

ALL DOORS OPEN

CONGREGATIONAL STRATEGIES
FOR COMPREHENSIVE
EVANGELISM AND OUTREACH



Arlin J. Rothauge, PhD

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Opening the Door To Our Own

[The word “door” in this analysis represents a complex set of dynamics in the relationship of the congregation to its social context.]

The Episcopal Church includes much diversity. “Our own” come from every race, age group, and lifestyle. However, even the most casual observer will notice that each Episcopal congregation tends to favor a certain profile and particular constituency. “Our own” in some congregations will be African-American, Anglo-American, Native American, Asian, Hispanic, or some distinct subcultural group. In other congregations, “our own” might consist, predominantly, of people over 50; or it might be made up of many young families; or it might consist of a mix of singles with some couples; or it could be a different mix of any of the above categories. A level of affluence, education, or employment might be characteristic of our membership. Whatever the distinctive profile of “our own,” the characteristics normally find a parallel in the ministry area that surrounds the church. As the neighborhood changes, the congregation should also change in order to accommodate the new diversity. In all our diversity, the one factor that still remains fairly constant is our denominational heritage: we are Episcopalians. Although such labels mean less and less in our society as a whole, we still assume that “our own” kind of people will affirm the shared Anglican heritage in some manner. Consequently, we first ask, what is happening at the familiar “front door” of the Episcopal Church?

The Episcopal Church registered a slight gain of 23,108 members, bringing us to 2,471,880 baptized members, as reflected in the 1991 parochial statistics report.¹ And in a recent study called *Ethos 90s*, it was found that 3% of the United States population names the Episcopal Church as their preference.² This percentage represents approximately

7.5 million, about three times our present membership.³ Clearly, we have evangelism work to do with “our own.”

In recent decades we have been disturbed because the back doors of our churches seemed to be more active than the front doors. In analyzing trends in the church from 1950 to 1990, Dr. Kirk Hadaway observed that the slowing down of growth among conservative churches and the continuing decline among most mainline churches are due largely to:

- a decline in the birth rate
- changing family patterns leaving fewer members in a household
- the defection of young adults
- an increasing number of marginal members who identify with the church but don’t belong
- a decrease in activities that reach people.

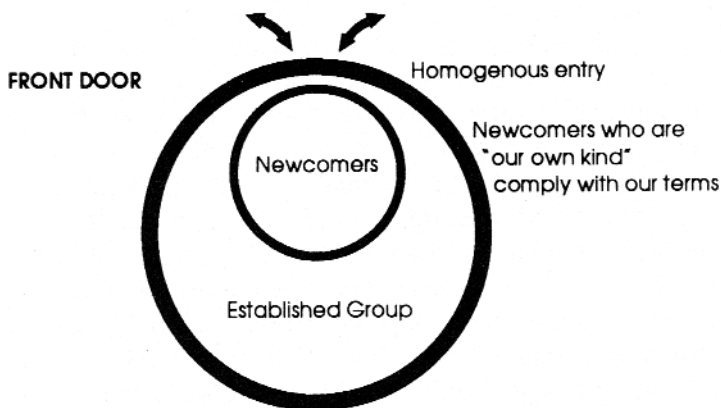
Membership in the Episcopal Church began to decline in 1966, and the losses were particularly serious in the late 1960s and early 1970s. After some letup in the late 1970s, the situation was worse in the 1980s -”even if we take into consideration the 1986 reporting change” that tightened the definition of what constitutes active membership in the church, Hadaway said.

“Episcopal Church members tend to be older than the average church member in the United States,” and they are “more educated, more affluent; also they have smaller families, and they tend to be theologically liberal,” Hadaway observed. Movement in and out of the denomination is also very noticeable in the Episcopal Church, and “today, there are almost as many adults who call themselves Episcopalians, but who are not church members, as there are baptized adults on your church rolls.” The existence of millions of “unchurched” persons who retain an Episcopal Church identity “suggests an opportunity,” Hadaway believes.⁴

When we open the door to “our own,” the first people across the threshold should be us! The first step in a comprehensive

strategy for evangelism will be Episcopalians reaching out to other people with an Episcopal preference. We may find that some prospective members have been active in a congregation in the past but at some point simply drifted away. Perhaps the bond was too weak, or the experience had ceased to be compelling. In other cases, an isolated problem may have grown into alienation. Perhaps, we will find a history of anger and deep disappointment. Reaching out to this group will require much energy, and should not draw us away from those prospects who have a fresh and eager attraction to the Episcopal Church. Jesus was always ready to work with the responsive listener. He did not care about their background or affiliation. His attitude may be a clue for us: we look first for the people who find few or no barriers in coming to the Episcopal Church. Secondly, we prepare ourselves for repairing the sad experiences that have caused some members to retreat from active participation.⁵

When newcomers approach our church doors, we assume most often that they are interested in our heritage and will consider conforming to our traditions. The new member is coming into our territory where our rules and our expectations determine the measure for acceptance. From the viewpoint of social dynamics, we could say that the newcomer enters into our “social contract.” Such expectations for passage always exist when an established group opens up to the new member. The social contract will impose requirements and offer benefits. It will prescribe many behaviors, traditions, and perspectives. Most visitors will soon discover, if they do not already know, the general flavor of the Episcopal Church. A successful entrance occurs when they welcome alignment with the established group and enjoy acceptance by it. In most cases, a considerable homogeneity will exist between the members of the congregation and the newcomers in this process.



In recent years we have learned more about ministry to newcomers, and most congregations have improved their hospitality by new procedures. We will review briefly these activities under three headings: **visibility to newcomers**, **greeting visitors**, and **incorporating new members**.

Visibility to Newcomers



In order to evaluate how easy it is to find a congregation, we might start at the residence of a newcomer in the area. Will the newcomer see an ad for our church among the community's church ads or listings in the local newspapers and phone books? If newcomers use the information they find about our church and its schedule of services in local newspaper listings or phone books, will it be updated and correct information? If they call their local Episcopal church, will they find a

pleasant and ready hospitality? If the phone yields only a recording on an answering machine, will the information they hear be updated and correct? Are there signs in town pointing the way to the church and displayed outside the church building? Are the signs well maintained? Valuable first impressions will be given by church signs, church buildings, and the people living in the area. Will people in the community

know about the church? Does the church have a good reputation in the area, and could others direct newcomers to it? Run your own tests. Does the church facility look like a house of prayer that holds a place of affection in the hearts of its members? Is it in good repair, and are the grounds kept up attractively? These outward and visible signs of congregational life do tell the prospective newcomer much about the members. Do not underestimate the value of visibility.

Greeting Visitors

The quality of hospitality to the visitor begins with the parking space. It happens rarely, but imagine how impressive it would be for visitors to a church to have the most prominent and convenient parking places in the church parking lot \ identified for them. This honor usually goes to staff and the early birds. Visitors may not be early; in fact they may be late if getting ready and finding the church did not go smoothly. A parking area for visitors in a “front row” location is also a reminder to the congregation about the importance of hospitality.



When the visitor comes up to the door, we hope that they can identify the correct door. How frustrating if everyone knows where to go but “me,” the visitor. Some entrance areas are obvious and others are not; check the front door with someone who has never walked on the grounds before. When passing through the front door, the visitors are always recognizable because of the look of “questions” and possibly confusion on their faces. We hope that they will be received by a gracious person assigned to be a greeter who senses their needs and will attend to them without embarrassment. What do we do with our coats? Where are the restrooms? And we can hope that the restrooms are bright and very clean. Check it out.

When parents are visiting a church with their children, they will have special anxieties. The parents will wonder about separation, and so will the children. The questions will be obvious. What will they think about my baby and children? Are they welcome? Does the church have special programs and places for them? Will the children be allowed to join us in worship? And again, we must hope that the childcare areas will be very clean and pleasant, with capable oversight. Ask yourself, “would I want my most precious baby and treasured child in this place with this person?”

After discovering the coat closet, restroom, and childcare facility, we return to the door into the nave. Where will the visitor be seated? Right up front - alone - is certainly not the best spot for a newcomer. Having a friend and host in the pew with the newcomer would really be the best way to make newcomers comfortable and help them to follow the sometimes complex twists and turns of the worship service. How does the church bulletin read for a visitor? Check it out: is it designed for a secretary, or for a visitor? More congregations are moving to service booklets or leaflets that contain complete texts for the liturgy, eliminating the need for newcomers to immediately try to master all of the books that they may find in the pews: hymnal, prayer book, Bible, and other special service books that are used in most Episcopal churches.

It is the custom in most Episcopal churches to invite visitors to join the congregation at coffee hour and, if baptized, to share in the Eucharist. Be careful about coffee hour. It gets lonely for visitors as we all chat with our friends. Provide coffee hour hosts who watch for someone who needs a little conversation and introducing around the room. This role has become as important as that of greeters at the church door as the congregation arrives for services.

Follow up has proven to be essential. A visitor takes time and makes an effort in reaching out to the congregation.

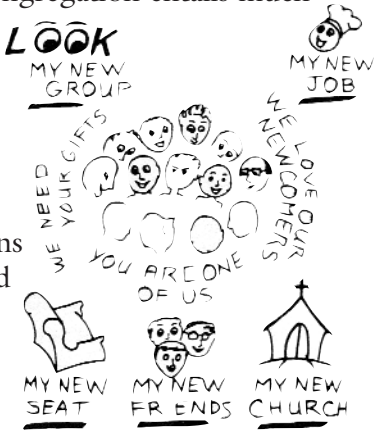
Will the congregation return that attention in some effective way, and soon? More and more, letters go out the week following a visit, and someone from the church phones visitors to thank them for the visit. Frequently, an appointment is made with a visitor who expresses interest in developing a closer tie with the church. Some congregations bring a gift, such as cookies or bread, to the home of the visitor very soon after the Sunday contact. All follow up assumes good information: accurate names, addresses, and phone numbers for interested newcomers. Do make some effective arrangements for getting this information; the methods vary. One priest wears a hidden tape recorder in his coat. Usually well trained greeters and coffee hour hosts can help in collecting essential information about newcomers with a smile and without offense.

Incorporating New Members

The inclusion of new members in a congregation entails much more than interpersonal bonding. It is essentially a drama of spirituality. Both factors are significant. People need to belong, and people need not come to church unless they want a spiritual pilgrimage. A program of incorporation should provide the means for finding a place and for finding God in new and more profound ways.

The procedures for giving a sense of belonging to new members has become a much more self-conscious

set of activities in most congregations. For example, we know that new members need friends, an opportunity to contribute, and a sense of identification or connection with the new congregation. These basic needs are met by becoming aware of the past experiences of newcomers in church life and with the personal gifts and talents that they might bring to the new church community. Some newcomers will prove to be leaders. Some will have special talents. In their previous congregations, they will have sung in the choir, served on the vestry, helped in



church school. We will certainly offer the opportunity to continue stewardship. We might present our vision of the mission of the congregation. New members may see connections between their personal gifts and the specific needs of the new community.

Beyond these obvious entry experiences for the new members, we might ask whether or not their spiritual life is vital and satisfying. It would be a mistake if a congregational incorporation process focused primarily on the needs of the host congregation. It is important for a new member to feel needed and a part of the Christian mission. Consequently, we ask, have the needs of the member been satisfied? Has the sense of faith and the value of Christianity been nourished? Do new members know that they are real ministers in daily life? It is at these deeper levels that most Episcopalians are asking, “does this church business mean anything to my life?” We do not wish to enlist the new member in meaningless expenditure of time, energy, and talents. Out of our faith journey flows our willingness to give, worship, and serve. In a secular society, we have many opportunities to give away money, worship our own success, and serve our personal needs. Can the church offer more?

A limited, but growing number of Episcopal congregations are using the powerful dynamics of small group life to move church participation beyond the experience of merely being part of an important civic institution in our society. The small group may gather at the church building or in homes. The new wave of small group life in the church today has a focus on spiritual growth and evangelism (see *Making Small Groups Effective*, Congregational Vitality Series Volume 4).

The incorporation process is greatly enhanced by small group experiences that give the new member the chance to bond with new friends in the faith, and an opportunity to take seriously a close Christian fellowship. Secularity today creates a hunger for greater Christian nourishment. With whom do you read the Bible, pray for deep concerns, laugh and cry over profound

experiences, support with Christian charity sisters and brothers who are suffering stress and or are in crisis? Particularly when a congregation grows larger, the small home group has the appeal of offering this unique experience. The newcomer classes and orientation experiences more frequently include an introduction to such Christian fellowship. Not all want it. On the other hand, some people will praise God for the new opportunity. Therefore, more congregations are using these small group occasions to supplement the traditional newcomers' dinner and inquirers' class.

Finally, we must affirm that the process of incorporation does not end with the initial period of becoming a new member of the congregation. If we were required to point out one major factor in the wasting away of members who drift back into our secular and unchurched society, it would be the necessity of constant renewal and new investment of our spiritual side in the home church, the Episcopal Church. We are all responsible for each other in this task of shepherding the flock. At any moment, you may become the lost lamb. It is easy to remain on the church rolls for decades. It is not easy to remain alive and active in our shared Christian pilgrimage. Life changes. We change. Our faith needs renewal. An old member may become disenchanted with the church and with Christian faith at any moment. New members and long-established members become partners on a journey from here to eternity. We look out for each other, and assume no immunities to the temptation of falling by the wayside. Everyone is a shepherd to other sheep. Every lamb needs everyone in the congregation to be a shepherd.

Opening the Door to Neighbors Different

Diversity is the most salient quality of divine creation. Our rational minds strain to find an order and a pattern in the endless mass of differences around us. No matter how many labels and categories we might create in forming a sense of similarity, our real experience humbles us with layer upon layer of difference. We are forced to a conclusion that God takes great delight in such a creation. It is from this perspective that we approach the variety in our ages, sexuality, personalities, races, cultures, and lifestyles. The neighbor who is different from us is a gift from God, and our commitment to love one another draws us into an appreciation of the differences. Beyond this acceptance, we stretch for the mutual enrichment of each other with our diversity.

This inherent vision in creation becomes a mandate of our Christian discipline. Christ was very open in his acceptance of all types and conditions of people. In his heart this unconditional love did not imply approval of brokenness and immorality. He held up both judgment and grace. His followers were clearly expected to demonstrate the same relationships. It is imperative, therefore, that the Christian community live up to the highest ideals, which include embracing others with their differences. Christian history and world mission enterprises have shown that the ideal is not always possible. The failure to attain it has sometimes caused bloodshed, domination, and cruel rejection even within the fellowship of the church. The horror stories of Christians burning heretics, chaining up slaves, and gassing Jews is a nightmare with no equal. But such gruesome moments in history remind us what can happen if we fail to place at the top of our values acceptance and love for neighbors who are different from us.

The reality of our congregations may challenge this wider and more inclusive vision. The contradiction comes not from who we are but where we are — that is, from our circumstances.

Most of the Episcopal Church buildings in the United States were constructed in small towns and neighborhoods at a time when those areas were populated predominantly by families with an Anglo-European background. In the last fifty years, approximately two-thirds of these ministry areas have undergone significant transition in constituencies. Frequently, different groups have moved into the areas while the founders of the congregations have relocated in new housing developments. Our large stone and heavy wooden structures remain behind, often without a clear reason for ministry. In most cases, the original membership has decreased greatly, consequently it would seem reasonable to redefine our mission in these locations. The congregational life and outreach should concentrate on the different groups who have come along.

Differences by Generation

The life of the church in the United States changes generationally, just as the life of the broader society changes and evolves. Essentially, the pews of Episcopal churches today are occupied by representatives of four generations. In their book, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584-2069*, authors William Strauss and Neil Howe identify the four generations that we can identify as coexisting in American churches today.⁶ Strauss and Howe call them the **G.I. Generation** (born 1921-1924); the **Silent Generation** (born 1925-1942); the **Boom Generation** (born 1943-1960); and the **Thirteenth Generation** (born 1961-1981). Many of the realities of life in our congregations - the divisions as well as the affinities - can be explained by examining the characteristics of these four generations.

For example, there is a marked gap in influences, interests, role models, and beliefs between the **G.I.s**, as the authors call them, and the **Silent**, on the one hand, and the **Boomers** and the **13ers**, on the other. The heroes, the presidents, and the events of the G.I.s, according to Strauss and Howe, included in their number heroes Charles Lindbergh, John Kenneth Galbraith,

Walter Cronkite, and Judy Garland; presidents Lyndon Johnson, Ronald Reagan, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, John F. Kennedy, Jimmy Carter and George Bush; and events included the Second World War, the McCarthy hearings in Congress, the first man on the moon, and the Watergate scandal. This generation, according to the authors, champions loyalty, duty, and global responsibility. A “good citizen,” in the eyes of the G.I.s, is faithful to the family church and the values of sacrifice.

The Silent, it seems, either agree with the values of the preceding G.I.s, or choose not to speak. However, we can detect new freedom among them in their choice of such heroes as Martin Luther King, Jr., Gloria Steinem, and Hugh Hefner. And the Kennedy assassinations and the Watergate scandal, traumatic events faced by this generation, created a sense of distrust among them. The theologians of the Silent once declared, “God is dead,” and the Silent sometimes still ponder that possibility seriously. However, duty and loyalty remain strong among their primary values.

The Boomers enter American society with the determination to get their share of the feast. “if it does not work or produce, don’t do it,” might serve as their motto. But hard, cold reality set in for the Boomers with the Vietnam War, the Kent State massacre, the spectacles of Oliver North, David Stockman, Donald Trump, Dan Quayle, and the messages found in *The Fate of the Earth* (Jonathan Schell) and *The Color Purple* (Alice Walker). Church for the sake of church no longer seems reasonable to the Boomers. The faith must make a difference in the world or be left behind. Although Boomers remain serious believers in a better future, only 33% remain loyal to the church. Among Boomers, 72% say they believe in God. In fact, 95% report that they grew up with parents who were religious. However, two-thirds dropped out of churches or synagogues in their teens. Among Boomers who dropped out, fewer than one in four have returned to active participation in religion. Some 70% say that one should attend worship not out of duty but only if it meets a need. Among Boomers, 80% claim that one can be a good Christian without attending church.⁷

As we move to the 13ers, we can see that trends spotted among the Boomers continue. The slide away from loyalty to formal church institutions continues: notice the responses in the Barna Report:⁸

	Ages	18-26	27-45	46-64
Religion is “very important” to me		5.1%	65%	79%
Attended worship in the past week		36%	10%	60%

The 13ers have lost their faith in the American dream. In this generation, 57% say it will be harder for them to own a home. Some 65% say that they will not live as comfortably as their parents. In this generation, 41% come from divorced families, and it is projected that 60% of them will, themselves, divorce. In 1991, the unemployment rate for people in their twenties was 29.8%, the worst unemployment rate for college graduates since 1970.⁹

Differences by Culture

Benjamin J. Wattenberg proposes that the United States is the first universal nation. “It is the first nation that was created by a stream of people from many cultures and ethnicities settling a continent and becoming a unique representation of the whole world in one new nation.” Wattenberg points out that in the fifty years prior to 1965, about 11 million immigrants legal and illegal, came to the United States. About 75% of those immigrants were of white European ancestry. The drama includes, in previous centuries, the tragedy of slavery and the takeover of land from the continent’s original native peoples. A new society emerged out of the racial conflict and ethnic mixtures. In the years since 1965, about 14 million immigrants have come to the United States, which is 27% more in half the time. About 85% of these recent arrivals are not of white European ancestry. The people of the United States for the first time can be accurately said to come from “everywhere.”¹⁰ “Until 1960 about 80% of American immigration had come from Europe; since 1960, about 80% came from places other than Europe. They are predominantly Hispanics, Asians, Muslims, and Caribbean and African blacks.”¹¹

Gradually, over the next century, the face of the United States will change further in color. Consider the following projected population shifts¹²:

Population Grouping	Percent of Population 1990	Percent of Population 2080
Hispanic	8%	19%
Black	12%	16%
White (non-Hispanic)	77%	55%
Asian and other	3%	11%

The birthing of the "first universal nation" dramatically influences the challenge that the Episcopal Church in the United States finds at its doorstep. In order to be a relevant institution in our society, and in order to be faithful to the "great commission," we must become, in fact, a universal church in this universal nation. We claim that our mission is to all people and to all the world. The world is now gathering at our doors.

In his provocative book, *The Once and Future Church*, Loren Mead refers to this shift of the mission frontier as he declared the heart of his thesis: "I am describing a church turned on its head. Upside down.. .the frontier has moved from the far-off edge of Empire to the doors of the local congregation.¹³ As we respond to this enrichment of our ministry areas by cultures and people from around the world, we seem to favor four methods at present: the **gateway congregations**, the **nesting congregations**, the **blended congregations**, and **ethnic-specific congregations**.

The **gateway congregation** receives immigrants in the very beginning of their settlement in the United States. Much support is required; language classes, job location, assistance in housing, health services, and opportunities to mingle with their own kind and enjoy their own customs. Eventually, members may situate themselves confidently and mobilize themselves successfully. As a consequence, members flow through the gateway into other levels and other sectors of American society. This constant drain might make it nearly impossible for

gateway congregations to become totally self-sufficient. But our mission is not wasted if we have other steps in congregational life available.

The **nesting congregation** arises in ministry areas that have well-established congregations (with members from a previous wave of immigration) who are willing to share their church facilities with the new arrivals. A **nesting congregation** will not, in all cases, have the financial resources for renting facilities for their services but some costs may be shared with the host church. The circumstances give an established congregation the opportunity to exercise Christian fellowship and some charity. Sharing “our home” with “strangers” will cause many tensions and questions about territory. This method of opening our doors is not a permanent and ideal solution for either congregation. However, with the high costs of constructing and maintaining buildings in some areas, we are pushed to test the virtues of the plan and the participants.

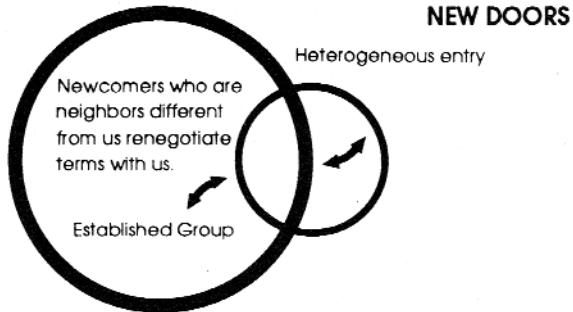
The **blended congregation** rings with the echoes of integration. Be aware that not all immigrants want to be integrated - if integration means losing their identity and pride in their own culture. “Therefore, we must be prepared to experiment with approaches that are somewhat more complex than integration. A **blended congregation** strives to achieve a multicultural posture in which many ethnic groups can mix and mingle without forsaking their cultures. Most frequently, the newcomers in such a multicultural congregation have acquired considerable skill in sustaining their daily life in the United States. In fact, they may already have occupational education, favorable incomes, and adequate housing. This model frequently has developed among Hispanics, Afro-Caribbeans, and African-Americans. Of course, the multicultural model could include those ethnic groups that have been important contributors to America since the beginning, such as the Native Americans, African-Americans with their deep roots in American soil, and the later generations of Anglo-European immigration.

It must be emphasized, at this point, that with the passing of each generation in the immigrant communities, the preference for the style of congregational experience may shift. For instance, the **nesting** and **blending** styles become much easier for the second and third generations.

The **ethnic-specific congregation** becomes desirable for the first generation which has not yet become comfortable with the new homeland, and perhaps for the later generations who fear the total loss of their ethnic heritage. Whatever the motive, we must reserve the right for any ethnic and cultural group to worship together; this is the first and most fundamental door that we open in the mission frontier of the “first universal nation.”

In this discussion we have glanced at only two kinds of major differences, the generational and cultural ones, but there are many more factors that create a challenge for us in reaching out to people in our ministry areas. In opening this kind of door, we do not wait passively for someone to enter and conform to our congregational life. The situation is much more dynamic and dramatic. We go out of the door, reach out into our ministry area, and encounter our neighbors. We are not standing on territory that we command and control. The encounter occurs on shared territory and assumes a lively response to our invitation. If our neighbor is both different and indifferent, we might doubt either our timing or our calling to the new relationship. Consequently, this door and this encounter assumes that both parties are in earnest about joining together in Christian fellowship. However, in order for this new relationship to happen, there are differences that must be explored, appreciated, and shared. This encounter depends upon renegotiating our expectations of each other. The newcomers seek flexibility and adaptability in the established group because the needs, norms, and lifestyles of the newcomers must genuinely influence the new relationship. The “social contract” is rewritten in light of the responsibilities and benefits as understood by both parties - rather than the established group alone. The social interactions at this door

have the potential for creating significant new directions and new conflicts. In every case, the boundaries and horizons of a congregation are expanded, making new space for new neighbors in our fellowship.



A few typical instances will illustrate the tensions that arise in opening new doors. For the first time in their home life, a Boomer family goes to worship with their children. The kids have watched much television but not quietly or seated in their place. The younger ones want to talk and run to the restroom when this “show” gets boring. The older couples at worship, mainly of the G.I. and Silent generations, have raised their children, and now prize a quiet, restful morning on Sunday.

By chance, the congregation has one young person who is in the age range of the Thirteenth Generation. The sermons are short and carefully worded in order to prevent offense. But this young person finds such pleasant conversation in the pulpit itself offensive. The gospel seems, to this young person, to be saying things that are much more alarming and critical. This twenty-five year-old - who happens to be a law student - wants to challenge the priest and offer another interpretation. The student suggests to the priest that a sermon response in the service might add a little more spice and interest.

The new Vietnamese families that the congregation sponsored have remained faithfully in the congregation. They come to worship but speak little English and cannot eat the food served at the congregation's potluck suppers. The father of the family asked to use the kitchen and parish hall for their own

Vietnamese festival so more Vietnamese families could be invited. The church kitchen guild suffers shock at the smells and the customs that come with this cultural exchange. Later, the patriarch asked the priest to stay after the regular Sunday morning services to conduct another service for the Vietnamese gathering, but the singing, accompanying musical instruments, and the sermon would be offered by their leaders. The Vietnamese leaders want the priest to offer the Eucharist for all who attend; however, the priest knows that not all in the Vietnamese group are baptized.

The emergence of these new situations can exist alongside the established patterns, but not without some conflict. We call this process “parallel development” because the older patterns will be developed parallel with the expansion into new experimental patterns. The conflict will be inevitable and healthy if serious problem solving and earnest discussion addresses the disagreements (for a fuller discussion of this strategy see *Parallel Development: A Pathway for Exploring, Change and a New Future in the Congregation*, Volume 3 in the Congregational Vitality Series).

The Skills of Renegotiation

When a congregation provides a more heterogeneous entry and more diversity in its ministry and membership, an increasing number of leaders must become effective in the skills of encountering differences in others and renegotiating the terms on which the congregation includes others. The “Harvard Negotiation Project”¹⁴ offers helpful insights into the skills and processes of such bargaining.

Fisher and Ury point out that in such situations we get caught between holding either “soft” or “hard” positions which can cause us to give away too much or remain too recalcitrant. They argue that two parties can avoid this “win-lose” posture by seeking a new, third position that allows both parties to gain in some degree through creative negotiations. The chart following adapts their research findings to the positions of soft encounter, hard encounter, and open encounter. The latter option provides the best approach

for productive renegotiation between an established group and newcomers who are markedly different in their needs, dreams, and background profile.

Soft Encounter	Hard Encounter	Open Encounter
Participants in the new relationship allow themselves no conflicts or significant disagreements.	Participants in the new relationship are automatically adversaries.	Participants in the new relationship are partners on a journey of problem solving together.
The highest goal is harmony and fast agreement.	The goal is a victory that closes disagreements.	The goal is a wise and productive outcome that is reached efficiently and amicably.
Concessions are made in order to preserve the relationship.	Concessions are demanded as conditions for a relationship.	A relationship is cultivated between both parties in spite of the problems between them.
Rule One: Be soft on both the people and the problem.	Rule One: Be hard on both the people and the problem.	Rule One: Be soft on the people but hard on the problem. Separate people from the problem.
Rule Two: Always trust others even when they are different from us or differ with us.	Rule Two: Never trust others especially when they are different from us or differ with us.	Rule Two: Begin a new relationship independent of trust and build trust by facing the differences together.
Rule Three: Change your position easily in order to avoid any offense.	Rule Three: Dig in and hold to your position to avoid any compromise of integrity.	Rule Three: Focus on commonality, not on contrary position, looking for areas of common ground and reciprocity.
Rule Four: Make peace offers.	Rule Four: Make war threats.	Rule Four: Explore common interests.
Rule Five: Disclose your bottom line; be vulnerable and hopeful.	Rule Five: Mislead as to your bottom line; be closed and clever.	Rule Five: Avoid having a bottom line; be open and flexible.
Rule Six: Avoid your root values if they will cause more tension and resentment; people come before principles.	Rule Six: Never compromise root values; principles come before people.	Rule Six: Explore root values held by both parties seeking some crossover; honor both people and principles.
Rule Seven: Search for the single answer: the one they will accept.	Rule Seven: Search for the single answer: the one you will accept.	Rule Seven: Search for multiple options and choose the one that offers the most mutual gain.
Rule Eight: Insist on agreement.	Rule Eight: Insist on your position.	Rule Eight: Insist on a third position formed from common interests and mutual gain.
Rule Nine: Yield to pressure.	Rule Nine: Apply pressure.	Rule Nine: Relieve pressure by living into the third position.
Rule Ten: Avoid a contest of will.	Rule Ten: Win a contest of will.	Rule Ten: Apply the will of both parties toward reaching results within the boundaries and standards of the third position.

Opening the Door to the Oppressed and Forgotten

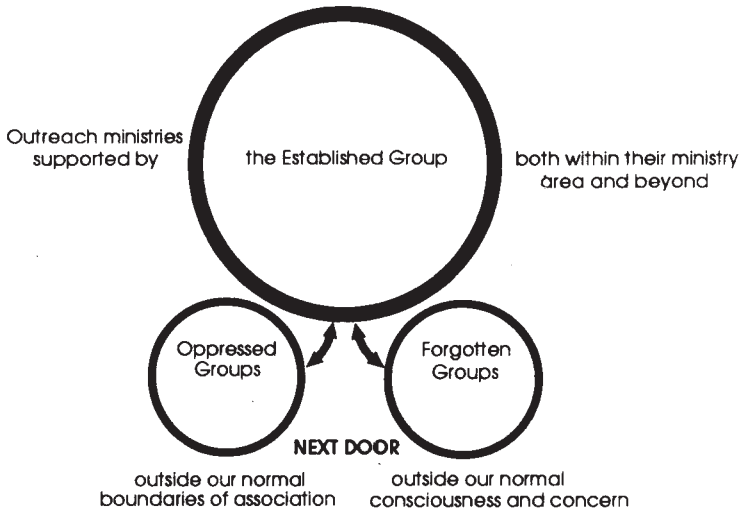
Frequently, we open our doors and invite others to join us because we want to gather a larger congregation. Our normal focus centers on our church building, the staff, the programs, and the resources that we command. We reach out to our own and neighbors who are different from us in order to make more disciples and new members. The gospel imperative compels us in this ministry, but there is more.

The ministry of Jesus also serves as a constant reminder that our mission mandate includes leaving the security of our church-like cocoon to meet the oppressed and forgotten all around us. The suffering and privation we often encounter may make us want to retreat right back into the cocoon as quickly as possible. Jesus faced the oppressed and forgotten with great compassion. In contrast to fleeing from the oppressed and forgotten of his day, he chose to make his home with them. The gospel narratives challenge us again and again to go beyond church-based evangelism to a more daring and sacrificially community-based evangelism. Our normal priorities are reversed by an evangelism that begins with the needy of the community rather than with the needs of our own congregation. We find that an equally important entrance to the kingdom might be next door rather than through our own familiar front door.

The consequences of following Jesus into the streets, the fields, and the mountains may be quite unnerving. We may discover levels of the human condition that alarm and depress us. The pain and loneliness we encounter may call our whole way of life into question. We may even discover that we ourselves are the oppressors and the perpetuators of the isolation of others.

Our sense of power and our reserve of resources may be dwarfed by the size of the human plight we discover.

And what will our response be? Will we run in horror? Will we leave this ministry to the state and the saints among us? These houses of tears and hopelessness that are right next door to us represent places we must enter if we are to walk with Christ. The following outline offers a process that will draw our congregation into greater awareness and action.



Community Awareness

Step One: Investigate

We begin with the need for information: demographic statistics, on-site impressions, community interviews, local history, and congregational history. Refer to the sample forms in the Appendix for this information gathering: Windshield Survey, Analyzing Statistical Data, and History of the Community. For a very complete demographic study of your ministry area, call Percept at 800/442-6277. The tasks can be shared by small groups or individuals depending on your available support. Before moving out of committee, the information should be interpreted and arranged in attractive ways that will be easily understood by others. Consider maps, charts, slide shows, recordings from interviews, and mini-information exercises that allow anyone to offer further data and interpretation.

Step Two: Sensitize

Let us assume that many members come to church for their own needs and reasons. That is healthy and natural. It might be a new venture for these members to focus on outreach through social action and evangelism. We will prepare ourselves to be patient and persistent in raising their sensitivity to the needs and opportunities in the surrounding community. Staff and committees for education, both local and in the wider church, will be helpful in planning events that will offer learning in enjoyable ways. When members are fully aware of the community, they will initiate discussions about the role of the church in outreach. We believe that Christian conscience will respond to information with vision.

Step Three: Discuss

It would be embarrassing to be “all talk and no action,” but a period of exploration will widen the support in a congregation for greater outreach ministry. We do not want outreach to be an isolated activity of only a few passionate Christians. Members of the congregation need to be involved for the sake of their own spiritual health! Encourage discussion in many quarters and at many levels of the congregation, from the governing bodies to the youth groups and church school classes. Gather their ideas, their visions, their commitments as the foundation for your future plans. Make it a venture for everyone.

Step Four: Negotiate

Your investigations and discussion will no doubt become very lively at some points. Do not be shocked if members have deeply felt disagreements over the political, ethical, and social issues that surface in thinking about their community. It is not outside of our Christian rights to have honest disagreement with each other. Such conflict in the congregation will result inevitably from a serious struggle with Christian conscience and Christian responsibility in your community. When we have focused on the problem and solutions, the disagreement can be worked through with loving, even heated negotiation. Avoid at all costs a focus on persons and positions; meaning that person is right or wrong, that position is evil or righteous. Such polarization causes us to view each other as the problem. We

lose our way from the start. Look for issues on which a reasonably large number share agreement for new initiatives.

Community Action

Step Five: Organize

In preparation for organizing an effort in outreach, it is important to understand the position of your initiative on the “Continuum of Community Involvement and Social Transformation.” Refer to the chart below.

Continuum of Community Involvement and Social Transformation

	CHARITY	SERVICE	ADVOCACY	JUSTICE
You focus on:	problems	persons	underlying causes	systems
You give:	money	your time	your heart	empowerment to others
You benefit from:	immediate satisfaction	broadening experiences	deeper insight	community mobilization

In the Episcopal Church, significant national and provincial support for social ministries is coordinated through a program called Jubilee Ministry. You may have one or more designated Jubilee Centers in your diocese or province. You will find valuable resources and experienced staff at the centers, staff who have the responsibility of giving support to local congregations which are organizing a wide variety of outreach ministry. Refer to a listing of Jubilee Centers and the book giving histories of Jubilee ministries, *Jubilee Ministry: A Place to Serve*, produced by the Office of Jubilee Ministry at the Episcopal Church Center.

If you find that your local ministry involves “advocacy” and “justice,” as described on the “Continuum of Community Involvement and Social Transformation,” explore financial and educational support from the Economic justice programs of the Episcopal Church.

Refer to *Organizing for Economic Justice* and contact the Economic justice staff at the Episcopal Church Center.

In most cities and rural areas, you will find capable and responsive partners in your ministry. You will learn much from other churches and community agencies. In the end, you might find that it is to your advantage to link your ministries together. Refer to the Appendix for questions to ask such agencies in your community - and other churches who have outreach ministries.

Step Six: Decide

At this point in your work, the task group in charge will have much information about your community, your church, and your opportunities for outreach through social action and evangelism. Evaluate the information in light of the following criteria:

- Receives the most excitement and support from members of the congregation.
- Potential support and partnership with other agencies and other churches.
- Adequate resources to do the job available from local, regional, and national sources.
- Clarity of the need, task, and results. We can document each clearly and with confidence.
- Reflects the convictions and theology of our congregation.
- Represents a gap in community services, or a lapse in services in our area.
- Receives the support of the indigenous leaders of the population.
- Target populations will be responsive to both ministries of social concern and evangelization.

We would not expect a 100% rating for every opportunity. In fact, your best opportunity may not have the highest rating. Careful evaluation by the above criteria should lead you in the right direction and to a worthy decision.

Step Seven: Plan and Act

Good action planning follows a process:

- Set reasonable, small, achievable goals.
- Know your strengths and weaknesses.
- Use time well.
- Develop target dates related to expected results.
- Use positive feedback and positive reinforcement coming from experience that have brought some small successes.
- Assure continuing success by breaking tasks down into small steps.
- Accept moderate risks so that the project continues to be a challenge.
- Establish support systems.

Outreach projects will involve volunteers from the whole congregation, perhaps the wider community, and hopefully from the population being served. In the end, the program should become theirs! The book *How to Mobilize Church Volunteers* by Marlene Wilson can be helpful. She lists the following reasons why people volunteer:

- They want to be needed.
- They want to help others and make a difference.
- They want to learn new skills or use skills they already have.
- They want to belong to a caring community and feel accepted as members.
- They want self-esteem and affirmation.
- They want to grow in their faith and share their God-given gifts.
- They want to keep from being lonely.
- They want to support causes they believe in. ¹⁵

Appealing to the motivation of potential volunteers is only the first step. Next we must give good care and nurture to volunteers. A broad participation in the program is essential! Remember two key points: 1. Outreach includes sharing the spiritual resources of our life; it is right and necessary that we give away Christ for lasting empowerment. 2. The leadership of

the ministry should eventually be in the hands of those being served. This goal includes both church and community leadership roles.

Step Eight: Evaluate

Every effective program remains subject to change. Careful evaluation is not judgment over the past but direction into the future. Evaluation is valid only when we have carefully worked out our objectives and desired outcomes. The beginning steps in forming an action plan become the foundation for evaluation after an action. We are asking about a performance that has been made clear beforehand to ourselves and everyone involved. Evaluation brings us back in a loop to our original vision, strategy, and resources. It will refresh the whole endeavor.

A Comprehensive Strategy for Evangelism and Outreach Constituencies of a Ministry Area

	Our Own	Neighbors Different	Oppressed & Forgotten	
P O I N T S O F E N T R Y	FRONT DOOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Diverse membership in a congregation crossing distinctions of culture, lifestyle, and class. •Multi-cultural ministry settings with one standard language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •House churches and missions in isolated or desolate areas. •Eucharistic ministers serving members who are homebound or confined to institutions. 	
	NEW DOORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Para-church groups for same gender, crisis population, and particular ages, such as child care, youth programs, guilds, support groups, private schools, etc. •Alternative experimental worship services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •New worship services to accommodate different music, other languages, various age levels, etc. •Small specialized evangelism groups that bridge to the congregation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Voluntary bible studies and worship at social service centers/shelters. •Offering baptism, communion, and confirmation, to terminally ill patients and very troubled persons.
	NEXT DOOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Cell groups and fellowships that gather at homes, schools, and workplaces. •Ministry of laity in daily places. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Auxiliary chapels and specialized chaplaincies on campuses, at prisons, in storefronts, at hospitals, etc. •Ministry of laity in daily places. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Economic justice initiatives, community organizing, and Jubilee Centers. •All outreach to those in need; thrift shops, soup kitchens, food collections, outpatient clinics, street ministries, shelters, etc.

Far beyond the examples cited in the grid on page 28, you will find that many more opportunities for new ministries will come when we open all doors

NOTES

1. *Episcopal Life*, April 1993, p. 1.
2. Percept/Church Information and Development Services, Costa Mesa, *Ethos 90s Report*, (proprietary data).
3. *The World Almanac, 1992*. (New York, Fairest Books, 1991), p. 75.
4. Kirk Hadaway, “*Episcopal Church Trends: Analysis 1950-1990*” (Report to Executive Council, February 1, 1992).
5. Excellent training for this ministry to lapsed members is offered regularly by L.E.A.D. in locations across the country. Many dioceses have church leaders who have been trained to offer the workshops locally. For more information about L.E.A.D. call 614/864-0156, and also contact your diocesan evangelism leaders.
6. William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America’s Future, 1584-2069*, New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1991, pp.261ff, 279ff, 299ff, 317ff.
7. *USA Weekend*, March 19-21, 1993, “The Four Spiritual Styles of Baby Boomers,” p. 5.
8. Telephone Poll, January 1992, n=1013, The Barna Research Group.
9. “Twentysomething: What happened to the American dream?” ABCnews Production, MP 6366, MPI Home Video, 800/323-8442.
10. Benjamin J. Wattenberg, *The First Universal Nation: Leading Indicators and Ideas about the Surge of America in the 1990s*, New York: Free Press, 1991, p.10. 11. Wattenberg, p.45.
12. *ibid*.
13. Loren Mead, *The Once and Future Church: Reinventing The Congregation for a New Mission Frontier*, Washington, D.C.: The Alban Institute, 1991, p.58.
14. Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981, p.13.
15. Marlene Wilson, *How to Mobilize Church Volunteers* Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983, p.17.

APPENDIX I

Windshield Survey Information Sheet

AREA COVERED

GENERAL LAYOUT

Street and traffic patterns

Physical boundaries

Identifying marks

Characteristics of the area

HOUSING PATTERNS

Kinds of housing

Clusters of housing

General appearance

INTERRELATIONS

Signs of people relating

General impressions of population (age, activity)

OTHER CHURCHES

Names

Size

General impressions about their mission in the community

APPENDIX II

Windshield Survey Questions

Divide your neighborhood among the task force members, and have them walk or drive around it singly or in pairs to get a really close look at it. They should record their observations on copies of the “Windshield Survey Information Sheet.”

Remember that the goal is two-fold:

- (1) to discover persons who need love and concern; and
- (2) to identify potential target groups for evangelism.

Get in touch with your senses - sight, hearing, smell, and even the “sixth sense” of intuition. Discuss or write down your answers to these questions:

- From looking: How do the people I pass on the street or in the stores look? Happy? Discouraged? Harried? How are they dressed? What kinds of people do I see? Children? Elderly people? Mostly men or mostly women? What races or ethnic groups do they represent? What are they doing?
- From listening: Do I hear anyone laughing, crying, shouting? Is there oppressive noise pollution, or quiet and peace? What do these sounds tell me?
- From sniffing: What kinds of odors do I notice? Smog? Flowers? Industrial smells? Pine trees? Rotting garbage? Stale beer? What do these suggest?
- From intuition: Does the neighborhood seem warm and friendly or cold and forbidding? Is it a pleasant place in which to be?

Take special notes in other churches in the area. Consider questions like these:

- Does the building and grounds show evidence of life and usage?
- Are the facilities well cared for?
- Have adequate and welcoming signs been provided for the public?
- About how many worshippers would the building serve?

APPENDIX III

Analyzing the Statistical Data

To use demographic information well it will be necessary to ask several questions:

1. How has the population change or lack of change been reflected in the membership of the church?
2. What kind of future should we prepare for in regard to our ministry in this community?
3. What groups of people do we seem to be unable to reach?
4. What are some specific needs of people reflected in that data?
5. How are those needs being met at present and by whom?
6. What needs should we as a church be addressing?

APPENDIX IV

History of the Community

Here are some suggestions for writing your community history.

1. Who were the settlers or later immigrants?

Update—Add current population information.

2. What has been the growth pattern of the community?

Update—Are there projections for future growth?

3. How was the community organized politically?

Update—What is the current political structure? Is the leadership representative of the entire community or dominated by one part of it?

4. What business or industry first developed in the community?

Update—What keeps the economy running? How is it serviced for food, clothing, housing and furniture, utilities, banking, transportation, business, and industry?

5. How have the housing patterns developed over the years?

Update—Current housing information.

6. When did doctors and hospitals begin to operate?

Update—What recent information regarding health care is available? It is improving or declining? Is there specialized care offered for the handicapped, the aging, the addicted, and the needy?

7. What was the school system like?

Update—How has it developed? Are there programs for adults in continuing education? Are there both public and private schools? Do they cooperate with each other?

8. When did any government social service agencies begin?

Update—Are they still available?

9. What is the history of the police and fire departments?

Update—How safe do the residents feel in the community? Are

certain segments of the population a problem in the community?

10. When did a local newspaper begin publishing?

Update—Does it still exist? What influence does T.V. or radio have locally?

11. List the growth of churches in the community.

Update—How many are there today? Do they work together in any manner?

APPENDIX V

Questions to Use with Community Agencies and Other Churches

1. Name of agency or church.
2. Name of person interviewed.
3. What types of services or help do you give to the people you serve?
4. Who are the specific types of people that you serve in the program?
5. Why did your agency or church initially decide to offer this service?
6. What services do you see still lacking? What are the problems? What are the causes?
7. Do you see major changes that must be made in our society and local institutions for the sake of our citizens, especially the poor?
8. Have you ever heard of (name of your own church)?
9. Are there ways our church can help you with this problem?
10. What can we offer you? What can we expect of you?

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