

# Welcome Programme 2006

## Meeting II - Guidance Notes

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### Introduction:

The purpose of this meeting is to review the assessment work that has been undertaken since the first meeting and to reflect upon what it means for your parish.

At the end of the first meeting, you should have given out this pink booklet which includes - **Assessing your Parish Welcome** and **How Family Friendly is your Parish?**

You need to allow sufficient time between meetings (at least 3-4 weeks) for your Parish Group to work through these assessment sheets and engage others to determine how your Parish currently meets your community's needs.

Try and take time to engage with a wide variety of people in your parish community – particularly those who don't attend services regularly i.e. families with children in your parish school (it may be that they don't feel particularly welcome when they do come!!)

### Getting started:

When the Group comes back together, it is suggested that you use the 'Reflection' music and slides on the DVD again to begin the meeting. If any new people have joined the Group since the last meeting, remember to give them the background slides so that they know what the programme is about and how we are organising it in our Diocese.

### Start with the Positives!

Use flip charts or blank paper to list up all the positive things you have discovered about your 'Parish Welcome' and specifically how you cater for the needs of families.

*Depending on the size of the Group you may do this together or in two separate groups, one covering 'Welcome' in general the other covering 'Family Friendly' aspects of your parish welcome.*

### Identifying the Gaps.

On a separate flip chart/paper, list the areas where your audit has identified gaps or a specific need in your Parish that is not currently being catered for.

Try and list these in three categories:

- 1. Quick Fixes** (simple practical steps that you can action quickly and easily)
- 2. Short-Medium term improvements** (possibly requiring some additional discussion/ input from others and/or requiring funds/resources)
- 3. Longer term improvements** (possibly requiring more detailed discussion/input from outside the parish and/or requiring substantial funds/resources)

There may be some areas where the Parish needs more support from the Deanery or Diocese. Try to highlight these on your flip charts or create a separate list so that these can be raised at the Deanery/Diocesan meetings later in the year.

The Group leader should bring the meeting to a close (you might wish to play the DVD again by way of a quiet reflection or have somebody read a particular passage from scripture).

Again, you need to delegate somebody to bring all the output from this meeting together by way of a short report or at least type up the points noted on your flip charts/paper.

Your next meeting should then concentrate on developing an action plan for your Parish which will allow you to develop specific responses to the needs identified during the reflection and audit process.

Later in the year we will be planning to come together again, first in our Deaneries and then as a Diocese to share all the positive aspects of 'Welcome' and to discuss ways in which we can support each other into the future.

## Meeting II

### Assessing your Parish Welcome

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*Some questions for you to consider in assessing how welcoming your Parish is to others.*

#### First Impressions:

- Are the Church grounds neat and tidy?
- Is the entrance to the church clearly marked and brightly lit on dark nights?
- Is there a notice of service times that can be read from outside the church?
- Are the phone numbers of the Priest/parish office clearly displayed?
- Are your porches/entrance areas brightly lit and tidy?
- Are the notice Boards tidy and updated regularly? Are the posters friendly, colourful and informative?
- Is there plenty of information about Parish activities? Does it contain names and telephone numbers if people want more information or are interested?
- If you have a car park, is it clearly signposted? Is it safe for people at night?
- Does the Church sound system work adequately? Can people hear at the back?
- Is the Church warm enough or do people have to wear coats to keep warm?
- Are toilet facilities available and easy to locate?
- Is there an induction loop for the hearing impaired?
- Is there a large print newsletter, service sheet etc for the visually impaired?

#### The Welcome

- How are people greeted when they arrive at Church? How are 'welcomers' identified?
- Does anyone give out hymn books, mass books, service sheets etc?
- Do members of the congregation openly greet or welcome others around them?
- Do parishioners greet and welcome people at baptism, funerals and other services?
- Are newcomers formally welcomed at the start of a service?
- Is it made clear when people should stand, sit, kneel etc or do you just expect people to follow what others are doing?
- Is it clear *when* and *how* to receive communion? Are people who cannot receive communion invited to come forward to receive a blessing?
- Do the Priest(s) and/or designated lay people greet people at the back of church?

## **How child friendly is your church?**

- Is there an area where children/toddlers can go without disturbing others?
- Is there an area where young children can be fed/nappy changed etc?
- Is there a selection of books, crayons, paper, quiet toys for children?
- Is there a children's Liturgy of the Word or other specific activity for children?
- Does someone invite new children to join these activities?
- Are members of the congregation involved in the children's liturgy?
- Are the children involved in the procession of the gifts?
- Are young children encouraged to come for a blessing at communion?
- Do young people generally, play an active part in the service?
- After the service are there drinks, biscuits, toys etc for children?

## **Following up the Welcome!**

- Do you provide tea/coffee after services? Are newcomers openly invited?
- Are there welcome cards for newcomers to fill in to give their name and addresses?
- Does the parish have a welcome pack to give or send them?
- How soon are newcomers contacted after their first introduction?
- Does your parish have a process for welcoming 'returning' Catholics?
- Does the parish organise events specifically to welcome people?

## **Catering for everyone's needs.**

- Do you have parking facilities for the disabled? How easy is it for disabled people to access the church?
- Are people with disabilities invited to undertake liturgical ministries?
- Are all social/ethnic groups included in the life of the parish?
- Does the church have a bookstall or repository or library?
- Are there regular social events in the parish?

## **Parish Communication**

- Does the church have contact with the local press?
- Does the parish have a website? Is it updated regularly?
- Does the Parish post newsletters to those who can't get to Church?
- Does the parish organise leaflet drops in the neighbourhood?

## Meeting II

### How Family Friendly is your Parish?

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*Here are some questions for you to consider with regard to how your Parish supports families. It is not expected that every parish should offer all that is listed. The important point is that we create a parish community where families feel that they belong, whether they are passing through or staying for many years. Is your parish the kind of environment that actively supports parents/carers/families? Are they given space to develop as Christians themselves, and how much help do they get as they introduce their faith to their children? Does your Parish community help families of all dimensions to feel comfortable and valued?*

- What is there for expectant parents in your parish?
- Are there pre-baptismal events where they can get to know other parents?
- Do you provide Baptism preparation? Do non-Catholic partners feel welcome?
- Do you offer practical support to young families i.e. a clothes exchange, second hand baby equipment service, toy library etc?
- Do you have a parent and toddler group for all families connected to the parish?
- Do you offer support for children who do not attend Catholic schools?
- How do you cater for non-Catholic partners in the Sacramental programme?
- Is your sacramental preparation programme sensitive to families in different domestic situations or does it assume that all children are living with two parents in a traditional family setting?
- Is there any support for children after school for working parents?

- Does everybody know who is responsible in the parish for the protection of children and vulnerable adults?
- What is available for young people in your parish?
- How does your parish link in with young people at secondary school?
- Do young people in your parish participate in any Deanery/Diocesan activity i.e. Lourdes Group, World Youth events etc?
- Do you have any church services specifically for or focused on young people?
- How do you help parents of young people? Do you run any courses or groups for single, separated or divorced parents? How do you support parents of teenagers?
- Do you have any parish activities where all the family can join in and have fun i.e. socials, outings, sports events, weekend breaks etc.?
- Does your liturgy (words and music) reflect your community? In its active participants? In special celebrations?
- Do you have a parish magazine? Is it sent to housebound/elderly parishioners?
- Do you provide opportunities for sharing skills, experiences and information?
- Do you have a supply of leaflets, information available on problem areas?
- Do you know where to find help for families who are looking for support with social issues/problems i.e. bullying, drugs/alcohol abuse, domestic violence etc.

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