

Reaching Out to the Unchurched Webinar Series

Today's Topic

Session 5

Assimilation and Integration

Incorporating New Persons into the Life of the Parish

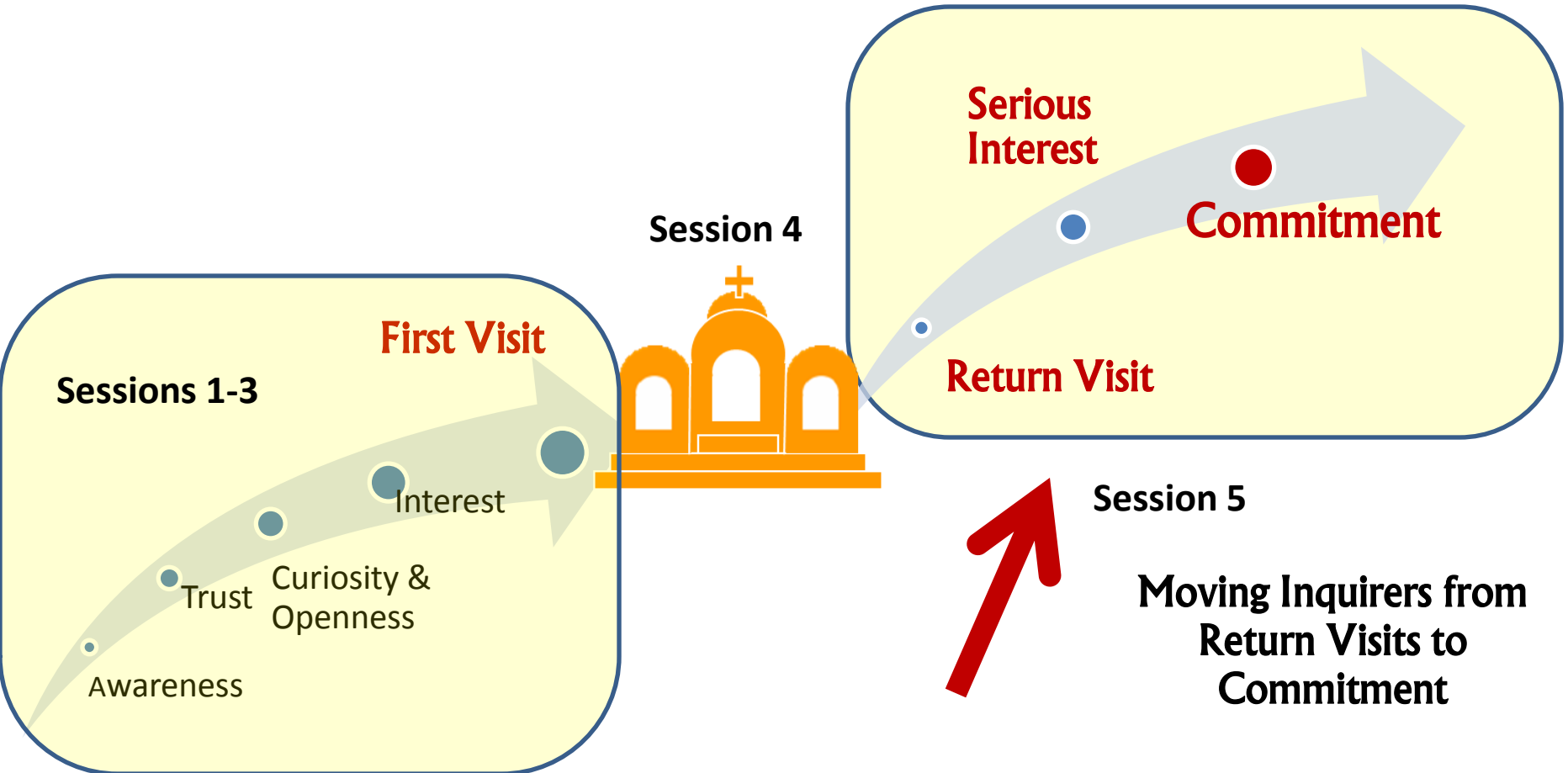


Fr. Jonathan
Ivanoff



Joseph
Kormos

Tonight's Focus: Assimilation



Goals

1. Offer insights about assimilation
2. Encourage you and your parish to thoroughly examine your assimilation process/methods.

Content Warning

- Some of the material for this session may seem overly formulaic and structured
 - Lots of parish “busyness” ...certainly not “mystical”!
 - Take what works...leave the rest
- ➔ *Remember: Your parish needs to develop the “structure” that **supports the size you want to be!***

Outline

Overview

Communicating
Member Expectations

Catechesis

Spiritual Gifts

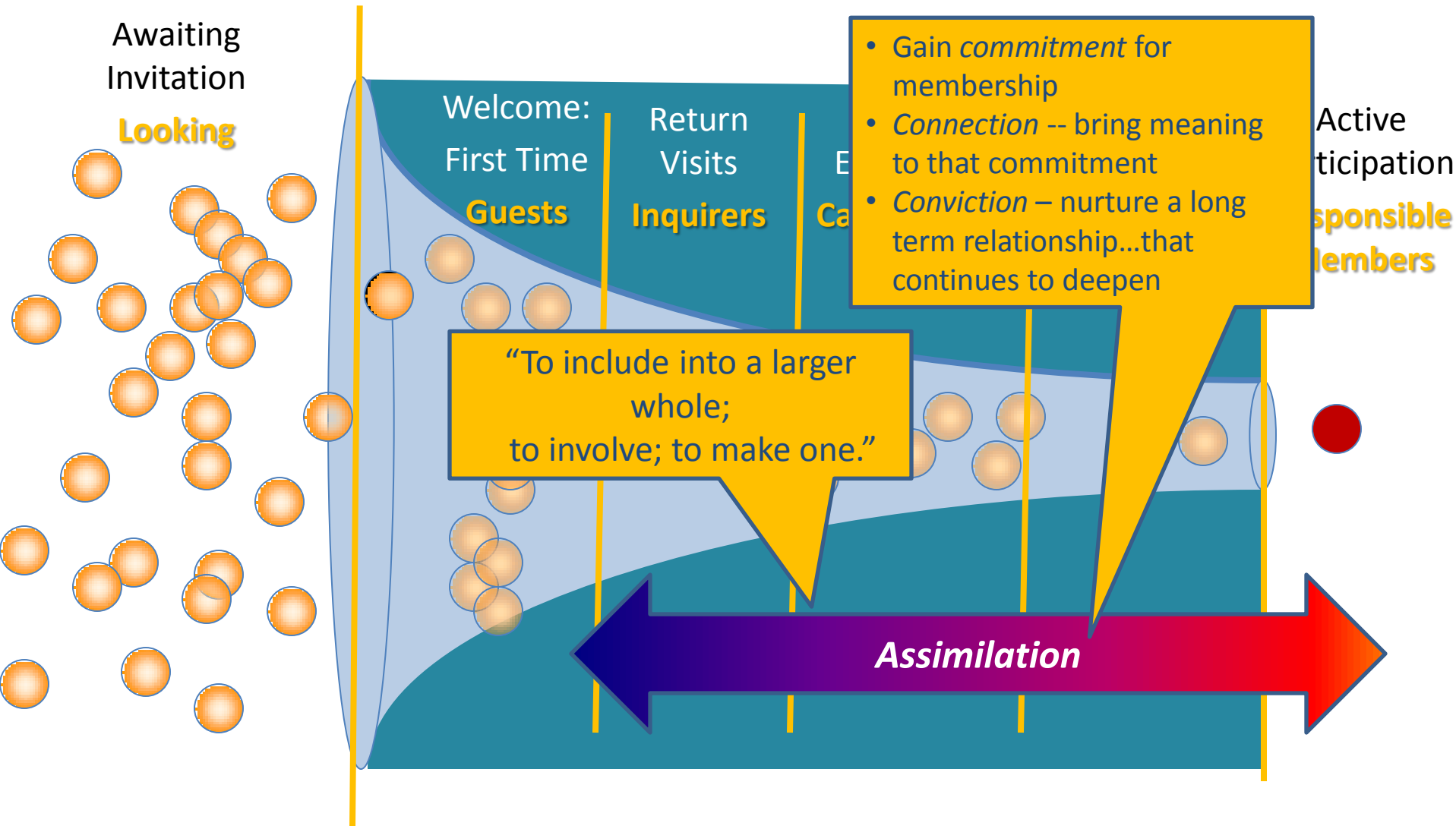
Stewardship

Assimilation
Toolbox

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Summary

Awareness to Active Membership “Funnel”

Where is your bottleneck?



You Will Be Assimilated...



...But resistance is still possible...

Assimilation/Incorporation Mechanisms Vary with Parish Size

Different...

- characteristics
- needs for newcomers
- Incorporation strategies will apply



Small <50



Medium 50-175



Large > 175

Assumptions About Assimilation

1. Assimilation does not happen automatically
2. Responsibility is parish's, not the newcomer!
3. Begins before membership and is an on-going process.
4. Most new members (e.g., converts) eager to contribute, but...
5. ...Some new members are “consumers” – they’re “users”...looking to “hide”

Who Needs Assimilation Help?

Assimilation & incorporation applies to:

New

- Converts
- Transfers
- Reverts

Current

- Teens entering adulthood
- Empty nesters
- Passives
- Marginals
- Faders
- Dropouts

“All of these people come to us with ‘urgent’, though perhaps inarticulate longings and high hopes”

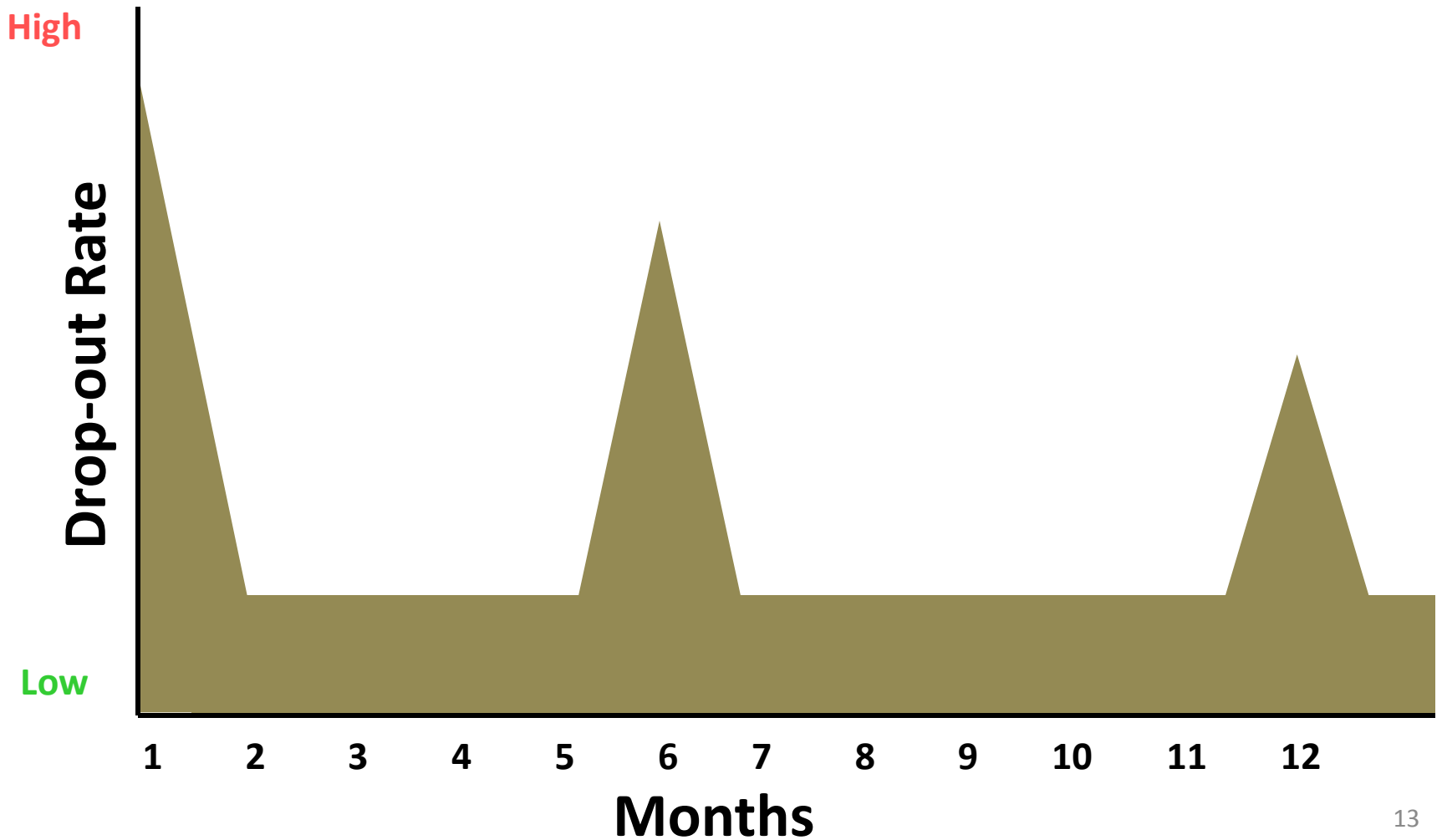
“The First Year – Incorporating New Members”

S. Braden

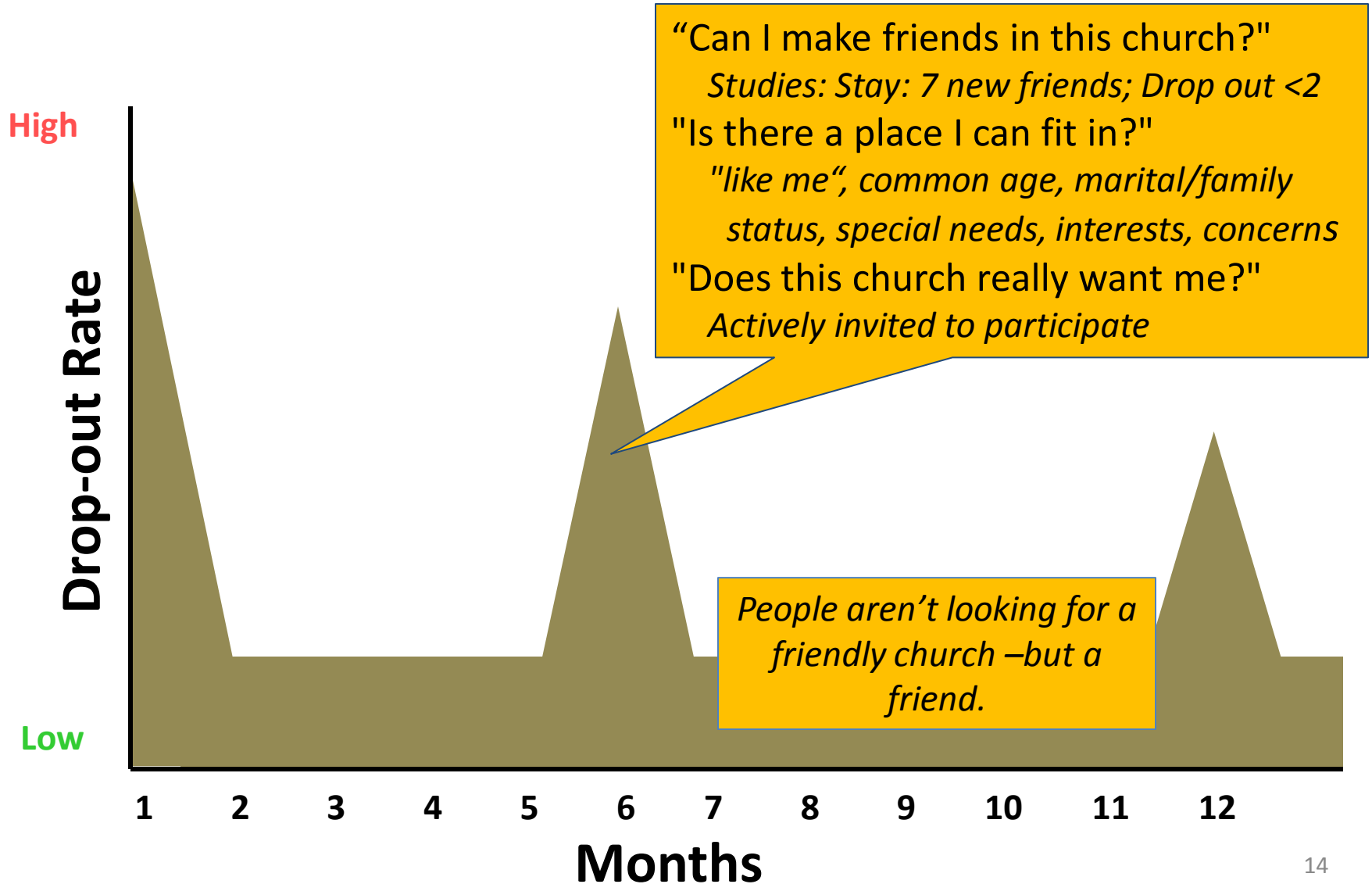
No Time to Waste

- An Urgent matter!
 - Newcomers **do** drop out!
- People do not leave at random times
 - “82% of those who drop out of a new church do so within the first year.”

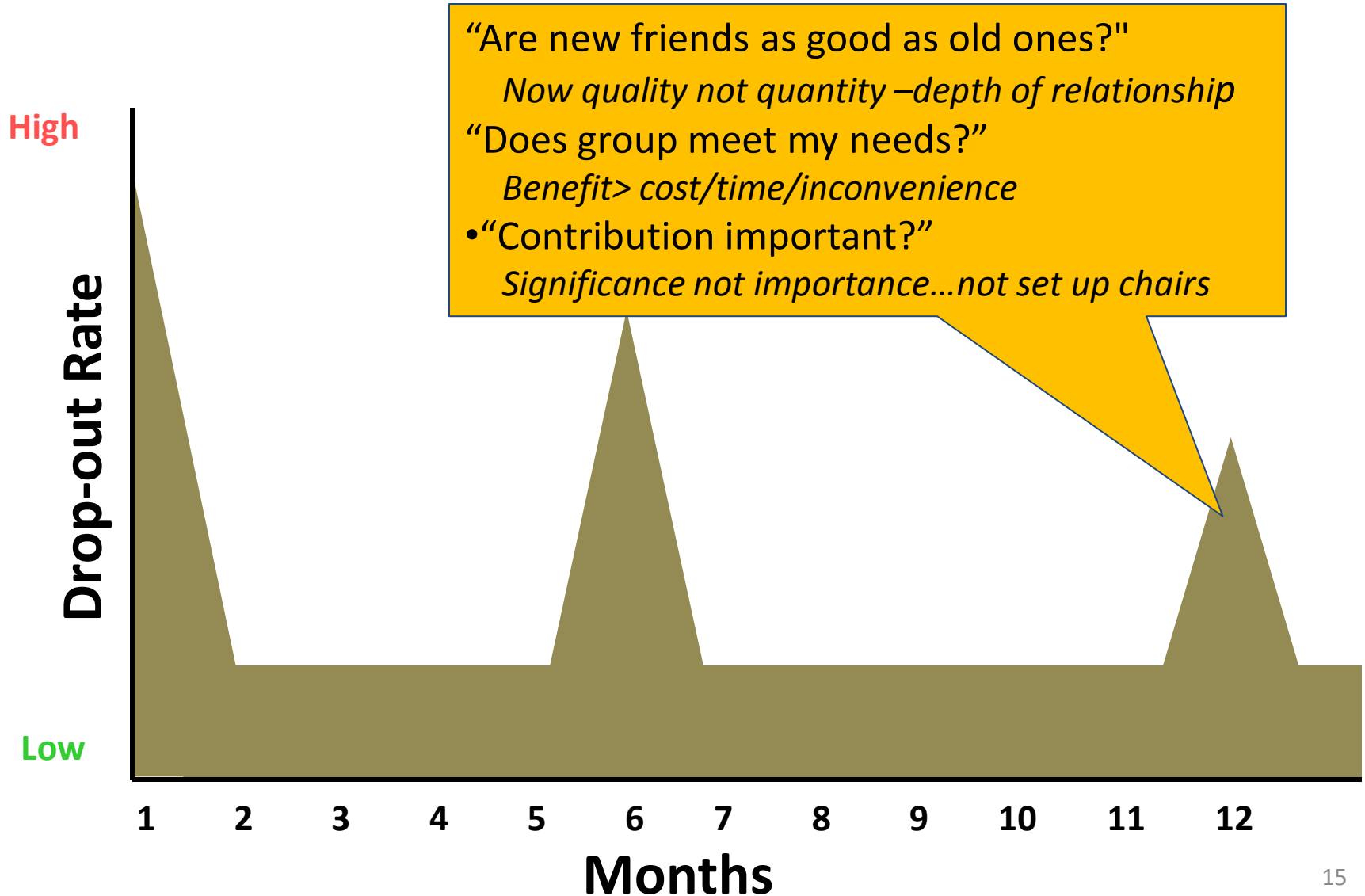
Two Distinct Spikes



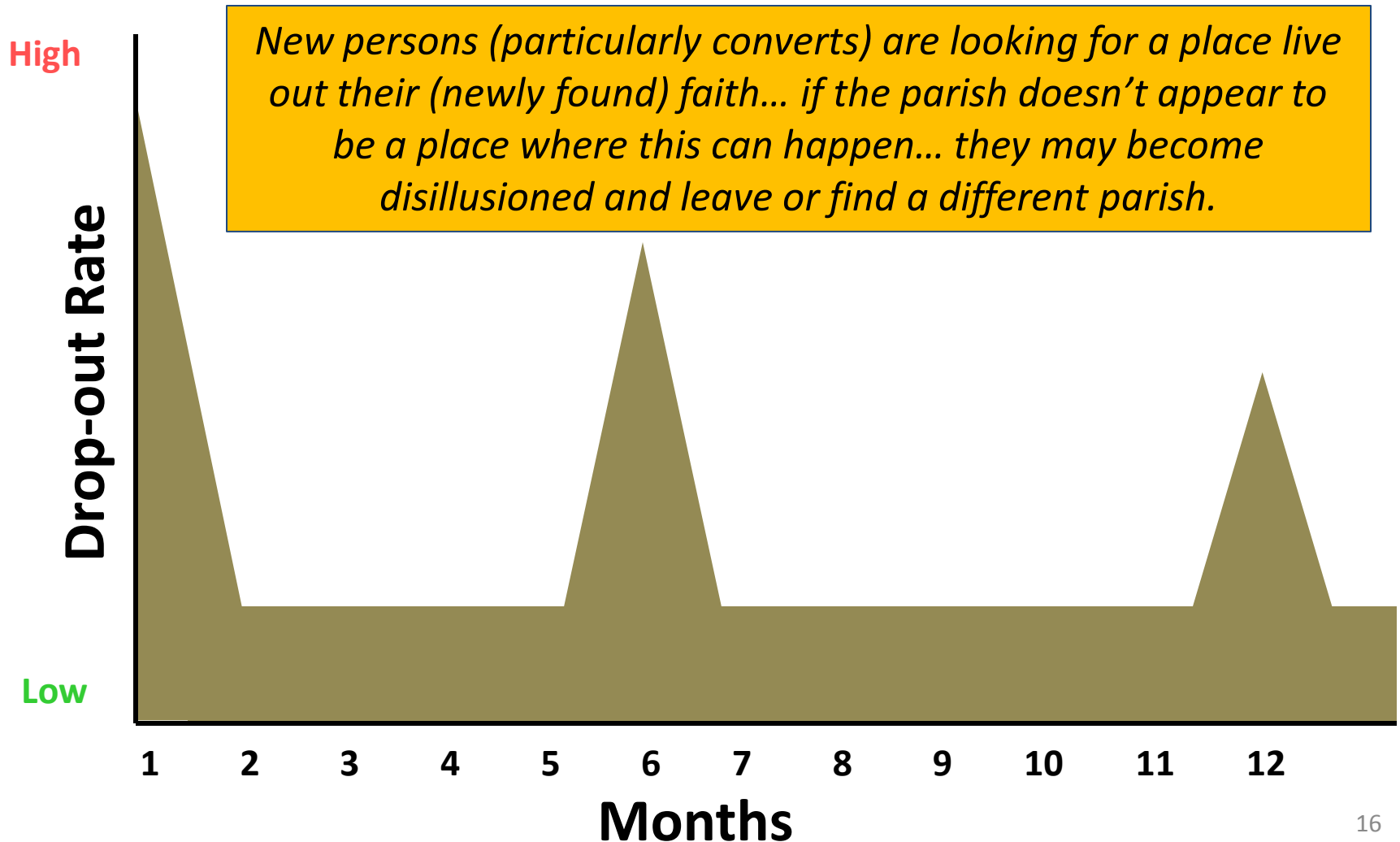
First Six Months



Second Six Months



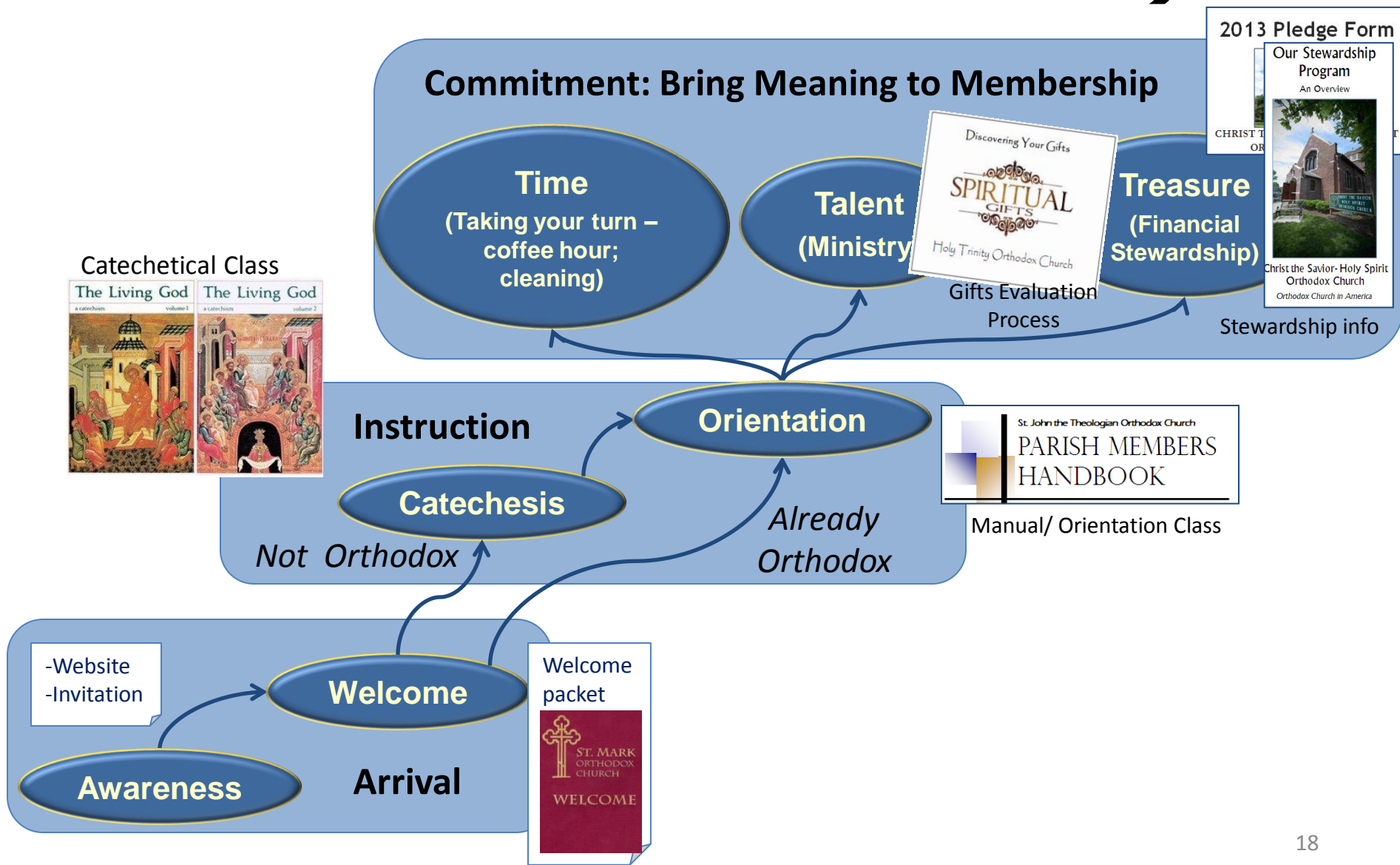
Additional Orthodox Perspective



Understanding the Difference?

New Members	Older Members
Needs being met in their life	Relationships with those in the church
enthusiastic about present parish	One/more disillusioning experiences
outsiders, little sense of belonging	earned their sense of belonging
future-oriented	past-oriented
open to change	status quo
strong positive feelings toward present priest	"I remember Father Nick..."
not attached to the present building	see the building as a "sacred place"

Parishioner Formation Lifecycle



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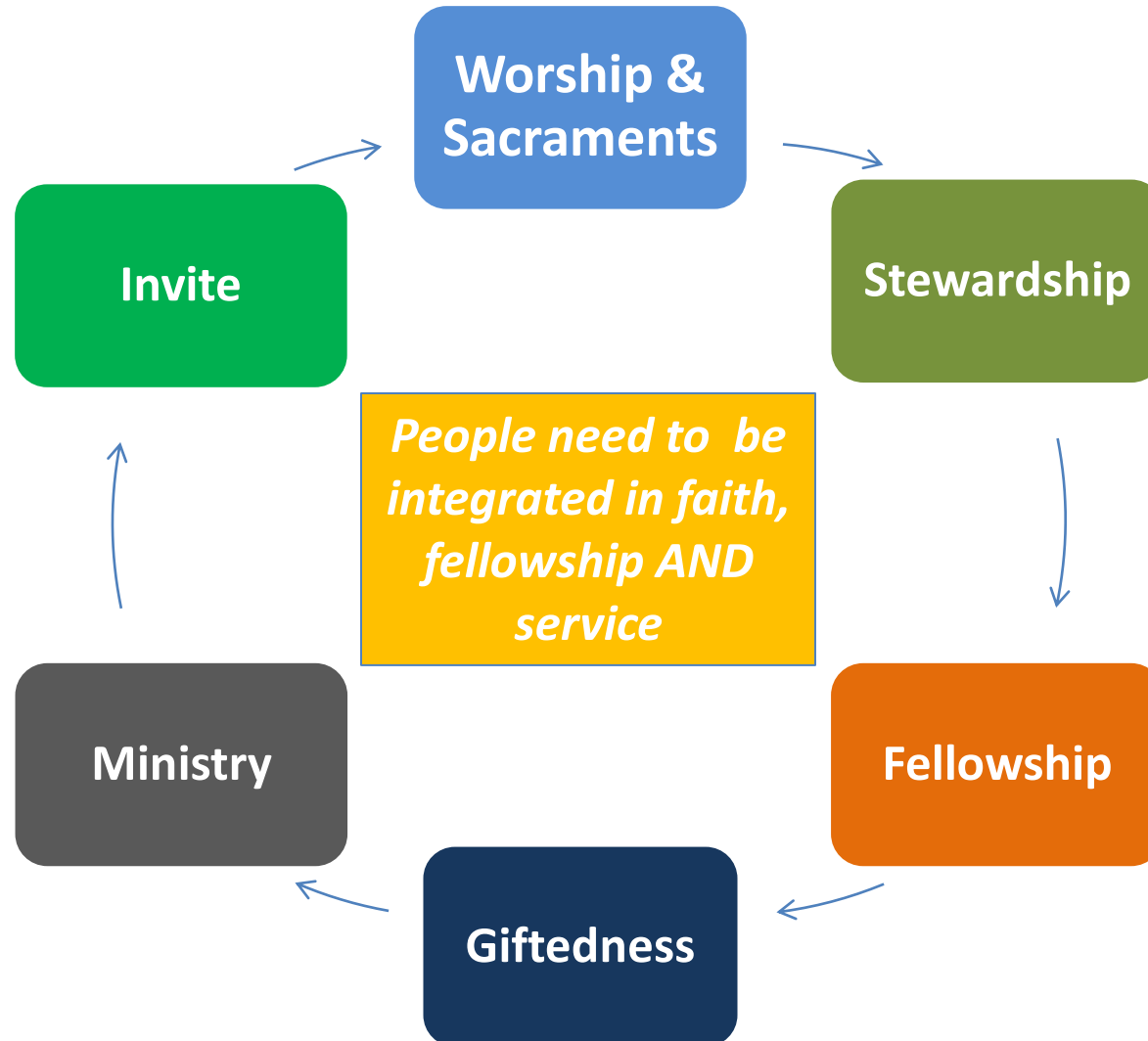
Successfully Assimilated “Member”

The Ideal: the Model of Acts 2:42-47

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers...Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.”

Successfully Assimilated “Member”

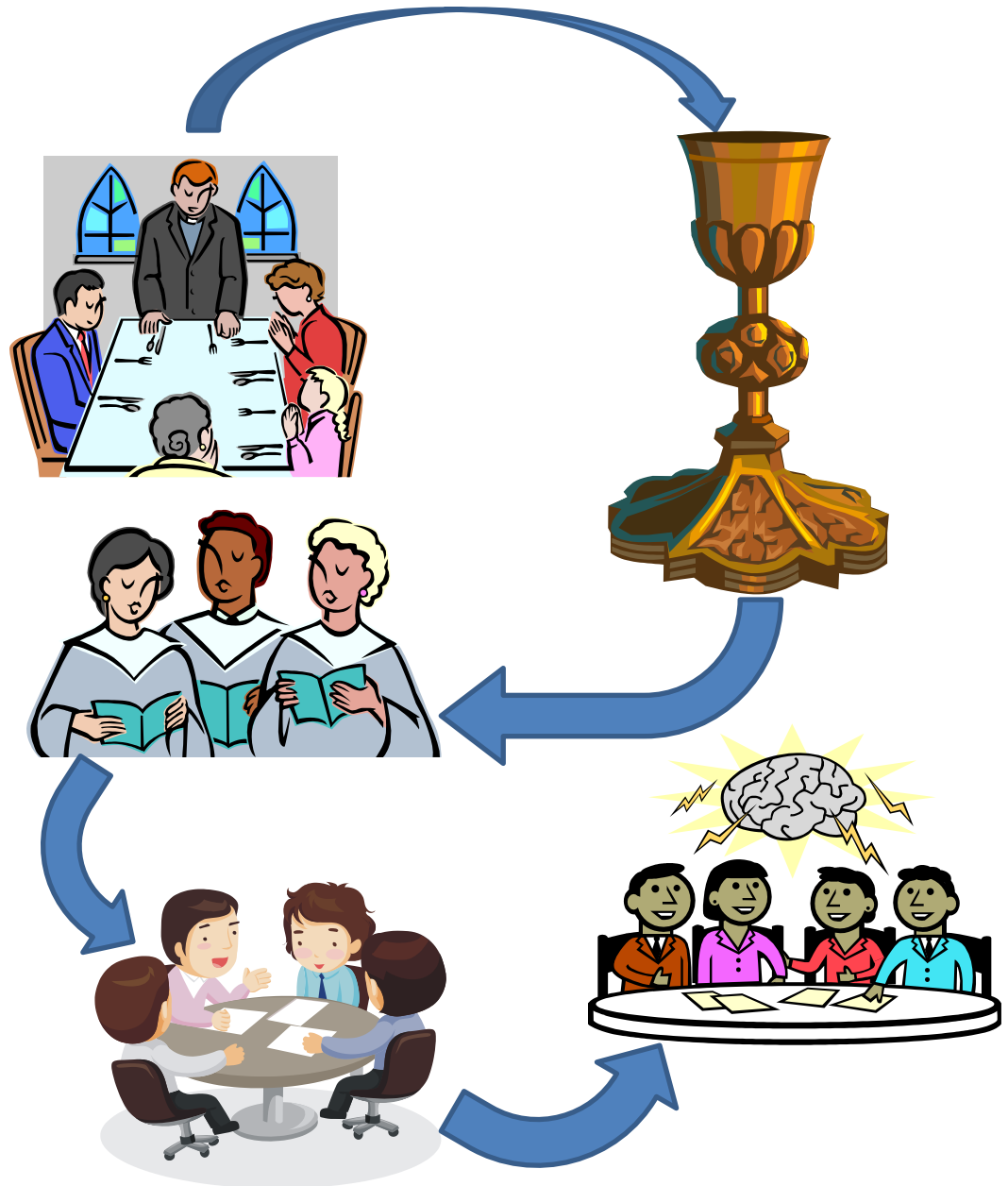
Starting “With the End in Mind”



Steps to Becoming a Member:

1. Priest visits family, gives blessing
2. New family participates in Confessions and Communion
3. Priest announces joining, all sing "Many Years!"
4. New family meets with Secretary, Treasurer/Stewardship, Education, Sisterhood, etc.
5. Rector meets again with family and reviews ministry involvement

The sooner they are connected, the deeper and quicker their commitment to parish life will be. All parishioners should have an understanding of involvement in and commitment to and support of parish life in all ways: spiritual and financial and otherwise.



ORIENTation: *To Guide to the East*

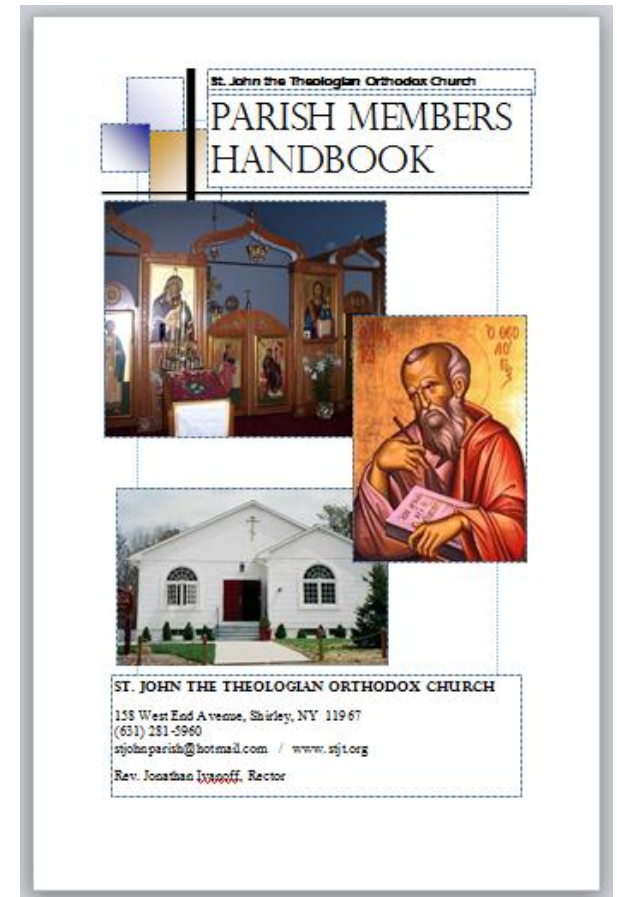
A “New Member Course”? Why not?

- 7:30 pm – Moleiben (10 min)
- 7:45 pm - Overview: History, Vision, Mission (15 min)
- 8:00 pm – What is a “Good Member?” (5 min)
- 8:05 pm – Who, What, Where, When: How the Parish Functions and What You Should Know (10 min)
- 8:15 pm – Ministries (15 min)
- 8:30 pm – Time – Talent – Treasure: Obligations of Membership. Stewardship, Coffee Hour (15 min)
- 8:45 pm – Closing Prayer, coffee and questions

ORIENTATION: *To Guide to the East*

New Member's Welcome Kit:

- Parish Members Handbook
- *"What is a Good Parishioner?"*
- Parish Member Profile
- Time and Talent Survey
- Wall Calendar
- Roster
- Prayer slip
- Patronal Icon



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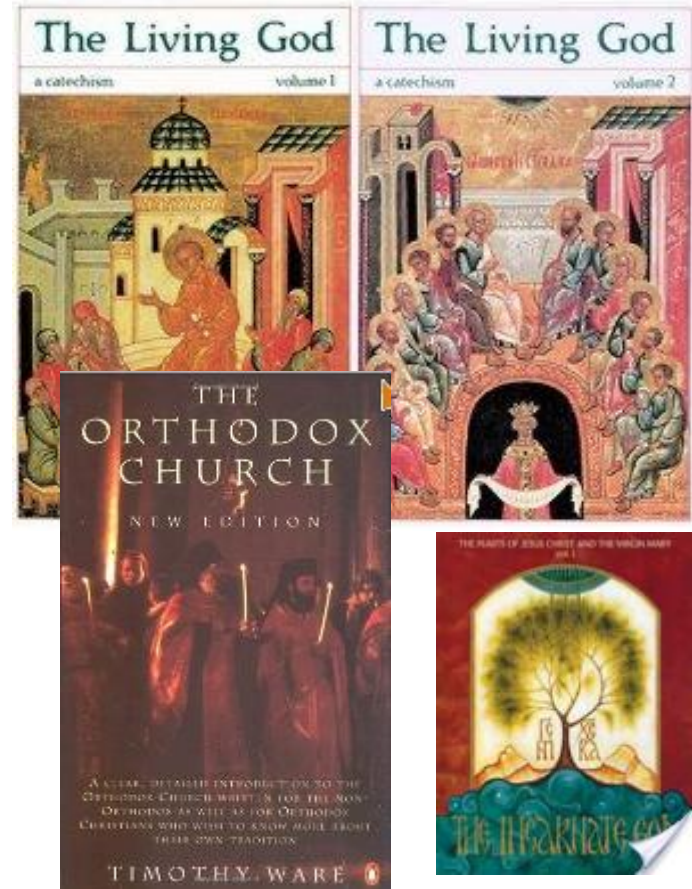
Do a Survey!

Find out what they've already done:

- **Reading:** non-Orthodox guests have already read a lot (Ware, etc.)
- **Websites:** Which ones? Not all “Orthodox” websites are created equal!
- **Visits:** Have they been to other Orthodox churches? How long did they stay? Why did they leave?
- **Relationships:** Who do they know that are Orthodox? How has that influenced them?

Stuff Exists!

Priest and/or Lay can teach:
Teach **early**, teach **soundly**,
Teach **consistently**,
teach **foundationally**



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Every Christian is Gifted...

A spiritual gift is:

- A special ability...
- That God gives...
- According to His Grace...
- To each member of the Body of Christ...
- To be used for the development of the Church

8 Reasons to Know your Gifts

Knowing your spiritual gift...

1. helps you understand God's will for your life. What God has called you to do He has gifted you to do, and what He has gifted you to do He has called you to do
2. helps you understand how the Holy Spirit works through you
3. helps you know what God has not called you to do

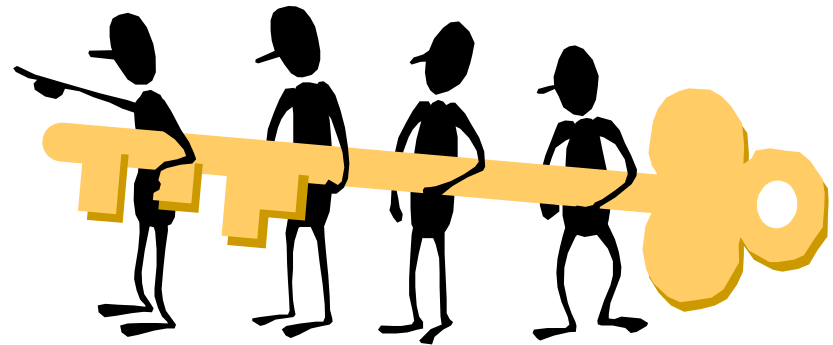
8 Reasons to Know your Gifts

Knowing your spiritual gift...

4. relieves you from serving out of duty
5. fills a deep inner need
6. builds unity among members
7. equips you to fulfill God's purpose for your life
8. edifies you!

Spiritual Giftedness: Scripture

“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” – 1 Peter 4:10



Spiritual Giftedness: Patristic

*“The **most basic task** of the Church leader is to **discern the spiritual gifts** of all those under his authority, and to encourage those gifts to be used to the full benefit of all. Only a person who can discern the gifts of others and can humbly rejoice at the flowering of those gifts is fit to lead the church.”* -St. John Chrysostom

Assimilating by Equipping

Do Those in the parish:

1. Know their spiritual gifts?
2. Are they using them effectively?

IMPLEMENTING SGs

- Teach about SGs
- Find a good assessment tool!
- Assess/survey (new) members
- Clarify ministry descriptions
- Make sure ministry leaders on-board
- Make a list of SGs needed; do ministry tasks and SGs match?

Ministries: *Landing Places to Use Gifts*

Worship

- Sacristan
- Prospora
- Church Decoration
- Choir

Formation

- Youth
- Adult Education
- Church School
- Prayer Groups

Christian Service

- Charity Neighborhood
- Charity International
- IOCC

Evangelization

- Speakers Bureau
- College Programs
- Events

Governance

- Parish council
- Finance
- Leader development
- Retreats & Forums

In-reach/Fellowship

- Meals/Visits/Assistance
- Social
- Men/ women/ demographic

Property

- Cleaning
- Maintenance
- Landscape
- Planning/Architectural

Stewardship

- Annual campaign
- Gift planning endowment

New Member Assimilation

- Mentoring/ Sponsoring
- Giftedness assessment
- Find a landing spot

Communications

- Website
- Newsletter /Bulletin
- Directory

Needs & Celebrations

- Coffee hour
- Celebrations /meals
- Kitchen
- Small groups

Youth

- Meetings
- Projects
- Trips

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Not All “Conversions” Are the Same

"People go through three conversions in the Christian faith: their head, their heart, and their pocketbook -- unfortunately, not all at the same time!" - Martin Luther

7 Biblical Approaches

- 1 - Give Reverently** (Deut. 14:23)
- 2 - Give Systematically** (Gen 28:16-22, Prov 3:9,10)
- 3 - Give Expectantly** (I Kings 17, Haggai 1:4-11)
- 4 - Give Cheerfully** (II Cor. 9:7, Lev. 22:17,18)
- 5 - Give Accordingly** (I Cor 16:2)
- 6 - Give Eternally** (III John 8, I Sam. 30:22)
- 7 - Give Faithfully** (I Cor. 4:2)

7 Lessons

1. Provide solid Scriptural teaching
2. Personal testimonies help!
3. Make it part of their spiritual journey
4. Have a plan (based on NM's background)
5. Get help – form a team
6. Use well-done collateral material
7. Yearly education, specific program delivery time

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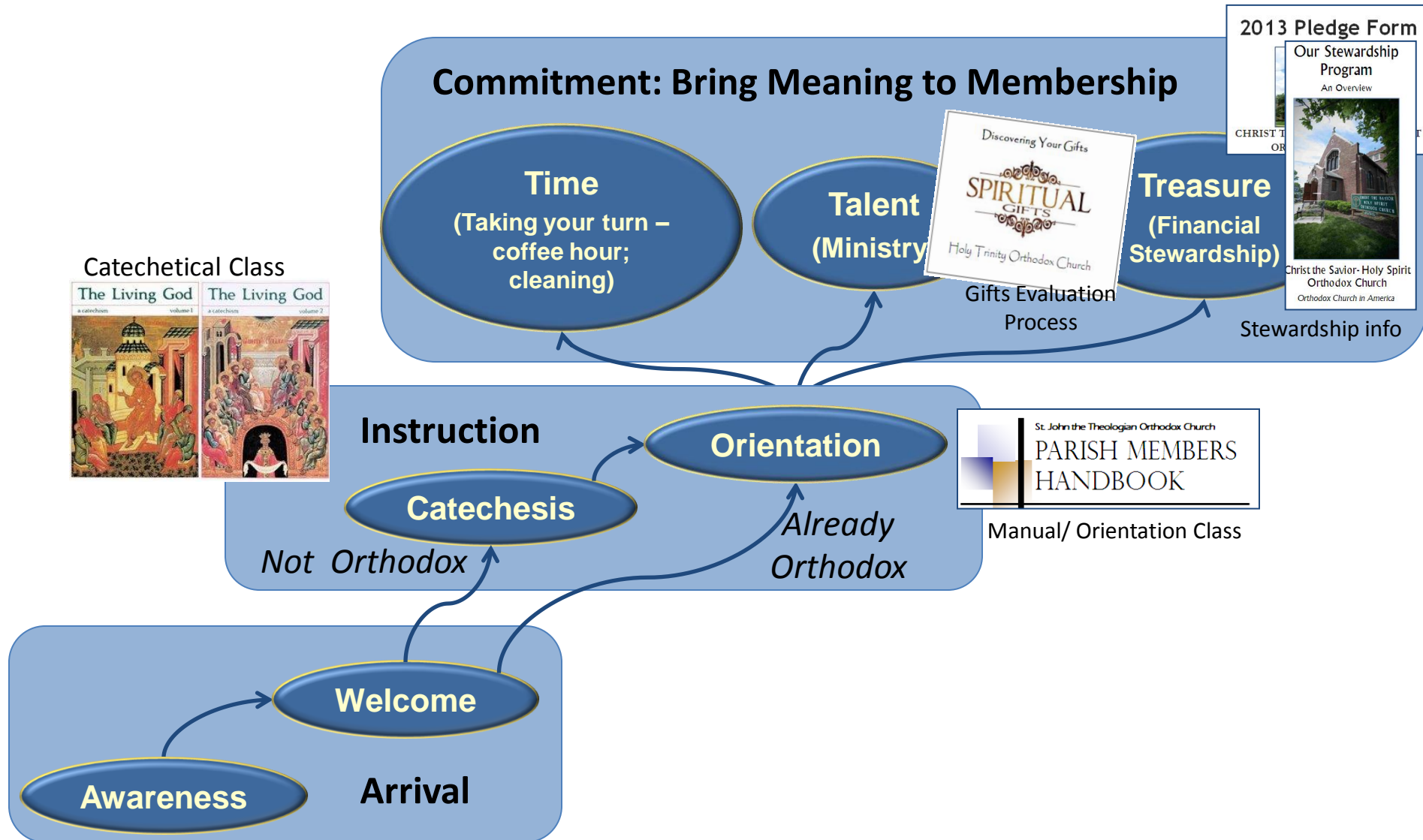
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Assimilation Tools



Additional Tools

Inquirers Course

Introduction to Orthodox Christianity

A Three Session Class
for Inquirers



<http://www.midwestdiocese.org/files/Parish%20Health/InquirersClassV1final.ppt>

Holy Trinity Orthodox Church



2012 Parish Member Directory

Parish Directory



New Faces Board



Small Groups

Ingredients

- Spiritual growth
- Service opportunity
- Outreach to others
- Meaningful friendships
- Intellectual growth
- Fellowship & fun

Lessons Learned Survey

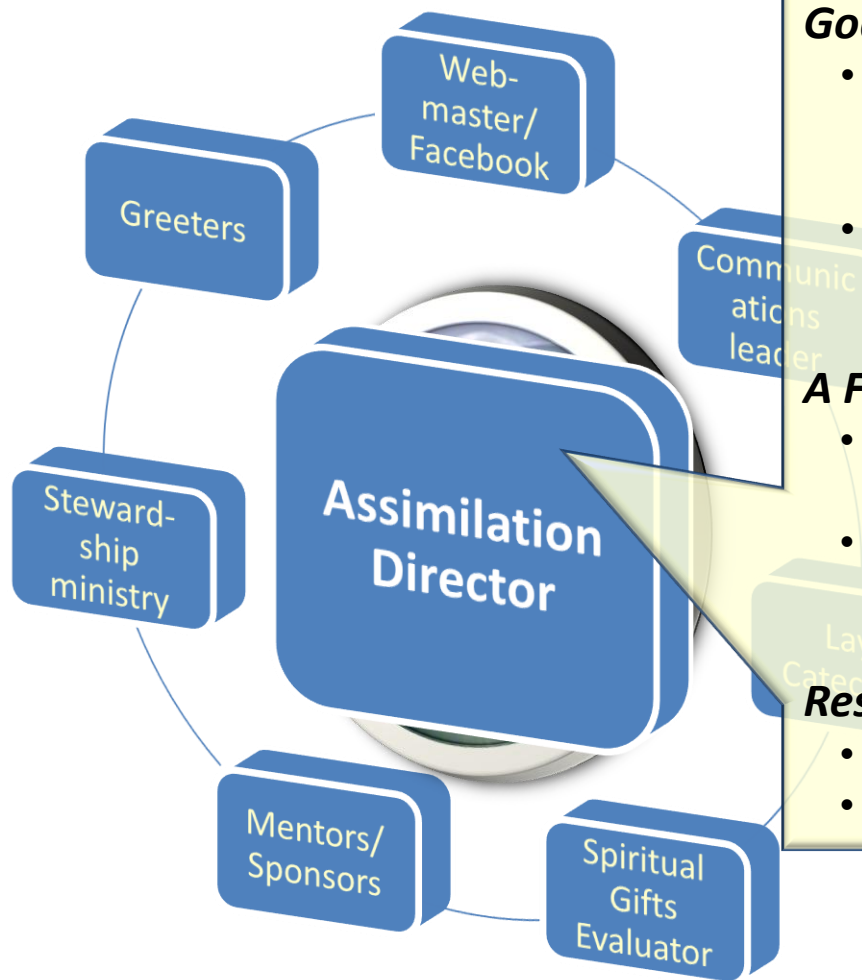
Recent New Members

- What was it like?
- What worked?
- What didn't?

WOW!
**Who is going to
do all of this
stuff?**



Assimilation Roles



Goal

- assist new members in developing a sense of belonging/citizenship
- help current members maintain that sense of belonging

A Feeder Ministry!

- thinks, dreams, breathes new ministry for members!
- constantly explores ways to tie the new member to friends inside the church.

Responsibility to the Parish

- Open the front and side doors
- Close the back door

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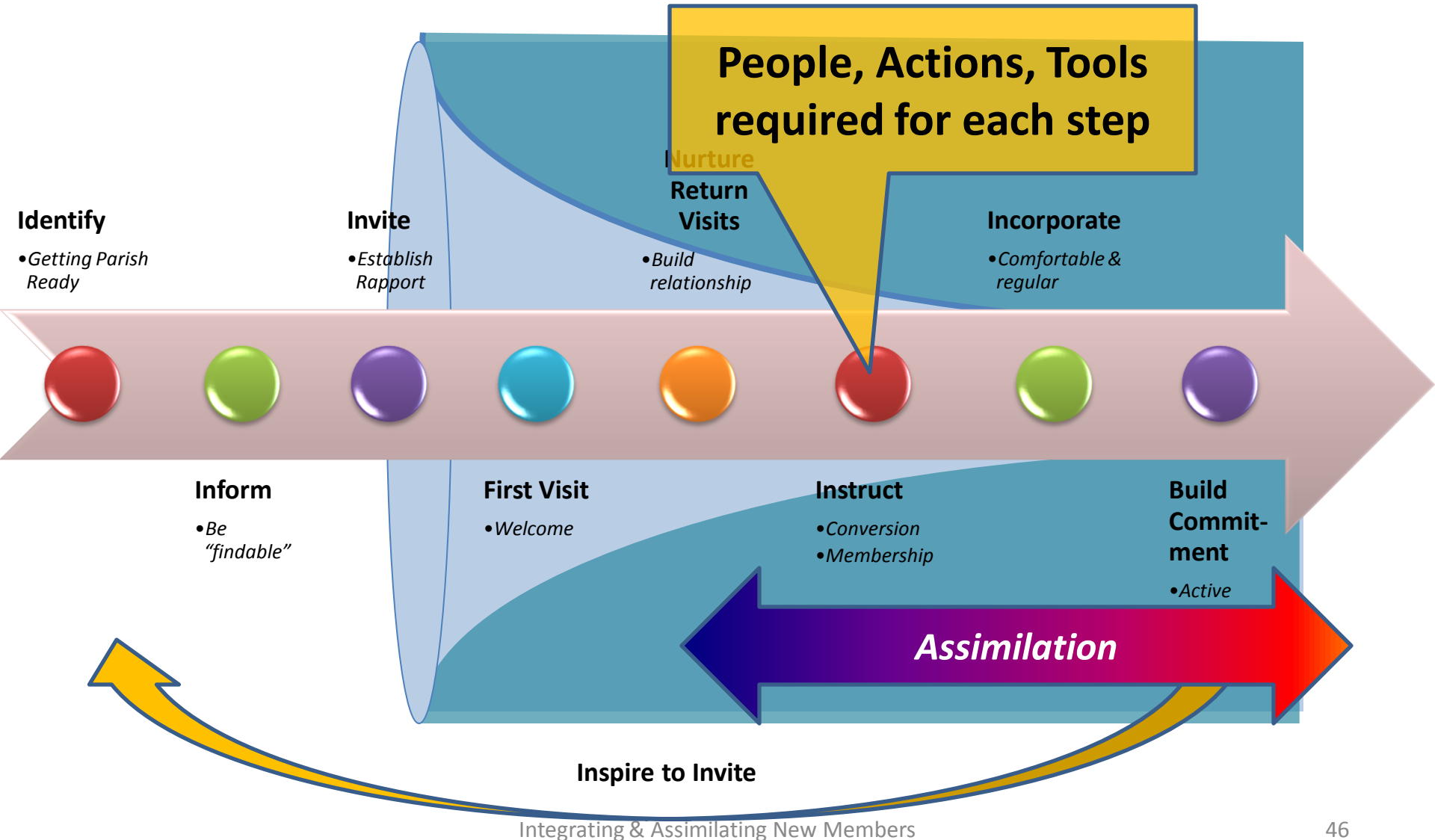
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Summary Evangelization & Growth Stages



Comprehensive Parish Evangelism Effort -- Actions for Each Step in the Journey

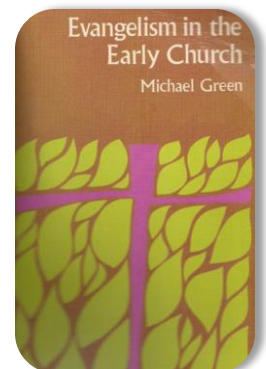
Stage	Responsible	Action/Practices	"Collateral"/Tools
1. Identify <i>Getting Parish Ready</i>	All; Evang.leader; Communicatiions team	Understand unchurched: 200 M; Looking!; various "faith stages". Internal Planning/ education; Size the effort; not optional; parish not closed community; clear steps.	Education session
2. Inform <i>Be "findable"</i>	Webmaster, Communications team	Build awareness: WOM, media coverage, interviews, speakers bureau; connect w/ neighborhood/community ; community events @ church; venues (coffee house)identify "parish "connectors";	Website —future not past centric; links to sites;, people photos; Other directories, web ads; search positioning; yellow pgs; Events; Facebook ("sharing") Newspaper; Street signs
3. Invite <i>Establish Rapport</i>	Evang. leader All	Inviting>>Sharing Good news; Not manipulative/coercive/ interrogation/ conquest; Key skill: listen , good questions; <i>Path:</i> Trust>> Curiosity>> Openness>> Interest; Go slowly; Be prepared>> Personal Narrative; Invite FRAN (friends relatives, assoc., neighbors); Bring to church; Share your identity; offer prayer.	Parish Business cards for parishioners; Orthodox tracts.
4. First visit <i>Welcoming</i>	Greeter Team & ALL	1st Impression: Parking; Landscaping, Accessibility; Warm greeting offer bulletin, Vibrant Liturgy; friendly people; good preaching; evident mission/ vision; post greeting/invite. Explore their needs ; <i>Goal:</i> substantive conversation; tame unfriendly behaviors; no public intro; Understand convert "likes": "continuity"; "authentic, apostolic, truth, mystical, beauty"; Alt 1st visits: lectures concerts, vespers	Signage; Welcome Brochure w/ personal stories" Service Books Bulletin
5. Return visits <i>Build relationships</i>	Greeter mln. F/u Teams; All	Follow Up Call/note/email; discussion w/priest; affinity intros; natural bonding opportunities	Ministry Brochure/web pages Orthodox literature
6.. Instruct - Serious exploration <i>Chrismation/ membership</i>	Priest; Catechists; All	Inquirer's Class Catechetical training Orientation class;	Inquirers Slides Intro profile; photo board; Welcome visit
7.Incorporate - <i>Comfortable & regular</i>	"Assimilation director " Mentors	Multiple ministry entry points; affinity intros, mentor matching; Say it: 'everybody a ministry' Nudging: "consumers"/ "users"/ "passives"/ "marginals"	parish data, pledge form: membership expectations & mat'ls summary T3; parish dir.
8. Build commitment <i>Active contributor</i>	Ministry Leaders Giftedness Coord	Explore personal giftedness Make room for new people	Giftedness Inventory Ministry Planning Small groups
9. Inspire to Invite <i>Begin again</i>	Renewal leader Evang. leader	"Lost sheep" effort; one on one conversations Invite FRAN etc.	Renewal Letters, calls, visits – Evang. effort round 2.

A Final Point...

“Unless there is a transformation of contemporary church life so that once again the task of evangelization is something which is seen as **incumbent on every baptized Christian**, and is **backed up by a quality of living** which **outshines the best that unbelief can muster**, we are unlikely to make much headway through techniques of evangelism. **Men will not believe that Christians have good news to share until they find that bishops and bakers, professors and housewives, are all keen to pass it on.** And men will continue to see the church as an introverted society composed of “respectable” people, bent on its self preservation until they see in church groupings, and individual Christians, the caring, the joy, the fellowship, the self sacrifice and the openness which marked the early church at its best.”

Evangelization in the Early Church

Michael Green



QUESTIONS

