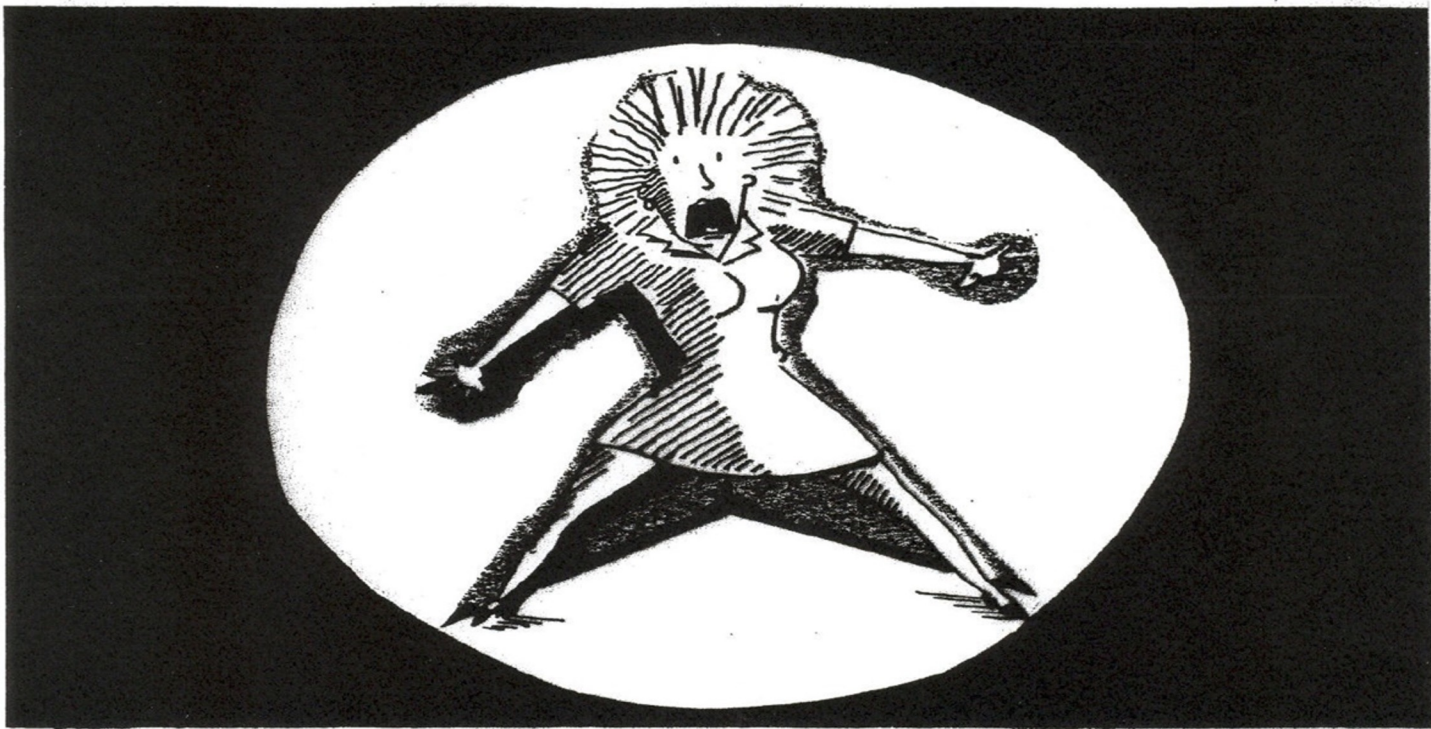
Physical

- ★ Connect Card
- ★ Guest Book
- ★ Pew Pens
- ★ Plan for follow up

Digital

- ★ Website
- ★ Facebook/Instagram





We Are In Need Of A Volunteer



Connecting Requires Holy Listening

When we engage in it, we are hoping and expecting to encounter God.

“Holy listening is indispensable in congregations because it builds intimacy and helps people connect with each other in a way that goes beyond the superficial, resulting in powerful bonds between people. ”

- Craig Satterlee



Empowering Skills, Talents, Spiritual Gifts of Newcomers for Ministry

- Discovered through Holy Listening
- Intentional and prayerful discernment
- Spiritual gifts inventories

Then.....

By personal invitation to get involved



Website Tools

Connect



- Core Church / Relational Connection Assessment
- Welcome Rite for Newcomers
- Liturgy of Belonging
- Flow Chart for Invite Welcome Connect Ministry
- OCD Chart - Implementation
- Seekers Forum How-To Guide
- Giftedness & Vocation Article
- Spiritual Gifts-Scripture References
- Motivational Spiritual Gifts inventory
- Life in the Spirit Workbook
- Opening Your Spiritual Gifts - ELCA Women
- S.H.A.P.E. test - Discovering your Purpose
- Beloved Community StorySharing Guidebook
- Better Conversations-A Starter Guide | On Being with Krista Tippett
- Pastoral Care: A Special Kind of Listening | Jerry Gentry

Small Congregations Webinar Series

Steps for the Future

January 21, 2026

2 pm Eastern

(Invite and special
assessment tool)

You're already registered



Invite Welcome Connect Webinar Series

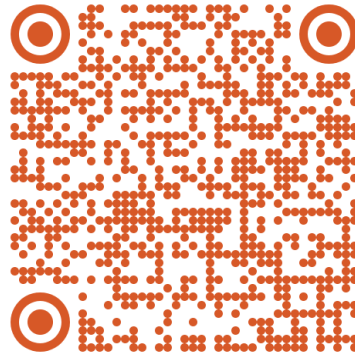
*Introduction to Invite Welcome
Connect*

Wed., Dec 10
7 pm Eastern

Mary Foster Parmer, Founder of
Invite Welcome Connect

Register at: bit.ly/IWC_Dec

Invite Welcome Connect
Webinar Series



Invite Welcome Connect On Demand

Subscription Details

Diocesan Subscriptions: \$1,500 for smaller dioceses to \$2,500 for the largest.

Individual Congregations (in non-subscribing dioceses): \$200–\$400 annually, depending on Average Sunday Attendance.

Diocesan subscriptions also include a live online intro and Q&A session with ministry leadership.



InviteWelcomeConnect.org