

AR Diocesan Convention 2026
Learning and Engagement Session
The Rt. Rev. Melissa Skelton
“Modest But Not Shy: Assisting God in Becoming an Invitational Congregation”

Within our ecclesial tradition, we are called to Gather-Transform-Send: To assist God by gathering, in the transformation of minds, hearts, actions, sending people into the world to be and act as God's presence in their contexts.

Transformation is our Baptismal identity and purpose. Inviting is a part of gathering.

Invite - Greet - Orient - Incorporate (Alice Mann)

Assisting God is the source of all invitations.

Behaviors to call attention to, intrigue, attract, entice or woo people to Christ and to the Church; All things that happen before someone crosses either the physical or electronic threshold of the congregation.

Dimensions of Inviting - establishing an “Invitational Culture”

- 1) Congregation's property - care of the physical property and grounds is a witness to the love of the church, allowing outside groups to use buildings/rooms is an invitation to return
- 2) Signage - communicates who we are. More than just the basic info, spells out that is important to us
- 3) Website - accessible, relevant, and accurate - keep it updated, formatted for both computer and mobile devices
- 4) Website - magnetism and authority, include information about the newcomer experience. Who will I meet? What is a service like?
- 5) Social Media - links, regular postings, identity, events, photos of people in activities, and email lists updated
- 6) Word of Mouth - fueled by the congregation's relationship with the neighborhood/community
- 7) Phone system Message - important to keep updated
- 8) Public relations - get stories into the local paper/media, utilize Chamber of Commerce, neighborhood groups
- 9) Advertising - an investment but keep it local and consistent, not best way
- 10) Congregation Livestream - service, classes, concerts, etc
- 11) Person to person - personal invitations are most powerful, but most difficult

Pay attention to where resources are allocated, what actions are taking

Big question: What do we want to be known for?

Have a clear idea who we want to be and what God wants us to be.

What has worked for us? How to do it better?

- 1) Teach this material, about inviting people
- 2) Assess the Congregation- what do we do well and not so well?
- 3) Identify a limited number of steps to take to have the most impact
- 4) Create a Team to work on this area - meet a lot, do the things, check in on, learn and adjust as you go

Teach people HOW to invite and practice doing it

- 1) Be able to talk to each other about God has meant to us
- 2) Begin by thinking about our personal networks
- 3) Listen to others as they speak of their lives, invite in response to what we have heard and learned
- 4) Be authentic, genuine, and available

Point to remember: We are only responsible for assisting God in the invitation, we are not responsible for the outcome. Don't be afraid of the refusal.