

Parishes may create new structures to address some concerns, and they may carry out other functions through pre-existing parish structures, such as the following:

- **Hospitality functions**—a group of lay volunteers who may already be previously engaging in outreach and hospitality
  - **Pastoral care functions**—the liturgy committee
  - **Social service and resettlement services**—the parish social concerns committee, refugee resettlement committee, or parish charitable organizations
  - **Advocacy issues**—a parish social justice group
- It is essential that pastors and parish leaders give the support and resources needed to develop and implement a successful welcoming plan and promote a diverse membership on the committees that carry out the work. The following suggested activities for each of the four main functions will assist in formulating a welcoming plan.

### **HOSPITALITY GROUP**

#### *Responsibilities:*

- Providing welcoming and outreach activities
  - Registering new parishioners
  - Providing general information and referrals
1. Prepare and distribute “welcome packets” and “welcome baskets” (baskets to help newcomers set up their new home/living arrangements) for newly arrived parishioners.
  2. Greet parishioners at the beginning and end of weekend liturgies. Provide special outreach to newcomers and invite them to participate in an upcoming activity; follow up with a call or visit (see below).
  3. Host regular “welcoming events,” such as a “Welcome Coffee” or “International Dinner” where newcomers can meet other parishioners in a friendly environment.

4. Make home visits to newly arrived persons in the parish or community. Also, visit newly arrived migrants or highly mobile persons in their camps, ports, parks, or temporary living arrangements.

5. Organize outreach activities directed towards migrant or mobile populations in your community. Post an invitation to the parish—including Mass times—in truck stops, tourists spots, or ports; invite migrant or mobile groups (such as migrant farm workers, circus and carnival workers, or seafarers) to a special social event at the parish.

6. Host National Migration Week activities in the parish.

### **PASTORAL CARE GROUP**

#### *Responsibilities:*

- Planning multicultural liturgies and sacramental services
- Organizing formation and leadership development classes for multicultural ministers
- Identifying and developing multilingual, multicultural resources and materials
- Addressing the pastoral needs of migrant or transient populations

1. Plan liturgical and non-liturgical multicultural celebrations. Celebrations could be organized around feast days (such as Epiphany or the parish saint’s day).

2. Arrange for leadership development and pastoral ministry training for representatives from the diverse ethnic communities in the parish.

3. Form teams of volunteer lay ministers of various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds to assist parish leaders with pastoral duties such as shutin visits, Eucharistic ministry, or religious education in multiple languages.

4. Conduct fundraising drives for multicultural and multilingual materials such as multicultural

songbooks and catechetical materials or Bibles in other languages.

5. Include local migrant or mobile populations in pastoral ministry plans. Send Eucharistic ministers to migrant camps or seaports regularly; hold special liturgies in which established parishioners and members of migrant and mobile populations can worship together.

### **RESETTLEMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICE GROUP**

Responsibilities:

- Coordinating pre-arrival planning for and reception of newcomers
- Providing orientations
- Assisting newcomers with finding housing, medical services, and employment
- Providing education and tutoring services
- Organizing other social service activities

1. Establish a relationship with your diocesan refugee resettlement office and volunteer to resettle refugees. Your diocesan resettlement office will provide information about pre-arrival planning and family sponsorship.

2. Organize charitable drives to benefit immigrants, migrants, and refugees in your area. Ask parishioners to gather household items that refugees or immigrants need to set up an apartment, or ask them to gather items for seafarers or local migrant workers.

3. Find “partner” families for the newly arrived who will help to orient them to parish life and ease their transition.

4. Establish a parish tutoring program for immigrants, migrants, and refugees.

5. Organize a job fair for the newly arrived.

6. Plan a parish service day in a neighborhood where new immigrants, migrants, and refugees live.

### **ADVOCACY GROUP**

Responsibilities:

- Staying current on public policy issues
- Organizing educational activities to inform parishioners of social justice issues
- Developing and maintaining a grassroots advocacy network
- Coordinating letter-writing campaigns
- Visiting with policy makers

1. Establish contacts and collaborate with national, diocesan, and local Catholic social justice groups that advocate for the rights of immigrants, migrants, and refugees. Make sure these issues are given focus within social justice groups in your parish.

2. Publicize pertinent information that affects the rights of immigrants, migrants, and refugees (e.g., in Mass announcements and in the parish bulletin).

3. Encourage congressional visits and organize parish participation in demonstrations to promote and defend the rights of immigrants, migrants, and refugees.

4. Recruit local attorneys to provide pro-bono services and advice on immigration matters.

## **DEVELOPING A WELCOMING PLAN FOR THE PARISH**

Developing a welcoming plan for the parish can be an effective way to enhance a sense of community, better integrate newcomers and culturally diverse groups, and meet the spiritual and human needs of newly arrived persons. Below, Fr. Andre Pierre, pastor at the Shrine of the Sacred Heart in Washington, D.C. (a large multicultural parish serving many immigrant and ethnic groups), describes some of the greatest challenges faced by “newly arrived” persons (i.e., immigrants, migrants, and refugees) today and explains how establishing an active plan for welcoming newcomers can help address these needs in a parish. This is followed by a suggested model for developing such a plan.

### **Greatest Challenges Faced by Newcomers to the Church in the United States**

1. **Cultural shock:** This includes adjusting to a whole new system (transit, money, technology, etc.). Worship is different, too; newcomers may find Mass in U.S. parishes “fast and cold” when the liturgy does not incorporate dance, song, and other cultural elements.
2. **Distance of community from newcomers:** Many newcomer ethnic groups are from a tradition where Church is integral to community life; here, however, they may feel marginalized and rejected, as established community members “fear” them, and as anti-immigrant attitudes exist even within the Church.
3. **Strained relationships with other ethnic groups:** Often there is competition for parish resources, which causes social tension among ethnic groups.
4. **Priests and parish ministers who are not familiar with the cultural backgrounds of ethnic groups:** Although newcomers do not expect that the local priest and ministers will know their language, they do expect them to value their culture. Pastors and ministers who wish to

serve “whoever approaches the altar” may lack the experience or models to reach out to the newcomers.

### **How a Parish Welcoming Plan Addresses the Needs of Newcomers**

1. **Newcomers become better oriented to parish and community life in the United States:** As a result of personal outreach, the cultural, spiritual, and human needs of the newcomers are better understood and thus better addressed by the parish community.
2. **The parish becomes a more welcoming and inclusive place:** Stereotypes and misunderstandings that lead to fear and anti-immigrant sentiment are diminished as parish members have more contact with one another. Newcomers feel personally encouraged to participate in all parish activities and leadership; as a result, parish recruitment and retention rates increase.
3. **Cooperation among ethnic groups is enhanced:** Distinct ethnic and cultural groups are encouraged to work together to solve common problems. Established members of ethnic communities have leadership roles in reaching out to the newly arrived.
4. **Communication, dialogue, and mutual understanding between pastors/parish staff and newcomers is enhanced:** Priests, staff, and parishioners gain important knowledge about newcomers’ backgrounds and the changing demographics of their parish, thus becoming more capable of integrating and of serving the needs of all their parishioners. Developing a Parish Welcoming Plan Any parish welcoming plan should address four primary areas of concern: hospitality, pastoral care, resettlement and social services, and advocacy.