



Moving From Inviting to Inclusion to Radical Welcome

As you consider this grid, ask yourself the following questions:

- Which of these models best fits your church’s current reality, in general?
- What observations bring you to that conclusion?
- Who is The Other for you? What oppressed or marginalized group do you feel most compelled to welcome?
- What might this group’s experience be in your congregation? What barriers would they encounter?

	Inviting	Inclusion	Radical Welcome
The Message	“Come, join our community and share our cultural values and heritage.”	“Help us to be diverse.”	“Bring your culture, your voice, your whole self—we want to engage in truly mutual relationship.”
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	Systems and programs in place to invite and incorporate newcomers into existing structures and identity; rejection or marginalization of those who do not assimilate	Stated commitment to inclusivity, but less attention to ongoing programs, systemic analysis or power; emphasis on individual efforts	Systems and programs in place to invite and welcome people, including those from the margins; to ensure their presence, gifts and perspective will be visible and valued; and to ensure that these new communities, gifts and values influence the congregation’s identity, ministries and structures
The Result	Healthy numbers (perhaps with some members who claim marginal identity) but institution and its membership is overwhelmingly monocultural	Revolving door, with people coming from margins only to stay on fringe or leave; institutional structure remains monocultural, with some pockets of difference	Transformed and transforming community with open doors and open hearts; different groups share power and shape identity, mission, leadership, worship and ministries



The Radical Welcome Signs

Mission and Vision

What is it? (Mission) The congregation's understanding of its purpose
as God's people

(Vision) A specific, compelling picture of the community's future

The signs

1. The community has discerned and claimed a clear, compelling, transformational mission and vision that incorporates radical welcome of The Other.
2. The mission and vision guide the continuing development of the community's identity, ministries, leadership and worship.

Identity

What is it? The demographic markers like the church's size, median income, its dominant age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ideology, etc.; also includes the defining culture and story of the community's life to this point.

The signs

1. The congregation values its history, traditions and denominational heritage; it also fosters an identity flexible enough to include The Other.
2. Leaders have consciously studied the make-up of the surrounding community and related communities, and intentionally welcomed those neighbors to join and help to shape their common life and common mission.
3. The congregation is developing critical consciousness of who is inside, who is marginalized and who is outside, and why, and seeks to eliminate exclusionary barriers blocking The Other.

Ministries and Relationships

What is it? Any practices of the congregation related to fulfilling the mission and vision: pastoral care, evangelism, community service, justice ministries, community life, stewardship, Christian formation, external relationships and more.

The signs

1. The congregation's activities have been thoughtfully organized to reflect and fulfill the radically welcoming mission.
2. Community ministries reflect a desire for mutuality, empowerment and transformation of all participants (doing *with* others, rather than doing *for* others).
3. Ministries draw members at the community's center and its margins into mutual, transforming relationship.

Leadership and Feedback Systems

What is it? The set of mechanisms that enable a group to reflect effectively, make decisions, act and otherwise exercise power

The signs

1. Leaders are intentionally recruited, mentored and selected from the distinct groups in the community, with special attention to building power among the under-represented margins.
2. There is wide access to decision-makers and transparency regarding decision-making.
3. Different cultural and generational styles of leadership are understood and creatively accommodated.

Worship

What is it? The complex of ritual activities that serve to gather God's people and foster relationship with God and with each other through prayer, praise, sacrament and scripture

The signs

1. The make-up of the worshiping body—which may be spread over more than one service—reflects the surrounding community and communities with whom you seek meaningful relationship.
2. Liturgical texts, music, images and worship leaders reflect the congregation, surrounding community, and communities with whom you seek meaningful relationship.
3. The community's worship is lively and reflective, deeply rooted in lived traditions, yet open to fresh expressions (again, not necessarily in a single service).