



Cultivating
Connections
in Christ

DIOCESE OF DES MOINES

Creating a Culture of Welcome & Care

Parish Toolkit

Preface

As we focus on our strategic vision's call to cultivate connections in Christ, we remember that connections start with meeting and welcoming one another. A welcoming parish is a reflection of Christian hospitality. Creating a more welcoming environment consists of many aspects, such as providing clean and accessible restrooms, decorating a space beautifully, learning one another's names, and meeting each other with the awareness that we are all created in the image and likeness of God.

Once we are welcomed, it is important to know we are cared for and that we matter to the life of the parish. Creating a culture of care in our parishes also consists of many aspects, such as celebrating sacraments, remembering anniversaries, gathering socially, caring for each other in times of need, and reaching beyond the walls of our churches to our parishes' communities.

This toolkit, developed by representatives from both urban and rural parishes, is offered in the hope that it will start meaningful conversations, generate ideas, and serve as a catalyst for sharing with each other what is working in our parish families and how we might build on our successes with good ideas from other parishes and beyond.

Contents

Welcome The Guest.....	1
Welcome New Members and Returning Catholics.....	5
Communication.....	7
Facilities	9
Care.....	11
Staff/Volunteer Leader Training	14

Welcome the Guest

Do not neglect hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. Hebrews 13:2

Welcoming the stranger, guest, or someone returning to the faith is a vital form of evangelization. A guest's first impression will last beyond the first moment and determine if they want to return. Take time to imagine the experience of a guest and walk through your parish from the parking lot to the pew. Use the questions and ideas below to help think through the various touchpoints of your parish.

Parish Assessment

1. Do we have a dedicated and trained hospitality team in our parish?
2. Does our hospitality team include team members who speak Spanish or other languages that are prominent in the local community? Do we have welcome materials and other information in these languages?
3. At parish social events, do parishioners go out of their way to welcome people they do not know?
4. Do we presume that we have non-churchgoers, non-Catholics, and visitors at every weekend Mass? How are we prepared to welcome them?
5. Do our parish staff and volunteers, especially those working with parishioners and public, exhibit a welcoming attitude?
6. Do we welcome all ethnic groups in the same manner? How do we show this? Do we have tools, staff, or volunteers to welcome visitors that do not speak our language?
7. How do we welcome all ages to Mass, including families with young children?
8. Is our church building well maintained, clean, and beautiful? Is it accessible to people of differing abilities?
9. Are guests welcomed by greeters, ushers, or other parishioners in the parking lot, at the door, or at their pews?
10. As a pastoral team, imagine that you are a complete stranger to the Catholic Church, or any church or house of worship. What would your experience be if you walked into this parish church on a typical Sunday?

Parish Staff and Ministry Leadership Training

See the section on Staff and Leadership Training, page 19.

Best Practices

1. Hospitality

Greeters are in the parking lot, at the door, in the entrance hall, and in church 15 minutes or more before Mass and for a short time after Mass.

Greeters check in to see if there is anything happening that they might need to know.

They hold the doors for those entering and leaving. They greet people and say goodbye warmly.

They are prepared to assist people who might need help in the parking lot. Have nametags for greeters and staff.

Consider what is needed for hospitality during weddings, funerals, and other celebrations when many guests might be attending.

Funerals – Consider forming a bereavement committee.

Provide hospitality during funerals.

One or two people meet with priest to determine needs for a particular funeral and then arrange for members of the committee or others to serve.

Wear nametags so people attending can identify people who can offer assistance or answer questions.

Outside greeters hold doors, welcome people, keep a count for lunch, if needed.

Inside greeters distribute programs, direct people to guestbook, answer questions.

Guestbook attendant greets guests, answers questions, has extra pens, replenishes memorial cards, provides help using computer guestbook, if needed.

Place tissue boxes in the reserved pews.

Two people to present the pall to the family at the beginning of the funeral; after Mass they take the pall and fold it for storage.

Two or three people to set up lunch, organize clean-up.

If needed, they can serve as lectors, communion ministers, gift bearers.

If there is visitation in the church before the Mass, after the casket is closed, as family enters church one or two people stand nearby with additional programs and tissues.

- Consider the needs of visiting musicians for weddings and funerals. Have someone meet them when they arrive. Make sure all equipment is working and musicians have access to instruments, sound equipment, music stands, electrical outlets, water.
- If there is not a wedding coordinator, consider what could be helpful. Here are some ideas from the Diocese of Sacramento:

Have a host to provide a welcoming presence to the soon-to-be-wed couple, their guests, and the community who gathers for the celebration of the wedding.

Assist couples, their wedding party, and the presider of the ceremony at the wedding rehearsal by:

Unlocking the church, turning on lights as needed, greeting and welcoming those who arrive.

Leading the wedding rehearsal, depending on the preference of the celebrant.

Overseeing the securing of the church, if appropriate, by turning off lights and locking doors.

Being available an hour before the ceremony and until the wedding party has left for their reception.

Assist before and after the celebration of the wedding:

Check that the church is clean and in order before the event.

Check the work of the florist for conformity to the guidelines of the parish.

Check restrooms.

Be present to those who need assistance.

Greet and assist visiting clergy.

Assist the presider in preparing what is necessary to celebrate the wedding.

Check after the event that all is in order.

Meet with couples during the preparation phase:

Review the parish policies for the use of the church for weddings.

Assist the couple with finding answers to their questions about the ceremony.

Take inquiries from florists and photographers/videographers about their work in the church during the ceremony. Inform them of parish and diocesan policies.

- Coordinators for other sacramental celebrations (Baptism, Confirmation, First Communion) allow the celebrant to focus on the ceremony and people.

Ensure participants—family members, godparents, sponsors, guests—are in the right place at the right time. Answer questions.

Prepare altar and other area and items—water in font, oils, linens, towels, etc.

Facilitates from beginning to end working with celebrants and greeters.

If the sacrament is celebrated during Mass, communicate with musicians, lectors, and servers. If a bishop is coming, communicate with pastor regarding what the servers will need to know.

See that all areas of the church are clean and in order after the liturgy.

Be available to take photographs if requested.

2. Information –Access Points for All People

Set up an area in the gathering space for guests, new parishioners, and everyone else. Call it a Welcome

Center or Connection Center. Be sure everyone knows that it is for everyone, not only guests.

Ask friendly people to staff the table. Be sure they have current information and materials about events and programs.

Ask the priest or deacons to spend time at the table to welcome and visit with people.

Some ideas for what could be included in welcome area:

A laptop or large screen to show parish website, pictures, program information, ministry opportunities.

Sign-up sheets or information for baptism classes, marriage prep, Christian initiation and other faith-formation opportunities.

Information on requesting Mass intentions, including donation suggestions.

Include a basket and slips of paper or a bound blank book for people to write prayer requests.

Children's resources: coloring pages, crayons, pencils, children's Mass books.

Miscellaneous supplies: tissues, hand sanitizer, cough drops, safety pins, small bottles of water, sanitary items, first aid items.

Special needs resources: assisted-listening devices and instructions for how to connect to sound system, noise-cancelling headphones, fidgets, other sensory tools

Large-print worship aids.

Communication cards for visitors to complete basic contact information for staff or others to reach out for one-on-one welcoming conversation and information.

New member orientation information.

3. Announcements before Mass

Explain communion for non-Catholics.

Anything special or different happening that day, such as feast days, baptisms, or other events.

Invite people to introduce themselves or greet others around them.

Announce priest's and deacon's names.

Ask if there are any guests from out of town or welcome any visiting guests.

4. Obtain Information from guests and new members.

Ask new members about their experience the first time they came to the parish.

Invite someone who is not a parishioner to do a walk-through of your parish campus. Have them start in the parking lot and attempt to complete various tasks, such as visiting the parish office, registering for a Bible study, or attending a Mass. Ask about the experience.

Resources

Websites and Webinars

Amazing Parish Conference Training Online
<https://amazingparish.org/aponline/>

Catholics Come Home: Welcoming Best Practices
<http://www.catholicscomehome.org/parish-welcome/>

Creating a Culture of Hospitality in Parish Ministries
<https://www.learnwithocp.org/video/v/hospitality-in-ministry>

Divine Renovation – Bringing Your Parish from Maintenance to Mission by Fr. James Mallon
<https://divinerenovation.org/>

Books and Articles

Byer, Glenn CJ, and Prendergast, Michael R., *Hospitality Basics* Lake Oswego, OR: OCP <https://www.ocp.org/en-us/collections/dg/609/hospitality-basics>

Catholic Stewardship Consultants, **The Sunday Mass Experience and Hospitality** - https://www.catholicsteward.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Sunday_Experience_Hospitality_eBook.pdf

Welch Thomas P, *“Reaching Out with Hospitality to People with Mental Illness.”*
Pastoral Liturgy Magazine, May/June 2017, Chicago:

Liturgy Training Publications. <http://www.pastoralliturg.org/resources/ReachingOutwithHospitalitytoPeoplewithMentalIllness.pdf>.

Documents, Forms, Checklists

- Welcoming Strategies and Tips for Systemic Change (How parishes can better serve people with <https://www.dmdiocese.org/disabilityministry>)
- Creating a Culture of Hospitality in Parish Ministries, pages 5–6 include checklist. <https://www.learnwithocp.org/video/v/hospitality-in-ministry>



Welcome New Members and Returning Catholics

Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God. Romans 15:7

As the people of God, we are all called to welcome others into the Church, to introduce them to a lifelong relationship with Jesus, and to accompany them on their journey of faith.

Parish Assessment

1. Do we have a welcome coordinator on staff or a volunteer to be the point of contact for new parishioners, helping them navigate the parish campus and connecting them to staff, other parishioners, ministry leaders or groups?
2. Do we have unnecessary fees or restrictions for those preparing for sacraments or formation, or for those who are supporting others coming to the sacraments?
3. Do we have unnecessary fees or restrictions placed upon those who want to join the parish?
4. Do we have people on staff or volunteers who speak Spanish or other languages that are prominent in the local community? Do we have welcome materials in these languages?
5. Do we have an intentional welcoming process for new parishioners in our parish?
6. Do our parish hours accommodate people who work during the day?
7. Ask new members to help assess the parish. How was their experience on their first visit? Registration? Welcoming attitude? Simplicity? Answers to their questions?

Parish Staff and Ministry Leadership Training

Please see section on Staff and Leadership Training, page 19.

Best Practices

1. Welcome Coordination

Consider hiring a welcome coordinator or finding volunteers to perform this role. They would be the

first point of contact for new parishioners by sending them a letter of welcome, helping them navigate the parish structure, and connecting them to the right staff, ministry leaders, and other parishioners.

Include the welcome coordinator's name and contact information on all welcome material.

2. New Member Registration

Consider the advantages of having online registration (convenience) compared to having no online registration (more personal contact).

If there is no online registration, identify a regular time to register in person (for example, after Mass on the first Sunday of the month). Accommodate those that might need individual appointments.

Consider making registration available in the back of church at a welcome table or information booth.

3. Follow-up Plan for New Members

Invite people to come to the office and meet staff or have staff available after Mass.

Send a personal card or letter in the mail after registration. Encourage them to introduce themselves to the pastor or other staff member after Mass.

Send a personal email after the card is received.

Host monthly, quarterly, semi-annual, or annual newcomer events. Invite new members to these events for two years after registration. Provide personal or direct invitations.

Examples of events: Wine and cheese, family picnic, faith study, tour of church.

Encourage new members to reach out to the pastor for a house blessing.

Deliver a welcome basket to the home.

A welcome basket could include a parish directory, a booklet describing ministries, Mass and

reconciliation times, a prayer card or other image of the parish's patron saint, a crucifix for the home, potholders or a kitchen towel. Women's or men's groups might contribute something to the basket.

Consider welcome ambassadors for geographic neighborhoods or small towns.

Introduce opportunities for involvement in the parish.

Time and Talent Survey (Archdiocese of St. Louis uses the words prayer, participation and generosity instead of time, talent and treasure).

Called and Gifted Program/Assessment

Regular ministry fairs or welcome table.

Schedule a time for pastor and/or welcome coordinator to visit new family.

5. Mentorship Family/Prayer Partners

Pair new family with an established family, who could host them for a meal, an outing, or simply a conversation.

Take picture of new family to share with parish, with their consent.



Resources

Websites

Diocese of Lansing Parish Binder – **Welcoming Environments** <https://www.dioceseoflansing.org/new-evangelization/assembly-parish-binder-welcoming-environments>

Called and Gifted is a program designed to help Christians discern the presence of charisms, or spiritual gifts in their lives. <https://siena.org/called-gifted>

Books

Rebuilt, Michael White and Tom Corcoran, Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press <https://www.avemariapress.com/products/rebuilt>

Tools for Rebuilding, Michael White and Tom Corcoran, Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press <https://www.avemariapress.com/products/tools-for-rebuilding>

Communication

Pleasing words are a honeycomb, sweet to the taste and invigorating to the bones. Proverbs 16:24

Communication is vital for effective outreach. The various platforms of communication often are the first contact a newcomer seeks to learn more about your church and parish community. In spreading the good news, keep in mind both the newcomer viewing for the first time and our current parish members.

Parish Assessment

1. How do we communicate with new members, with guests, and with parishioners?
2. For every communication, keep in mind the question “Who is my audience?”
3. For every communication, keep in mind the question “Why is this important?”
4. Use the answers to these questions to determine best method of communication: the parish bulletin, the website, social media, phone calls, one-on-one, letters, email, brochure, or a combination of some or all of these.

Parish Staff and Ministry Leadership Training

Please see section on Staff and Leadership Training, page 19.

Best Practices

1. For Newcomers

Website

Make sure the parish website is up to date and fresh.

Are the Mass times easy to find? Include Holy Day Mass times and other services.

Are the parish address, phone number, and email address prominently displayed?

Are staff members’ names, phone numbers, and email addresses readily available?

Is it easy to find out how to register at your parish?

Is there a map and directions to the parish?

Have someone not familiar with your parish review your website.

Provide a link on the homepage to a page that offers information and guidance for people interested in returning to the Catholic faith.

Bulletin

Include information on how to join the parish in every bulletin.

Include a visitors’ section that includes a welcome statement, the parish’s office phone number, and other information a visitor might want to know.

Tips and Suggestions

Use videos for personal greetings and invitations from priests and staff.

Offer directions and a map.

Evaluate automatic phone system: Can a person be reached for questions quickly? Can the caller get relevant information without having to listen to Mass times if that is not the reason for the call? Can calls be answered by a live person?

2. Ongoing Communication/Outreach

Create a communications plan that includes updated multiple media platforms, print, phone, one-on-one, bulletin, social media, welcome brochure, etc. (See the Communications toolkit for more information.)

Include information on accessibility for persons with disabilities. For all events, list who to contact for accommodations.

Language and cultural considerations. For example, if a homilist is difficult to understand, homilies could be printed and available during Mass.

Evaluate the sound system to be sure it is adequate for the space and working properly.

Website

Include an ongoing, easily accessible parish calendar:

Is it easy to use/access? Does it match what is in the bulletin? Does it include Holy Day Mass times?

Social Media

Consider Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp

Email

Use an email program to keep in contact with parishioners on a regular basis. Many programs are available, such as ConstantContact.com, Mailchimp.com or Flocknote.com

Collect email addresses from as many parishioners as possible- include young adults and teens, with parents' consent.

Consider including

Monthly or quarterly newsletter

Weekly bulletin

Synopsis of Sunday homily

Parish current events

Reach out to existing members on regular basis

Email followed by phone call (Perhaps in connection with a capital campaign or time and talent survey?)

Is your parish record up to date?

Have there been any changes in your household?

Would you like your home blessed?

Can the parish help you in some way?

Would you like to help the parish in some way?

Offer to schedule meeting with clergy.

Updated Parish Directories

Print directories (St. Boniface in Waukeg is currently doing one of these)

Online directories (with print option for those who would prefer) (St. Mary of Nazareth in Des Moines and St. John in Adel has done this type of directory)

3. Translation Software

In-person translation

Google Home Hub (\$100)

IPad for registration, PayPal at front desk – can be changed to any language.

Translation apps on phones and tablets

Translation headsets for Mass or other events

Consider outsourcing translation to a third party company or parish staff members or volunteers. (Ideal to have someone with understanding of Catholic faith.)

Third-party translation providers

Iowa Interpreters and Translators Association

<https://iitanet.org/iita-directory-1>

Mayan Business Solutions, Translation and Interpretation Services, Antonio & Mayra Banuelos
abanuelos@mayan-solutions.com 515 991-2791 or
mcmoriel@mayan-solutions.com 515 991-9673

DeepL is a webpage that offers translation of written and spoken text. <https://www.deepl.com/en/translator>

Resources

Websites

Catholic Social Media – A social media service offered through the Diocese of Des Moines Communications Office

Posts already designed for social media. If your parish does not have access to these, please contact Anne Marie Cox at acox@dmdiocese.org

Canva offers graphic design services for websites and other business products.

<https://www.canva.com/>

Facilities

For where two or three gather in my name, there am I among them. (Matthew 18:20)

Our buildings and grounds are all unique, yet our one common goal is to make them as inviting and accessible as possible, to welcome those both familiar and unfamiliar with each parish.

Parish Assessment

1. Do we have clear and sufficient signs directing people to various places on the parish campus? Do these signs communicate a welcoming spirit? Are they in multiple languages? Should they be?
2. Is our church building well maintained, clean, and beautiful?
3. Is the main entrance clearly marked?
4. Are grass, trees, exterior, parking lot, landscaping and other areas clean and well kept?
5. Does our space reflect beauty indoors and out?
6. Invite someone who is not a parishioner to do a walk-through of your parish campus. Have them start in the parking lot and attempt to complete various tasks like visiting the parish office, registering for a Bible study or attending a Mass on Sunday and a weekday. Ask them about the experience.

Parish Staff and Ministry Leadership Training

Please see section on Staff and Leadership Training, page 19.

Best Practices

1. Signage

Interior Signs

Make sure vital areas of the parish are well marked.

Can people find the bathrooms?

Can they find the parish office if they are not familiar with the campus?

Look at space as if you are visiting for the first time.

Provide temporary signs for events (arrows, digital etc.)

Is there a number board in church for musical selections visible to all in the pews?

Exterior Signs

Are signs well lit?

Are important areas of the parish well marked from the exterior?

Is the entrance to the church easy to find?

Can people find the parish office if they are unfamiliar with the campus?

2. Physical Considerations

ADA¹ Accessibility

Are alternative seating options including pew cuts available in all areas of the church, not just in the back?

Is an alternative worship space available with livestreaming for people with anxiety, dementia, or behavioral needs?

Sensory-friendly Mass and tools available.

Review current traffic flow and if need be, design a logical flow for both cars and pedestrians

3. General

Cleanliness

Assess cleanliness of the facility on an ongoing basis. (For example, is cleaning bathrooms once before weekend Masses enough?)

Maintenance

Grounds upkeep

As you evaluate your facility, consider how it looks from a livestreaming perspective

¹ Americans with Disabilities Act <https://www.access-board.gov/ada/>

Have an annual maintenance and repairs budget

Consider environmental care (LED lighting, water bottle filler, automatic shut-off lights, recycling, hand dryers vs. paper towels)

4. Sound System

Is the sound system in working order?

Regular assessments

Train ministers and staff to use

The DFiocese offers information regarding assisted listening system resources available in Iowa. <https://www.dmdiocese.org/filesimages/DisabilityMinistry>

Consider applying for grants to assist with cost from The Catholic Foundation of Southwest Iowa <https://www.catholicfoundationiowa.org/organizations/grant-program/>

Resources

Books

The Sunday Mass Experience and Hospitality - https://www.catholicsteward.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Sunday_Experience_Hospitality_eBook.pdf



Care

Companions on the Journey

This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for another (John 35:13)

Ongoing care and support of all is our mission as Christians and as a parish community. How do we walk with each other, support, and celebrate those we meet on this journey? How do we show love and care to our community? Below are some suggestions and thoughts as we continue the mission.

Parish Assessment

1. How do we foster a community of care within our parish membership?
2. How do we celebrate our joys and support each other in times of trial in our community? Can we do this better?
3. Are marginalized people—poor people, people with mental illness, for example—intentionally welcomed in our parish?
4. Are Mass and reconciliation times based on the needs of the community?
5. How can we better pray for one another?

Parish Staff and Ministry Leadership Training

Please see the section on Staff and Leadership Training, page 19.

Best Practices

1. Outreach and Support Opportunities – who in your parish needs care?

Fellowship Opportunities

Receptions during Easter and Christmas seasons, events for feast days, other celebrations.

Childcare at all parish events, even parish meetings. (At one parish, Knights of Columbus provide childcare during their meetings and host family nights).

Knights of Columbus or other group events (for example, donuts, pancake breakfasts, fish fry dinners).

Have a welcome table or greeters at events to ensure a welcoming and caring environment at events.

Prayer

Prayer requests in bulletin (be sure to have permission before printing names).

Prayer groups or teams (One parish has parishioners with a particular charism for intercessory prayer available in the back of church after Mass to pray with people regarding their specific concerns).

Prayer chains.

Mass

Sensory-friendly Mass and tools available to attend Mass.

Train ushers to address disturbances.

Birthday blessing after Mass. (One parish, on the first weekend of the month, has parishioners with birthdays in that month stand up for a special birthday blessing.)

Announcements celebrating parishioner achievements (sporting events, graduations, wedding anniversaries). A parish graduation reception could be held for graduates at all levels.

Homebound

Visits

Transportation

Send cards

Connect with services – Meals on Wheels, grocery delivery, collect gift cards, Grub Hub etc.

How do you find out who is temporarily homebound due to surgery, illness, or other cause?

Organize parishioners who would be willing to provide a meal for individuals or families in a difficult time.

Parish-wide service days – ask in the neighborhood if people need help with raking leaves, painting, or other chores.

Service for parishioners in need.

See Section 5 of the Domestic Church toolkit.

Policies for how to help those in need immediately or connect with social service organizations.

Policy for response and list of resources for requests from people with basic survival needs.

St. Vincent de Paul

Closet with basic first aid, clothing etc.

State of Iowa social services.

Have parishes reach out to make relationships with people from these organizations.

In rural parishes, the pastor often handles these requests, or parishes could partner with other churches in small communities, perhaps through the ministerial association.

Grief Support

Annual Memorial Mass in November for those who have died in the past year.

Cards for the bereaved (for the whole first year after loss).

See Resources listed below.

Sacraments

Baptism: send one-year baptism anniversary cards.

Confirmation: send one-year confirmation anniversary card.

Marriage: gift; send one-year anniversary card; bulletin announcement for silver and golden anniversaries. One parish sends an image of the Holy Family to all couples married in their parish.

Resources

Websites

Divine Renovation Ministry offers tools to help

your parish get back on track for mission. <https://divinerenovation.org/>

Alpha is an 11-week course for evangelizing parishes. <https://alphausa.org/catholic-context/>

Nourish for Caregivers provides faith-based support and resources to caregivers. <https://nourishforcaregivers.com/>

Stephen Ministries trains ministers to provide Christ-centered care to people experiencing life difficulties. <https://www.stephenministries.org/default.cfm>

Grief Share Group serves those who are grieving with in-person and online support. <https://www.griefshare.org/>

Good Mourning Ministry offers bereavement resources for Catholic churches, people, and dioceses. <https://www.goodmourningministry.net/>

LAMB (Language, Accessibility, Meaningful Participation, Belonging) is an assessment tool offered by the National Catholic Partnership on Disability to guide the development and evaluation of programs, materials, and other resources relative to accessibility or usability for all persons. <https://ncpd.org/LAMB>

Books

Becoming a Parish of Mercy by Matt Halbach offers actions and attitudes of accompaniment that can bring Pope Francis' vision of a more merciful Church to life in your parish. <https://www.jumpincatholic.com/product-page/becoming-a-parish-of-mercy-ebook>

The Art of Accompaniment: Theological, Spiritual, and Personal Elements of Building a More Relational Church, developed by Colleen Campbell and Thomas Carami, is available to read online or download for free (QR code)at. <https://www.catholicapostolatecenter.org/art-of-accompaniment.html>

Seasons of Hope by M. Donna MacLeod offers a grief support program focusing on the spiritual side of grief. <https://www.avemariapress.com/products/seasons-of-hope-leaders-guide>

Guide for Forming a Parish Bereavement Ministry by Robert Valle guides parish leaders toward creating a bereavement ministry that flows from the liturgical and pastoral vision of the Church's official funeral rites. <https://www.ltp.org/products/details/FPBM/guide-for-forming-a-parish-bereavement-ministry>



An Introduction to Bereavement Ministry: Caring for Those Who Mourn by Corinna Laughlin addresses ministry with the dying and with the bereaved at the time of death and throughout the year following a death. <https://www.ltp.org/products/details/IBM/ibm>

Grieving: A Spiritual Process for Catholics by Paula Kosin provides insights and information about human patterns of grieving and recommends practices to support the grieving process such as journaling, mindfulness meditation, prayer, and nature therapy. <https://www.ltp.org/products/details/GCP/gcp>

Staff/Volunteer Leader Training

If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. (John 13:14)

Becoming a parish that excels at welcoming and care must start within. The staff and leadership must be examples for the entire parish. Ongoing training should be a part of creating that culture and sometimes an entire shift in culture will be necessary.

Parish Assessment

1. Do we focus on training and encouraging our staff and leadership to be models of welcoming and care?
2. How do we support and recognize our staff and volunteer leaders?
3. Where is our parish an open door and where are we a closed door?
4. Are the Mass, reconciliation times, and office hours based on the needs of the community?
5. Do we have policies that are not welcoming?
6. Consider a parish survey to assess the current environment and to measure change once new ideas have been implemented. Some resources are:

Faith Member Engagement (ME25) from Gallup [https://store.gallup.com/p/en-us/10299/faith-member-engagement-\(me%3Csup%3E25%3C%2Fsup%3E\)-survey-program](https://store.gallup.com/p/en-us/10299/faith-member-engagement-(me%3Csup%3E25%3C%2Fsup%3E)-survey-program)

Disciple Maker Index from the Catholic Leadership Institute <https://www.catholicleaders.org/disciple-maker-index>

SurveyMonkey Genius <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/surveymonkey-genius/>

Best Practices

Staff/ Volunteer Leaders

A culture shift starts with staff and all leadership.

Policies help the staff maintain order and treat everyone fairly, but they must be evaluated and changed to be sure that the pastoral needs of our parishioners are being met.

Identify strengths and ways to continue to grow in these areas.

Identify challenges and strategies to improve.

Answer emails, phone messages and inquiries within 24 hours.

Follow up when you are not able to help someone on the spot.

Remember that every individual we encounter is made in the image and likeness of God.

Ask ourselves and each other: Did we meet the need of the person we interacted with? Did they feel loved and heard?

Prayer

Have weekly staff prayer time together.

Pray for each other's ministry.

Pray for the parishioners.

Pray for the volunteers and ministries.

Training Topics

Continued formation helps us remember that we are Christians first.

Keep handy a list of talking points that could help in tough situations.

Humble Inquiry is a style of listening that ensures that the speaker feels heard. See Resources for more information.

Training/resources for receptionist/staff who handles day-to-day inquiries/situations.

Thank Volunteers

A Church is the people, not the leadership. Be intentional about thanking every group of volunteers annually at a minimum.

Ideas:

- Thank you wine and cheese
- Thanksgiving cards from the priest
- Grill out
- Brunch
- Cards of appreciation written by students
- Happy hour at the rectory with pastor
- Cookies
- Christmas carol at homes of volunteers
- Small gifts or gift cards

Resources

Websites

Recruiting Volunteers: The Art and Science of Invitation, webinar from OCP <https://www.learnwithocp.org/video/v/inviting-volunteer>

Crucial Conversations <https://cruciallearning.com/crucial-conversations-book/>

Books

Staff book for discussion: **Becoming a Parish of Mercy** by Matt Halbach

<https://www.jumpincatholic.com/product-page/becoming-a-parish-of-mercy-ebook>

Humble Inquiry: The Gentle Art of Asking Instead of Telling by Edgar H. Schein

<https://www.bkconnection.com/books/title/Humble-Inquiry-Second-Edition>

For more information email toolkits@dmdiocese.org