

COMPANIONS

Accompanying Newcomers into Church Life and Faith

Marney Ault Wasserman

foreword by Sue Westfall

Is your “new member class” uninspiring? draining energy? Consider a different way of ministering to church newcomers. One that builds on the simple arts of friendship and conversation, instead of classes and presentations. One that invites *transformation*, rather than just imparting *information*. One that gives the whole congregation a role to play in the church’s ministry of spiritual hospitality.

Companions is an outreach ministry that pairs newcomers in worship with church member companions for eight weeks of conversation about Christian faith and discipleship. One-page conversation guides, grounded in Scripture and prayer, help focus the dialogue on core themes of the life of faith, like gratitude, forgiveness, and community. *Companions* is designed to build friendships, invite honest sharing, encourage questions, meet newcomers wherever they are, and help them grow in their life with God—exercises that strengthen the faith of church members as well as the newcomers they befriend!

If you’re interested in outreach and church growth, in discipleship and spiritual nurture, in expanding the church’s reach in a secular culture, in equipping believers to articulate their faith, in strengthening lay ministries, in keeping baptismal identity at the center of church life—this book will speak to you.



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The spiritual formation of new and lifelong disciples has been a core focus of **Marney Ault Wasserman’s** ministry. A veteran pastor and spiritual director, she has served eight congregations and two new church developments in the Southwest and upper Midwest. She has taught seminary worship courses, and writes prayers and liturgical resources for the Presbyterian Church. She resides in northern New Mexico with her husband, David; they have three grown children and four grandchildren.

“How do leaders in a congregation move a gathering of people from being like an airport terminal to being a spirit-based community? *Companions* links guests of a congregation with members who, over eight weeks, share stories of knowing God and the transformational possibilities of church membership. These conversations lead to friendship so new members do not just join but become integrated into the church community.”

—NORMAN E. “NED” DEWIRE, President Emeritus, Methodist Theological School in Ohio

“I was thrilled to have the opportunity to use some of the early *Companions* materials. Even though Rev. Wasserman wrote it with new members in mind, her work provided fantastic conversation starters for our Session.”

—SHANNON J. KERSHNER, Pastor, Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago, IL

“Marney Wasserman offers a new and marvelous approach to welcoming people into church membership. I can’t wait to see this book widely used in the life of the church!”

—E. STANLEY OTT, President, Vital Churches Institute

“*Companions* offers a winsome, practical, and principled process to involve the entire congregation in befriending potential new members. The testimony from Wasserman’s congregation makes me eager to commend it to my own, in hopes of also discovering its potential to strengthen the spiritual life of the entire congregation, one new relationship at a time.”

—EMILY R. BRINK, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship

“In a day and age where many churches are losing members, and pews seem emptier than ever, church members cry out for more numbers. What’s a church to do? Wasserman shifts the conversation away from quantity to a faith-based, relational experience that nurtures the individual and creates a foundation for growing Christian disciples.”

—WILLIAM VOIGT, Trinity Presbyterian Church, Tucson, AZ

Media, Examination, and Review Copies:

Contact: James Stock

(541) 344-1528, ext 103 or James@wipfandstock.com

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