

**“This Church of Ours Is Open to All. There Will Be No Outcasts.”
Edmond Browning, Former Presiding Bishop, Episcopal Church**

Welcoming Churches

Quotes from the NIV Bible:

Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.
Romans 12:13

¹³Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. ¹⁴As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

¹⁵While Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and “sinners” were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the “sinners” and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: “Why does he eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?”

¹⁷On hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”
Mark 2:13-17

Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.
1 Peter 4:9

But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”
Luke 15:2

For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him.
Acts 28:30

Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself.
Galatians 4:14

Quotes from *episcopallife closerlook: this month's in-depth report:*
(<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/episcopal-life/>)

... making newcomers feel welcome begins the moment a visitor arrives at the door.

Liturgical churches are an anomaly for most people in the United States. ... most visitors who walk into Episcopal churches are not traditional Episcopalians. The image they get about Christianity, in general, is from their televangelist. Since we are not like that, people are confused. So to welcome people into our midst, we have a big job to do.

The real difference between a welcoming congregation and a non-welcoming congregation is primarily whether they are there for themselves or for the visitor. We need to realize that we put up a lot of hurdles, even when we are trying to be friendly. We use a lot of 'code' language; we do our liturgy for ourselves and not for our visitors.

Welcoming newcomers [in one church] is part of an intentional, well-developed method that acquaints visitors with the church and encourages their participation. It begins with some core values of the parish. The issue of hospitality is an intentional mindset in the parish.

The parish's mission statement affirms the "value of inclusion and diversity." "We are active in justice work in the community and have a progressive agenda. People come here for that."

Our goal is to properly welcome and further integrate [visitors] into the church family, and the way that we are most successful in integrating them is by getting them hooked up with activities that the church is doing ... that are more than coffee hour.

Don't call them "visitors." According to Webster, a visitor is "...a person who resides temporarily; one who goes or comes to inspect." May I suggest you use the word "guest" — a person welcomed into one's house; to whom hospitality is extended. Why not stop being a "greeter" — "one who meets or extends welcome in a specified manner," and become a host — "one who receives or entertains socially."