

ALL SAINTS ARE WELCOME



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH WELCOMES YOU

I moved to New England in 1993. Driving around I noticed these signs as I crossed into many towns in the region. The Episcopal Church welcomes you. They made me smile. I got a dose of the warm fuzzies. That's my church. But then I noticed there was neither address nor direction on any of the signs. The Episcopal Church welcomes you (if you can find it). If you belonged you would know where it is. The sheen of welcome was slightly dulled. Welcome is an essential ingredient in forming community. When we are in community we feel welcome. We feel seen. We feel safe. We know we fit without having to contort ourselves to fit in.

In Mark 6:1-6 we encounter an instance of Jesus being unwelcome in his hometown. He no longer fit the image that the townspeople had of him; so he no longer fit in. As we think about our own church communities we are invited to ask, "Are we really welcoming?" Can people find us? Are our worship times posted? Do we invite people in? And all of the other markers of welcome that committee members described. And once people have joined us do we offer room to grow?

WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL WELCOME?

THE ESSENCE OF FEELING WELCOME

(page 2)

Explore what makes someone feel genuinely welcome in a church through a series of thoughtful observations. From being greeted with a smile and having their name remembered, to being listened to attentively and invited to participate, discover the key elements that create a sense of belonging. Learn about the importance of respect, openness, and accessible liturgy in making a newcomer feel at home. This piece provides a heartfelt look at the small but significant ways to foster a welcoming church environment

THE POWER OF A SMILE

(page 4)

Explore the reflections of an introvert on what makes a church feel welcoming. From a simple smile to inclusive aesthetics, discover how small gestures and an open, patient community can make a significant difference. Learn how providing space and time for newcomers to explore at their own pace fosters a sense of belonging without pressure. Dive into this thoughtful piece to understand the nuances of creating a welcoming church environment.

SEEING MYSELF IN THE CHURCH

(page 5)

Unpack the importance of visible diversity in a church setting. From noticing people of color in various roles to the representation in art and photographs, see how inclusivity and agency matter. Learn how greetings, clear instructions, and genuine introductions make newcomers feel embraced. Discover how offering ways to get involved and making the first move can create a truly welcoming environment.



DAVID

The Essence of Feeling Welcome: A Personal Reflection

I feel welcome when I am greeted with a smile, when my name is remembered and I am addressed by name. When someone listens to me and is present, and isn't obviously distracted when doing so, I feel welcome. It is also a good feeling of welcome to be invited to share in something or be asked to participate.

I feel welcome when I'm given the respect and space to be allowed to find my own way. This is also true when someone asks "How are you?" then really listens to the answer, perhaps showing this by gently challenging my response, exhibiting a more than superficial interest.

I feel welcome when I am invited to share a meal or am asked for my opinion, likewise when someone shows me gratitude.

I feel welcome when I am not the centre of conversation and when there is a degree of openness so that I am allowed to express myself in a manner that suits me without overt public criticism.

I feel welcome when someone indicates their willingness to embrace me, offering the warmth of their touch.

I feel welcome in church when the liturgy is accessible and seems familiar, where there is evident alignment and focus on receiving and responding to the light of Christ, where attention is at least as much on external than internal matters, and when actions speak the words and I am neither isolated nor overwhelmed.

I feel welcome
when:

When my name
is remembered

Someone listens
to me and is
present, not
distracted, when
doing so.

Someone shows
me gratitude.

I am invited to
share a meal.

I'm given the
respect and
space to find my
own way.

I am asked to
participate.



Small Gestures That Make a Big Difference

Being greeted with a smile, handed a bulletin or brochure. Being asked my name (special points if that person remembers it later). Being asked if I am new and offered instructions (what is happening today that is special; how to participate in communion; sometimes shown where to sit so I can see / hear what is happening, etc.)

When the greeter notices I have a need – like having a coat to hang up or children to deliver to Sunday School – and addresses that need.

I never thought of a building as being 'unwelcoming', though I have found it to feel somewhat foreign – like the very baroque little Catholic church in our village. It is completely 'other' to the churches I usually attend. The busy-ness of the artwork makes it tempting to look around rather than listen to the service.

LOIS



The Power of Kindness

One act of kindness makes me feel welcome. One act of kindness can transform a person's day, or even their life. "Kindness is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit" (Galatians 5:22)

As the saying goes, 'Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.' Angela Maya said, 'I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.'

Unexpected kindness is the most powerful, least costly and most underrated agent of human change.

I feel welcome if people greet me with a genuine interest accompanied by a smile. A clergyman visited my home for a cup of tea. I felt welcome in his life circles.

When kindness is expressed, healthy relationships are created, community connections are nourished and people are inspired to pass on kindness.

"Small things done with great love are changing the world.

When we carry out random acts of kindness like paying for a stranger's coffee or writing a 'thank you' note to a shop assistant." Kindness is love in work clothes.

This is how a church in Cincinnati, Ohio, grew to an average attendance of over 7,000. It is recounted in a book "Conspiracy of Kindness" by Steve Sjogren.

HASWELL

The Power of a Smile



STEPHANIE

By and large, being an introvert, what is most important for me is to be given space and time to explore, to get to know a place and the people. I like the anonymity at first and, once I am ready, I hope that if I'd like to belong, to join in, it will be welcome.

I can think of several comments, observations, which put me off and necessitated me to revise my approach and realise that there is a mutual effort to be made, that it also has to be when the community is ready.

I have been anonymous and neither welcome nor unwelcome in a number of communities and while it may feel odd, it was sometimes exactly what I needed. There are other times when I would have liked to belong more and for whatever reason the doors were shut.



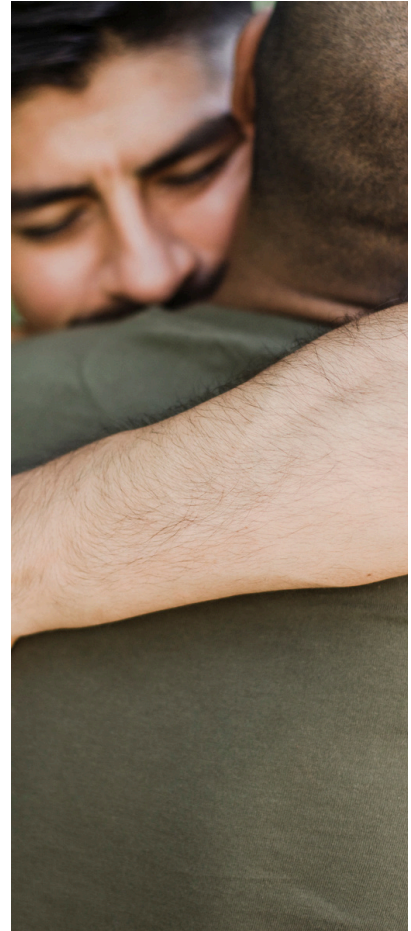
Also, broadly speaking, I have found churches themselves, that is, the buildings, rarely unwelcoming – perhaps because I would not dare enter certain places from the outset?

I may feel that I don't understand how a particular church functions, or why such and such elements are here and there, or I may just be curious about how different it is from what I am familiar with.

But I would not say that I have felt 'unwelcome' by a church building itself. However, I would say that a church where the aesthetics is inclusive, if not thought-provoking, engaging, or which visibly shows an interest and engagement with issues of our time, makes me feel immediately receptive and prompts me to engage spontaneously.

Human beings have had a very powerful impact on inclusion or exclusion. In some places, I have felt immediately rejected. In other places, I was touched by simplicity, genuine kindness, thoughtfulness which made me want to come back.

In terms of worship styles, I have enjoyed trying things out and what made me feel welcome was when people realised that I was new and clearly not aware of what was going on, were patient and not judgmental but gave me space to understand and join as much or as little as I felt comfortable with.





Visible Diversity: Seeing Myself in the Church

MPHO

I take note of visible diversity. Are there people of colour? What roles do they fulfil?
I look at the decoration, visual representations; fixed, and moveable art, displayed photographs and posters. Is there anyone who looks like me? What are they doing? How are they portrayed? It does make a difference to me whether people of colour are shown to have agency or are depicted as targets of mission or assistance.

I feel welcome when people greet me. I feel welcome when people smile. I feel welcome when someone says the word "Welcome"

I feel welcome when it isn't assumed that the way things are done in a place is the only possible way of doing things so instructions or guidance are offered

"Please be seated for the reading",

"Let us stand and pray together..."

"The collect can be found on page three of the blue leaflet."

I feel welcome when people introduce themselves, and reintroduce themselves. "I'm Jenny, we met last week." ; "I'm Nina, Tommy's mom."

I feel welcome when I am offered ways to get involved: "The prayer chain is looking for new members, if it sounds like a ministry for you, please see me at coffee hour, I am Jonathan and my number is in the leaflet"

I feel welcome when someone makes a step towards me.

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