

Moving From Inviting to Inclusion to Radical Welcome

Our Message

"Come, join our community and share our cultural values and heritage."



Invite

"Help us to be diverse."



Include

"Bring your culture, your voice, your whole self—we want to engage in truly mutual relationship."



Welcome

The Goal

assimilation:
community invites new people to enter and adopt dominant identity

incorporation:
community welcomes marginalized groups, but no true shift in congregation's cultural identity and practices

incarnation:
community embodies and expresses the full range of voices and gifts present, including The Other

The Effort

Inviting newcomers into existing structures and identity; rejection or marginalization of those who do not assimilate

Stated commitment to inclusivity, and individual initiative, but less systemic analysis of power

Systems and programs to embrace various groups' presence, gifts and perspective, so that new voices help to shape ministries and structures

The Result



Healthy numbers (some from marginalized groups), but institution and membership overwhelmingly monocultural



Revolving door, with marginalized people remaining on fringe or leaving; institutional structure remains largely monocultural



Transformed and transforming community with open doors and open hearts; groups share power and together shape identity, mission, leadership, worship and ministries

Moving from Invitation to Radical Welcome

The Center for Progressive Renewal recognized that talk about being an "Inviting" Church really had lost its zip. Almost every church strives to be inviting. Almost every church wants to be known as inviting. There are, however, differences between a church that sorta, kinda wants people to be a part of their company and churches who radically welcome people to actually participate in the transformation of a church.

To the left is a chart put forward by the Center for Progressive Renewal which outlines those differences. One church's message says, "Come, join our community and share our cultural values and heritage." An inclusive church says, "Help us to be diverse." A radically welcoming church says, "Bring your culture, your voice, your whole self—we want to engage in truly mutual relationship." I hope you hear the difference.

One says, "Become like us." The other says, in keeping with the bell hooks statement I read on Sunday, "I do not need to make you into something else to love you."

If we truly believe diversity is a gift of God, being and becoming a "radically welcoming" congregation becomes a necessary part of what it means to be Christian. Our diversity makes us hardier and more resilient. How do we be and become that place that does not invite newcomers into our existing structures and identity but allows new voices to help shape our ministries and structures?

Rev. Molly Baskette shared how, instead of having the regular Church Council meeting, she would send her Council out with a prayer and two by two into the community to walk around their neighborhood in silence for 30 minutes. They would then come back and report what they saw. What did their shoe leather and their eyes tell them about the needs and desires in their community? These days their once empty pews are largely full.