

Newcomer Follow-Up SOP

By Rev. Amy Newell-Large, [Lily Rays](#)

Creating a Welcoming & Sustainable Follow-Up System

Why Follow-Up Matters

A visitor's experience doesn't end when they leave the building—how we follow up can determine whether they return. Reaching out within 48 hours makes a significant impact. This process should feel personal, intentional, and invitational, helping newcomers feel seen, valued, and encouraged to return.

Invite, Greet, Orient, Incorporate

This process, presented by the College of Congregational Development, asks churches to consider how they invite newcomers (before walking through church doors), greet newcomers (when they visit), orient to the church space and community (learning where the bathrooms are, and what style of music to expect), and incorporate into parish life.

For newcomer follow up we focus on incorporate. How is someone being incorporated (*not assimilated*) into your community? Follow up is about helping newcomers feel that they know people, they understand the flow of parish life, they can easily connect with ministries and small groups. Additionally, they feel they can share what they need, express their gifts and talents to share and transform the church.

- This model can be especially helpful for leaders of ministries and small groups - how is someone invited to be part of a ministry? How are they greeted when they show interest? What does orientation look like? Training? And how are they incorporated into the ministry schedule?

1. Who Should Follow Up?

The best person to reach out depends on your congregation's size and structure:

- **Small or Pastoral-Size Church:** Clergy may be the best person to follow up, but clergy capacity should be considered.

- **Mid-Sized Church:** A well-established lay leader who excels in hospitality can be the primary point of contact.
- **Larger Parish:** A Newcomer Team (staff or lay-led) should facilitate the follow-up process to ensure consistency.

Regardless of who follows up, it's important that someone reaches out promptly and personally.

2. What Information to Include in Follow-Up?

If you use **Newcomer Cards** or **Digital Sign-Ups**, use the information provided to make the outreach personal and relevant:

- Greet them by name**
- Acknowledge something from their visit** (e.g., "It was great meeting you after the service.")
- If they expressed interest in a ministry, cc the appropriate leader** (e.g., Youth & Family, Choir, Outreach)
- Include upcoming church events** with a friendly invitation

Follow-Up Example Email (First Contact – Within 48 Hours)

CC: Relevant Ministry Leaders (if applicable)

Subject: Welcome to [Church Name] – We're Glad You Visited!

Dear [Newcomer's Name],

It was wonderful to have you at [Church Name] this past Sunday! We hope you felt welcomed and enjoyed the service.

I'd love to invite you to join us again this coming Sunday. We'll be [mention something specific happening at the service, e.g., "welcoming a guest musician" or "having coffee hour after the 9:30 service"].

If you'd like to grab coffee or take a short tour of the church, I'd be happy to meet with you. Let me know what works for you!

We're so glad you visited, and we look forward to seeing you again. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

[Your Name]
[Your Role]
[Church Contact Information]

3. When to Follow Up?

A structured follow-up plan ensures that visitors don't feel forgotten:

Within 48 Hours (Sunday Afternoon or Monday Morning)

- Send a personalized email or make a quick phone call.
- If they indicated interest in a ministry, loop in the appropriate leader.
- Invite them to an upcoming event or coffee with clergy/lay leader.

End of the First Week (If No Response)

- Send a brief follow-up email:
 - *"Just wanted to check in—hope your week is going well! We'd love to see you again this Sunday at [time]. Let me know if you have any questions!"*
- Remind them of any special events or gatherings.

Two Weeks Later

- Send a third follow-up message:
 - Acknowledge busy schedules and offer an open invitation:
 - *"We know life gets busy, but we're always here when you're ready. Hope to see you again soon!"*
- If they haven't returned but expressed interest in a specific group, encourage the ministry leader to reach out personally.

4. Hosting Newcomer Events

Newcomer gatherings help visitors meet others, connect with leadership, and feel a sense of belonging. These should be:

- Casual & low-pressure – Avoid anything overly formal or intimidating.
- No RSVP required – Encourage drop-ins to reduce barriers.

- Held 1-2 times per year – Aim for a mix of newcomers and longtime parishioners.

Possible Formats:

- Sunday Lunch: Hosted after a service with clergy and lay leaders.
- Happy Hour or Coffee Gathering: Paired with an existing event like an adult formation class.
- Themed Fellowship Night: A relaxed social event with light refreshments.

When inviting people:

Send invitations to those who have visited within the past 6-12 months.

Have a few longtime parishioners on standby in case the group is too newcomer-heavy.

Food should accommodate dietary needs, but it's more about conversation than cuisine.

5. Incorporating Newcomers into Church Life

Once a newcomer expresses interest in a ministry, take active steps to connect them:

- Introduce them directly to a ministry leader via email or in person.
- Offer to meet them before a group gathering to help with introductions.
- Follow up later: *"How was your experience at [ministry/group]? Let me know if you have any questions!"*

Avoid extremes:

- Jumping on newcomers too quickly (which can feel overwhelming).
- Never following up (which leaves them feeling forgotten).

Having a Newcomer Team means that no one falls through the cracks.

How to Introduce a Newcomer to a Ministry Team (Sample Email)

Subject: Excited to Connect You with [Ministry Name]!

Dear [Newcomer's Name],

I'm so glad you expressed interest in [ministry/group]. I'd love to introduce you to [Leader's Name], who helps coordinate this ministry.

[Leader's Name], [Newcomer's Name] visited last Sunday and is curious about getting involved in [ministry]. I'd love for you two to connect! Would you be available before or after church this Sunday to chat?

Looking forward to seeing how this connection grows!

Blessings,
[Your Name]

6. Newcomer Cards & Membership

A strong Newcomer Card system helps track visits and interests:

- Make it easy** – Available in pews, welcome tables, and digitally (QR codes).
- Include space for interests** – Worship, outreach, youth, small groups, etc.
- Ensure quick response** – Someone should follow up within 48 hours.

When does a newcomer become a member?

- Consider hosting Episcopal 101 classes or orientation for those interested.
 - Encourage them to take part in church life before formal membership—belonging comes before bureaucracy!
 - When they say they're a member is a good indicator!
-

Final Thoughts: Agents of Hospitality

Welcoming newcomers isn't just a task—it's a ministry. When we engage with new visitors, we are:

- Offering belonging in Christ's name.
- Creating connections that sustain faith and community.
- Inviting people into a transformative journey of discipleship.

Every interaction matters. By following these steps, we help people move from visitors to vital members of our church family.

7. Tracking & Organizing Newcomer Follow-Up

To ensure consistent and effective follow-up, it's crucial to track interactions and progress with newcomers. Using a simple tracking system helps avoid missed connections, ensures multiple follow-ups, and allows for seamless communication between clergy, lay leaders, and ministry teams.

Choosing a Tracking Method

Depending on the size of your church and available resources, consider one of the following:

Excel or Google Sheets (Simple & Customizable)

Best for: Small-to-mid-sized churches with a manageable number of visitors.

- Easy to update & share with clergy, lay leaders, and hospitality teams.
- Customizable fields (e.g., Name, Contact Info, Date of Visit, Follow-Up Status, Ministry Interests).
- Track multiple touchpoints (e.g., first email sent, second follow-up, attended coffee hour).
- Accessible across devices when using Google Sheets.

Suggested Categories for an Excel Tracker:

Name	Contact Info	First Visit	Follow-Up #1	Follow-Up #2	Expressed Interest	Introduced to Ministry	Notes
Jane Doe	jane@email.com	2/4/24	Emailed 2/5	Spoke 2/11	Choir	Intro to choir director 2/12	Excited to join!

Church Management Software (Comprehensive & Automated)

If your church already uses a database, take advantage of built-in newcomer tracking features. These systems allow you to automate follow-ups, track attendance, and manage communication all in one place.

1. Realm (ACS Technologies)

Best for: Mid-to-large churches needing a centralized, cloud-based system.

- Tag newcomers based on interest (e.g., small groups, youth ministry, outreach).
- Assign follow-up tasks to clergy or lay leaders.
- Track attendance & event participation.
- Automate email sequences (e.g., send a welcome email after their first visit, a second invite a week later).

2. Breeze Church Management

Best for: Smaller churches needing an affordable, user-friendly database.

- Simple visitor tracking with automated notes.
- Text and email follow-up tools.
- Easily integrate visitor data into membership records.

Best Practices for Tracking Newcomers

- ❖ **Keep It Updated** – Set a routine for updating records after every Sunday.
- ❖ **Assign Responsibilities** – Determine **who** (clergy, staff, lay leaders) updates the database.
- ❖ **Monitor Engagement** – If a visitor attends multiple times but isn't engaging, follow up personally.
- ❖ **Automate When Possible** – If using a database, automate initial outreach while keeping follow-ups personal.
- ❖ **Ensure Privacy & Respect Boundaries** – Never overwhelm newcomers with too much outreach; let follow-ups be invitations, not pressure.

Conclusion: Make Follow-Up Intentional & Sustainable

A **strong tracking system ensures** that no visitor falls through the cracks. Whether using a **simple spreadsheet or a full church database**, the goal remains the same:

- ✓ **Build relationships that foster belonging**
- ✓ **Invite people into deeper connection with Christ and the community**
- ✓ **Ensure follow-ups are personal, timely, and welcoming**

Fill-in-the-Blank Worksheet for Newcomer Follow-Up

Welcoming & Incorporating Newcomers: Follow-Up Worksheet

By Rev. Amy Newell-Large, Lily Rays

1. Initial Contact & Timing

- A simple and warm email subject line could be:
“_____.”
- One way to make the follow-up more personal is to mention something specific about their visit, such as _____.

2. Email Communication

- A good follow-up email should include:
 - A warm greeting
 - An invitation to _____
 - Information about _____
 - An offer to _____
- If I don't hear back after the first email, I should follow up again in ___ days.

3. Building Relationships

- Instead of overwhelming a newcomer with too many invitations at once, I should prioritize inviting them to _____ first.
- A great way to make a newcomer feel personally invited to an event is by _____.
- One way to ensure they feel included at coffee hour is to _____.

4. Newcomer Events

- Newcomer events should be (**choose one**):
 - Formal and structured
 - Casual and welcoming
- One thing I can do to help make a newcomer event successful is _____.

5. Incorporation into Ministries

- If a newcomer expresses interest in a ministry, the best way to connect them is by _____.

- A helpful introduction email to a ministry leader should include:
 - The newcomer's name
 - Their expressed interest
 - A suggested time to connect
 - A warm tone of encouragement
- Instead of leaving the newcomer to navigate the process alone, I should _____.
- A way a newcomer could feel incorporated into community could be _____.
- Newcomer integration is not _____, they should feel like they can contribute and transform the community, not like they need to conform to fit in.

6. Reflection & Commitment

- What is one step I can take this week to better welcome and follow up with newcomers?

- What challenges do I anticipate, and how can I work through them?

- What could a newcomer process look like at our parish?