

Expanding Our Welcome

May 2024 Edition



Consider This

Though some people seeking a church home feel overwhelmed in the face of too much welcoming friendliness, this is generally the minority. Those who “date” churches are seeking a place to put down roots, establish relationships, feel comfortable, and be fully accepted.

What is the vibe of your congregation? Does it welcome the stranger with energetic hospitality? Do visitors report that no one spoke to them? If they return, does anyone recall their name, or acknowledge their return? Is your congregation savvy about who might walk in the door: divorced, formerly incarcerated, single parents, gay/queer/non-binary, homeless, of color, military, disabled? Are your members devoted to welcoming the stranger?

It can take a year for someone to feel assimilated into a congregation. Friendship takes time. But seeking commonality with others is a good start. Mutual interests discussed over coffee or on walks, sharing books, playing a sport, carpooling, mailing a note, meeting for a lecture or music performance, can all cultivate meaningful connection.

It takes a spirit of intrepid hospitality to receive *whoever* crosses our threshold in an enthusiastic way. And it can require some stretching and education. From there we become more able to embrace the unfamiliar and the new, and more fully able to exhibit God’s love for *all people*. What a beautiful thing!

Here are some links that might be helpful as your congregation seeks to expand welcome:

https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Congregations-and-Synods/Disability-Ministry?_ga=2.248802887.196276523.1716228436-2078470978.1653923822

<https://www.faithward.org/everybody-belongs-serving-together/mental-health-challenges-and-the-church/>

<https://www.neurodiversechurch.org/>

~Newsletter articles written by ELCA Lutherans in the SWWA Synod who support RIC

RIC Work Team

The RIC Work Team serves as a resource for congregations and ministries throughout the synod as we all seek to expand our welcome in creative and life-giving ways. In this new publication we hope to provide practical ideas for your congregation to consider. Each month will have a different focus and some resources you may find valuable.

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