

# Incorporation Process Assessment 3/13/22

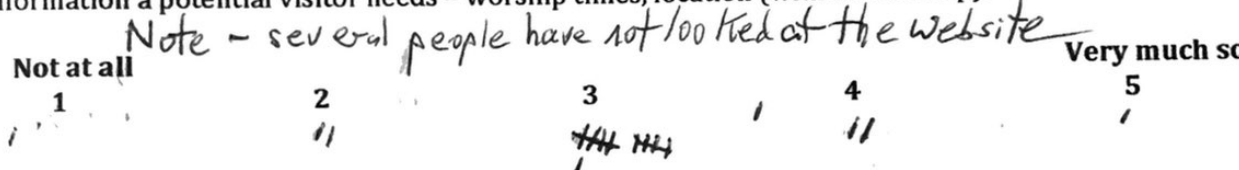
This assessment looks at the incorporation process as three phases: welcoming, orienting, and integrating. They are distinct phases as well as ongoing, overlapping processes.

The bias of this assessment is that parishes need a way that incorporates people that increases the likelihood that people will become mature, adult Christians in this tradition of the Church.

## Welcoming & First Contact

*These very initial encounters provide the visitor with an opportunity to experience what being part of this community will be like. It is the beginning of a pathway into a transformation of life. These first steps need to be in alignment with the desired result - maturity in Christ.*

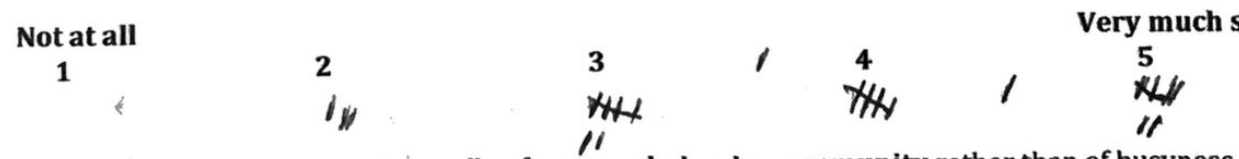
1. The **parish web site** is beautiful and easy to navigate. The home page provides the basic information a potential visitor needs - worship times, location (with link to map).



2. The parish has a **defined parish culture**. We know who we are as a community; we have ways of being and doing that are widely "owned" in the parish. We have a sense of identity and integrity. [Note: Without the boundaries of a defined parish culture we have nothing to welcome people into]



3. Visitors are **invited to find a space** in which they make themselves at home. The tone is receptive and open rather than impatient, intrusive or passive. It is an invitation to join a community with worthy way of life; a life in which the person may be changed.



4. The visitors' first impression is usually of a **grounded, calm community** rather than of busyness and rush. The **focus is around the Eucharist and coffee hour**. There are usually no meetings or adult education activities competing for attention.



5. On entering there is **just enough information** handed a visitor to allow making sense of how things are about to be done (information on the parish is available but not pushed upon people). An example of "just enough information" is the Sunday bulletin and a sheet saying:

- Participating in the Worship: You are welcome to enter into the Liturgy or if you prefer to allow the congregation to carry you as you become familiar with the flow and pattern.
- Children: Children may stay with their family during the Eucharist or participate in the child care (located at \_\_) or church school (located at \_\_)
- Communion: If you would like to receive communion .....
- Coffee hour - There is a time of community and social contact just after the Eucharist. Please join us. (Give directions to the location)

Not at all

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Very much so

6. The liturgy is usually well done. It has the structure, climate and rhythm of Apostolic faith. It requires some competence. It has the potential to catch people up in something beyond themselves; to feed wonder and awe. The congregation knows how to participate without prompting.

Not at all

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Very much so

7. Visitors pick up that they may choose to actively participate or allow the congregation to carry them. The congregation competently participates and therefore models. There are ways of providing assistance to visitors without moving in the direction of turning the congregation into an audience - directions and/or rehearsal before the Eucharist begins, worship leaflets with adequate information on the liturgical action of the congregation, members offering hymnals/Prayer Books, and so on.

Not at all

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Very much so

8. The preaching usually has a good pace, style, sense of ease, and length. It connects the tradition with life. There is an authenticity about the preacher and what is said.

Not at all

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Very much so

9. The Liturgical Space is graceful, not cluttered; is beautiful; fits the congregation's size and style of worship. Those serving at the altar can move about without awkwardness.

Not at all

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Very much so

10. We have a way of **getting visitor contact information** that is easy for the visitor to respond to (for example, asking for the minimal amount of information needed for a next step – name, e-mail, phone). The process is quick and easy, for example – we don't bother to ask for information that fits a later stage - about participation in parish groups. [Note: If the person gives you basic contact information they know you'll be in contact]

<b>Not at all</b>				<b>Very much so</b>
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11. We are good at **getting visitors to come to coffee hour**.

<b>Not at all</b>				<b>Very much so</b>
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12. The **coffee hour** is well attended, lively; people appear to be glad to be together. The beverages and food served is at least as good as what people would receive in a successful coffee shop.

<b>Not at all</b>				<b>Very much so</b>
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13. We provide **attention to visitors**, and newer attendees, by making sure that they are not abandoned. We have lots of nametags available for members and visitors to put on. There's a person or two who accept responsibility for this (they have the gift and some training in hospitality and listening). [Note: A coffee hour is primarily about the community's need for connection. It's a mostly informal time allowing people to wander the room and talk with a variety of people. That needs to be protected while visitors are paid attention to]

<b>Not at all</b>				<b>Very much so</b>
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14. The **priest makes contact** with visitors at coffee hour and follows up with the person within the week.

<b>Not at all</b>				<b>Very much so</b>
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*A number of people didn't know*

15. We understand the **difference between welcoming and inclusion**. Our task is to be a welcoming community. Inclusion is a longer-term process and involves the new person making choices to be included.

<b>Not at all</b>				<b>Very much so</b>
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16. Other (if any):

<b>Not at all</b>				<b>Very much so</b>
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# Orienting

Number of "I don't know" responses

An opportunity, in a very basic and initial manner, to become familiar with and connected to the people and ways of this parish. The person is trying to get a sense of whether he or she will fit in here. Early on they begin to explore a place within the community and to develop the core competencies needed to live in the community. This is the beginning of the parish's effort to orient people for a fuller relationship with Christ and his Church. As known and lived in the Episcopal Church.

1. **Information on parish life is available.** This may be a packet or a handbook with information on parish guilds and organizations, educational & spiritual formation opportunities, sacramental standards, and so on. The information is also on the web site.

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much so

2. There is an **orientation to participation in the Eucharist** available on a regular basis (offered frequently enough to pick up even small groups of new people within a month or so. Might be an occasional session of 40 minutes just after the Eucharist and/or booklets that describe the ways in which members of the congregation can participate). There are booklets available on the congregation's Eucharistic practices. [Note: The orientation is not an "instructed Eucharist" that cuts across the community's usual worship and is theoretical in tone. It is about how people in the congregation can participate - in the spoken parts, in silence, in the use of the body]

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much so

3. A **gathering** that is partly social and partly educational; done as needed, at least once every 3 - 4 months. It may be a social event at the rectory - with priest and 2 - 3 parish leaders who are good at such events. Or it could be a newcomers class in the parish hall.

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much so

4. There's an **orientation to core spiritual practices** available on a regular basis (offered frequently enough to pick up even small groups of new people within a month or so). There is a booklet available on spiritual practices.

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much so

5. Other (if any):

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much so

# Integrating

*This is about integrating a person into a healthy and faithful community. It assumes there is ongoing attention to the formation of the parish community and that people may be integrated into that process. The parish needs an ability to help people enter more deeply into the Christian life; to assist them in forming a spiritual discipline (rule of life;) and in developing increasingly mature habits for Christian living. A very useful resource in doing this is a foundation course for adults. A foundations course is a substantial educational and training program that is repeated over the years and is used to incorporate people into the parish and the spirituality of the Episcopal Church.*

1. New people and long-term members have regular opportunities to **develop a spiritual discipline** and a rationale for it.

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Very much so

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2. New people and long-term members have regular opportunities to build **relationships and friendships** with others.

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Very much so

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3. New people and long-term members have regular opportunities to **learn the tradition, especially the daily and weekly rituals** -- Holy Eucharist, praying the daily prayers of the church with the church (Office), and forms of personal devotions that fit the person's personality and provide ways of reflecting that allowing us to see our experience in relationship to who we are as baptized members of the Body

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Very much so

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4. New people and long-term members develop an awareness that we are **representatives of Christ and his Church wherever we may be**; seeing that most people's ministry is in their family, with friends, and work and as citizens.

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Very much so

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5. New people and long-term members are helped to **establish a responsible form of participation in parish life**. For some that will be focused on the basics of Sunday Eucharist, pledging and attending a few parish meetings; for others it will involve accepting a leadership role.

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Very much so

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6. Other:

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Not at all

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Very much so

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