

Get Started Guide

Welcome. CRHP 2.0
There is **More** to **Life**

Hello!

Thank you for your commitment to re-energizing your parish and the Catholic Church. We are thrilled to partner with you to bring Welcome to your parish.

Welcome is an incredible experience that has the power to change lives and transform parishes. It can transform *your* parish—and this guide will show you how to begin.

By now, you should have all the resources necessary to implement Welcome in your parish. The comprehensive Team Guide is your roadmap to navigating a smooth Formation Process and leading a powerful Welcome Weekend Experience. The Mass Journals will serve as tools for the continued spiritual growth of your Giving Team throughout Formation. The Participant Journals and New Testament Bibles will help the Receiving Team reflect and listen to God throughout the Welcome Weekend—and for years to come.

If your team needs additional resources or has any immediate questions, concerns, or feedback, please contact us at welcome@DynamicCatholic.com or **(859) 980-7887**.

This Get Started Guide will introduce you to some of the language and best practices surrounding Welcome. The Team Guide will walk you through the entire Formation Process so that you may better understand the program and implement a life-changing Welcome experience in your parish.

Additionally, Dynamic Catholic has developed exclusive resources like marketing materials and training videos for the Formation and Retreat Leaders. To access these resources, please visit:

[DynamicCatholic.com/WelcomeResources](https://www.DynamicCatholic.com/WelcomeResources)

Welcome works! Please remember to follow the format and trust the process. Welcome is capable of some pretty incredible things, and we are so excited to join you in bringing it to your parish.

The team here at Dynamic Catholic is praying for you.

Thank you for all you are doing to make your parish an incredible place.

God bless,

The Dynamic Catholic Team

The Program

What is Welcome?

Welcome is a two-day, one-overnight renewal weekend at your parish. (Men and women attend separate weekends.) It is an experience that helps parishioners discover what is missing in their lives and what to do about it. Most people want to work this out but have no idea how to do it or even where to start. Welcome puts a framework around the questions and struggles we all have so that every day, in every way, we can become a-better-version-of-ourselves.

Why the name “Welcome”?

We all want to feel a sense of connection, a sense of family, and a sense of home. Often-times a sense of community is missing within a parish. How many people do you know who make the trip to Mass each Sunday, but otherwise remain distant from the Church? We all long for a desire to feel welcome. This program acknowledges this desire by giving parishioners a community that helps them grow in faith and engage with their parish in ways they never have before.

Why is Welcome so successful?

Welcome is one of the only ministries that not only connects with people’s hearts, but also triggers conversion. In many cases, people have their first encounter with God on the Welcome Weekend. This life-changing experience creates an incredible bond and a sense of community between parishioners that continues after their Welcome Weekend as they prepare to lead the next Welcome Weekend.

How does it work?

ATTEND—Parishioners attend a two-day, one-overnight Welcome renewal weekend. (Men and women attend separate weekends.)

SERVE—After attending the weekend, parishioners can serve on the next men’s or women’s Giving Team. Each Giving Team will go through a time of team fellowship, formation, preparation, and catechesis (usually around six to twelve months) as they prepare to put on the next men’s or women’s Welcome Weekend.

Note: For a parish starting Welcome for the first time, the first Giving Team will begin with this step, not having attended a prior weekend.

LEAD—The Giving Team will lead a Welcome Weekend.

MINISTER—Following the weekend, each member of the Giving Team will discern how they can best serve their parish (joining parish men’s or women’s groups, becoming a lector or Eucharistic minister, joining the choir, etc.).

Who is the Giving Team?

The Giving Team is made up of members of the parish who have previously attended a Welcome Weekend. They dedicate themselves to leading the next men's or women's Welcome Weekend for their fellow parishioners.

What if the Giving Team has not yet experienced Welcome themselves?

If your parish is new to Welcome, the Formation Process will prepare the first Giving Team to lead and will also serve as a powerful way for them to grow in faith and community. Through community prayer, reading Scripture, and preparing the witness talks, the members of the Giving Team will learn where they are in their faith lives and where God is calling them to be.

Who is the Receiving Team?

The Receiving Team is made up of members of the parish who choose to attend the Welcome Weekend. Typically, they become the Giving Team for the next Welcome Weekend.

How will the Giving Team prepare?

The Giving Team will prepare with six to twelve months of prayer, formation, and training as outlined in the Team Guide.

How closely should the Giving Team follow the Team Guide?

The Team Guide can be thought of as an instruction manual for the Giving Team. It has been carefully constructed to ensure a smooth and successful Welcome Weekend. The processes in the Team Guide should be adhered to as closely as possible to provide a life-changing experience for everyone involved.

There will be parts of Formation and the weekend that allow for more personalization by nature, such as the witnesses and table activities. Additionally, the timing of sacraments on the weekend may vary depending on priest availability. It is important that the sequence of events remains the same, but exact timing for each activity may shift. A schedule overview can be found in chapter thirteen of the Team Guide.

Formation

What does a typical Formation Session look like?

Each night of Formation will have a topic. That topic corresponds to the witness that one of the Giving Team members will give. The goal of these sessions is to grow in communion with the team and to practice the witness talks for the Welcome Weekend.

Each Formation Session lasts approximately two hours and involves prayer, reflecting on Scripture, a witness talk by a Giving Team member, feedback on the witness, and assignments to complete before the next Formation Session.

The time and frequency of meetings is determined by each Giving Team. It is recommended that meetings are held once or twice a month depending on availability.

The Evening of Discipleship

The Evening of Discipleship takes place after the Welcome Weekend. It is a time for those on the Receiving Team who are interested in becoming part of the next Giving Team to meet and learn what will be expected of them.

For parishes that have not yet held a Welcome Weekend, this meeting will be an opportunity to introduce everyone and discuss the Welcome program in more depth.

A more detailed outline of The Evening of Discipleship can be found in chapter five of the Team Guide.

History Giving and Faith Sharing

The first gathering of the Giving Team is called History Giving and Faith Sharing. The purpose of this exercise is to get acquainted with each other on a deeper personal and faith level. There are key moments in an individual's spiritual journey, events in their everyday life, and hopes they have for the future that are central to who they are. History Giving and Faith Sharing is a chance to share these stories.

Through this process, the team will begin to form a supportive community of love, encouragement, and service. The team will continue to get to know each other at deeper and deeper levels throughout Formation.

A more detailed outline of the History Giving and Faith Sharing Formation Session can be found in chapter six of the Team Guide.

Discernment of Team Ministries

By the end of this night, every team member should know what role they will play in the Formation Process and Welcome Weekend. The purpose of this night is to learn to listen to the Holy Spirit's guidance and to grow in trust for the team. It is an opportunity to allow each member of the team to experience God's call to a specific ministry and to give team members the opportunity to affirm one another's calls from God.

A more detailed outline of the Discernment of Team Ministries Formation Session can be found in chapter seven of the Team Guide.

The Giving Team

Recruiting the Giving Team

If this is your first time hosting Welcome, it is going to take some work on the part of the parish to recruit amazing team members to lead an amazing Welcome Weekend.

The people who will likely make great members of a Giving Team are typically those individuals who are more active within the parish. Ideally, these individuals may also have a large circle of influence and are willing to encourage people to attend the Welcome Weekend in the future.

Hopefully you have a list of people in mind who would make wonderful members of the Giving Team. Now it's time to get out there and recruit them!

We know that asking people to commit to getting involved in anything at the parish, especially things that require a time commitment, can be a challenge. For parishes just beginning Welcome, the first Giving Team will probably take the most effort to recruit. Chapter ten of the Team Guide outlines some tips and tricks for recruiting parishioners to attend the Welcome Weekend. These recruitment techniques can also be used for the formation of an initial Giving Team.

Keep in mind, as Welcome grows and flourishes at your parish (because it will!), recruiting people to get involved will become easier and easier. In addition, the former Receiving Team will generally make up the next Giving Team following each Welcome Weekend, so you should only need to go through this recruitment process once.

We know recruitment of any kind can often sound intimidating. Trust that Jesus is on your side and will lead and guide you. The Dynamic Catholic Welcome Team is here for you, too. You CAN do this!

Roles of the Giving Team

The Giving Team is made up of individuals who hold the following roles. If your Giving Team is larger than required, wonderful! There are roles for everyone!

Required roles

The following roles are required for a successful Welcome Weekend. These roles should be discerned and filled first. A detailed description of each role can be found in chapter four of the Team Guide. For a look into how each role might serve the weekend, visit the Welcome Weekend schedule in chapter thirteen.

Formation Leader

Retreat Leader

Facilities Leader

Assistants to the Facilities Leader (1–2)**Invitation Coordinator****Liturgist/Sacristan****Table Leaders (6)****Witnessers (10)**

Witnessers may overlap with additional roles—for example, the Formation Leader may also serve as a Witnesser

Additional optional roles

These can be used as roles for additional Giving Team members or as supplementary responsibilities given to Giving Team members with an already discerned role.

HELP Coordinator (and Assistant)**Physical Arrangements Coordinator (and Assistant)****Kitchen Coordinator (and Assistant)****Other Ministries**

If the size of the team allows for other ministries, the following may also be discerned and assigned:

Dining Room Coordinator (and Assistant)**Musician(s)****Bursar****Book Minister****Entertainment Chairperson**

About the Witness Talks

There are ten witness talks given on the Welcome Weekend. Team members discern throughout the Formation Process which witness they are called to give, and they have one night each to practice their witness talk and receive feedback. Each witness correlates with the theme of Formation Sessions 3–12. The witnesses are practiced in order during their respective Formation meetings.

The ten witness topics are:

Session 3: Renewal

Session 4: New Life in Christ

Session 5: Spirituality

Session 6: Christian Community

Session 7: Christian Awareness

Session 8: Reconciliation

Session 9: Eucharist

Session 10: Scripture

Session 11: The Father's Loving Care

Session 12: Discipleship

Chapter nine of the Team Guide provides some helpful guidelines and tips for effective witnessing, as well as a framework, key words and ideas, and scriptural support for each of the ten witness topics.

Are all Giving Team members required to talk in front of people?

Some of the roles will require more speaking, such as the Formation and Retreat Leaders, Table Leaders, and Witnessers. Individuals in other roles may have the opportunity to share their experiences, but they are not required to do so. Talk as much or as little as makes you comfortable.

HELP Letters

HELP (He Extends Love Perpetually) Letters are a beautiful part of the Welcome Weekend. The weekend participants receive these letters of encouragement from loved ones and members of the parish, letting them know they are loved and being prayed for. After the letters are given to the participants during the weekend, there is a time for the participants to read and reflect on them.

These letters come from a variety of sources: Giving Team members and families, spouses and children of participants, friends of participants, and parish staff. It is also a great way to involve the elderly and homebound of the parish by asking them to pray for and write letters to the participants. Gathering the HELP letters is organized by the HELP Coordinator, who plans and directs the team effort in soliciting and gathering HELP letters and prayer support for those making the renewal weekend.

Program Expectations

Expectations of the parish

The parish can support the Welcome Weekend in several ways. In addition to prayers or writing HELP letters, the parish can provide meals, snacks, and drinks for the weekend in one of a few ways. The Giving Team can bring food themselves for the weekend, the parish can provide money for them to buy food, or parishioners or other parish ministries can donate food or prepared meals. Food plays a big role in hospitality and making people feel welcome, so it is important to have snacks and drinks available throughout the weekend.

Expectations of the priest

There are some things that a priest is needed for during the Welcome Weekend, such as administering the sacraments. Beyond those commitments, priests can be as involved as they would like, sitting in on the weekend or joining the Table Leaders in discussions. However, a priest can help the most by being an advocate for Welcome in the parish: recruiting people to attend, regularly talking about Welcome in homilies, allowing advertising with posters and in the bulletin, etc.

General Timeline of the Program

Sample Biannual Program

- Month 1** **Parishes that HAVE NOT hosted a Welcome Weekend:** Recruit Giving Team and hold **The Evening of Discipleship**
Parishes that HAVE hosted a Welcome Weekend: Hold **The Evening of Discipleship**
Both: Order appropriate number of Team Guides and Mass Journals for the Giving Team (1 of each for each team member)
- Month 2** **History Giving and Faith Sharing** (1–3 Meetings)
Discernment of Team Ministries
- Month 3** **4 Formation Meetings** (Sessions 1–4)
- Month 4** **4 Formation Meetings** (Sessions 5–8)
Order marketing materials
Begin advertising
- Month 5** **4 Formation Meetings** (Sessions 9–12)
Begin inviting parishioners
Order appropriate number of Welcome Journals and New Testaments for the Receiving Team (1 of each for each team member)
Encourage sign-ups
- Month 6** **Welcome Weekend**
Evening of Pentecost

Sample Annual Program

- Month 1** Order appropriate number of Team Guides and Mass Journals for the Giving Team (1 of each for each team member)
- Month 2** **Parishes that HAVE NOT hosted a Welcome Weekend:** Recruit Giving Team
Parishes that HAVE hosted a Welcome Weekend: Hold **The Evening of Discipleship**
- Month 3** **History Giving and Faith Sharing** (1–3 Meetings)
- Month 4** **Discernment of Team Ministries**
- Month 5** **2 Formation Meetings** (Sessions 1–2)
- Month 6** **2 Formation Meetings** (Sessions 3–4)
- Month 7** **2 Formation Meetings** (Sessions 5–6)
Order marketing materials
- Month 8** **2 Formation Meetings** (Sessions 7–8)
Begin advertising
- Month 9** **2 Formation Meetings** (Sessions 9–10)

Begin inviting parishioners

Month 10 2 Formation Meetings (Sessions 11–12)

Order appropriate number of Welcome Journals and New Testaments for the

Receiving Team (1 of each for each team member)

Encourage sign-ups

Month 11 Welcome Weekend

Month 12 Evening of Pentecost

Please note: These schedules are merely examples. The frequency and duration of Formation meetings are determined by each Giving Team or parish to fit their individual needs and capabilities.

Welcome Weekend

What happens on the weekend?

The Welcome Weekend combines witness talks, small group discussions, meals, Mass, Reconciliation, prayer, and social time. It is an opportunity for Receiving Team members to explore Jesus' call to them in a relaxed and supportive environment. It is also one of the best ways for them to meet and develop community with other parishioners.

Typically, separate men's and women's weekends are held once or twice a year, based on the size and needs of your parish. During the weekend, Receiving Team members will listen to a number of Giving Team members who have volunteered to give a personal witness to the power of Jesus Christ in their lives. Group discussions, usually made up of four to five people, follow each presentation. These discussions are led by the Table Leader at each table. Each member of the Receiving Team is free to share as much or as little as he or she feels comfortable.

There will be readings of Scripture and time set aside for prayer and personal reflection. Sacraments are an integral part of the weekend. There will be Mass and an opportunity to go to Reconciliation.

Where are the weekends held?

The weekends take place, if possible, on the parish grounds. Your venue needs adequate space for people to sleep (beds not necessary), an area to prepare meals, and an area to gather as a group. Encountering Jesus in your child's classroom or experiencing Christian community in the parish hall transforms the parish buildings into sacred spaces and helps the participants feel at home.

The weekend begins early Saturday morning and ends Sunday afternoon. Sleeping can be arranged in a number of places: school classrooms, gyms, etc. Many Receiving Team members are simply asked to bring their own sleeping bags and pillows or other bedding (inflatable mattresses or pads).

Dynamic Catholic will not provide resources for food on the weekend or any rental fees for the parish buildings or alternative retreat locations. We recommend those come as a gift from the parish or other parish ministries, a gift from the Giving Team, or from fellow parishioners.

What about meals?

Typically, the Giving Team will arrange and provide food from Saturday breakfast to Sunday lunch, with snacks, treats, and beverages in between. Additional preparations may need to be made if a kitchen is not available on site.

Who can attend the weekend?

There are no firm rules about who can attend a Welcome Weekend. The decision of who to invite is left up to each parish's discretion. It is recommended that the Welcome Weekend is not made up of too many non-parishioners, as this may jeopardize the sustainability of the program and defeat a major benefit of hosting a Welcome Weekend—to create a more vibrant parish community.

The ultimate objective of Welcome is to give people the opportunity to encounter Jesus. If someone from a different parish or even a non-Catholic asks to attend the weekend, it is worth considering what an encounter with Jesus could mean for them. In these situations, Welcome may even serve as a powerful tool to introduce someone to Catholicism or lead them to the parish.

What is the cost for weekend participants?

This is left up to each parish's discretion. Many times the weekend is a gift to the participants from the parish and volunteers, and provided at minimal or no cost to them.

What does the weekend schedule look like?

The Welcome Weekend begins early Saturday morning and ends Sunday afternoon. A sample Welcome Weekend schedule can be found in chapter thirteen of the Team Guide.

After the Weekend

The Evening of Pentecost

Shortly after your Welcome Weekend, the Giving Team will hold its final meeting—the Evening of Pentecost. This meeting is used as an opportunity for Giving Team members to reflect on their formation experience and discern where God might be calling them to serve within the parish.

What's next?

After the Evening of Pentecost, the entire Welcome Formation Process is restarted with any members of the Receiving Team who would like to become part of the next Giving Team. These men or women will need new Team Guides to begin their Formation Process.

The Formation Leader and Retreat Leader from the recent Welcome Weekend will help lead the first three meetings for the new Giving Team to help them establish themselves. These meetings include The Evening of Discipleship, History Giving and Faith Sharing, and Discernment of Team Ministries.

During the Discernment of Team Ministries, the new Giving Team will discern their roles, including a new Formation Leader and a new Retreat Leader, who will then lead the team through the twelve Formation Sessions and into the next Welcome Weekend.

If possible, the new Giving Team should consist of all new members. These members are traditionally those who have just completed the last Welcome Weekend, though it is acceptable to adopt a member of the previous Giving Team if not enough people sign up to form a new team (twelve people minimum). Keep in mind that Welcome is about creating a parish community, so it is important that as many new parishioners as possible are given the opportunity to serve as part of the Giving Team.

Epilogue

You can do this!

Dream of a parish that is dynamic, full of life, and vibrant in every way. Dream of a parish that is meeting people where they are, feeding them the Gospel in relevant ways, and leading them to where God is calling them to be. Dream of a parish that serves every age group and demographic in powerful ways, developing true disciples. Dream of a parish that people are excited to attend, a place where people want to spend more time, not less . . . a community of people loving God and neighbor in such incredible ways that people outside the parish are curious about what is happening inside.

Now let's make that your parish.

This process will be exhausting at times. Schedules will be messed up, and people will make mistakes. You will be tempted to give up or give in. In every one of those experiences and emotions, God is speaking to you. Each contains a lesson. Stay open, allow God to guide you, never get discouraged, and always try to keep in mind that it is all worth it.

This will be one of the best things you do in your life. You may be sitting there half-engaged, half-wondering what you got yourself into—and half-wondering if you have what it takes. Yes, that's three halves. The point is, our questions, doubts, and excuses can be overwhelming at times. Whenever you feel overwhelmed, just focus on the next thing you need to do. Procrastination loves making us feel overwhelmed, but action breaks through all our excuses, doubts, and procrastination. Just do the smallest thing you can to advance this great work and you will start to feel the momentum shift.

Finally, you are not alone. The Dynamic Catholic team is here to support and encourage you, to answer practical questions, and show you how to make this an incredible experience. If you should have any needs along the way, please feel free to reach out to our Welcome team at welcome@DynamicCatholic.com or (859) 980-7887.

Thank you for participating in Welcome. Together we are doing something wonderful for the Catholic Church in our own place and time.