



### 1. What is the Landings programme?

The Landings programme originated 21 years ago in the USA. A '**Spirit-led**' ministry of **reconciliation and hospitality**, it inspires ordinary Catholics to welcome returners and fringe Catholics into the heart of the faith community. Designed **for use in any parish**, it can trigger or renew a sense of welcome in the parish generally. It was brought to England at St. Benedict's parish, Ealing, as a millennium response to Pope John Paul II's request to engage in the New Evangelisation and has been introduced to 11 dioceses in England, Scotland and Wales.

### 2. How does a parish implement it?

After participation in an initial **training workshop** facilitated by trained Landings staff, four or five 'welcomers' join together with an equal number of 'returners' in a small group for a series of short meetings ending with a retreat. Some parishes offer a 'run' of meetings annually.

### 3. How does a parish organise a training workshop?

Contact is made with the Landings director or coordinator and a date is set to offer training to a group of three or more parishes (to maximise labour-effectiveness).

### 4. Why is outside training considered necessary when parishioners may already have the skills and experience required for outreach? Why can't we 'train ourselves'?

Landings training is **inspirational** in nature. The confidence, motivation and commitment of 'welcomers' will decree the level of the programme's success. Landings staff offer a **model of collaborative leadership** at the outset characterised by the assurance that comes with living the challenges of this ministry over time. If 'good practice begets good practice', a strong 'positive charge' at the outset is important for the successful embedding of the programme in the parish.

The training workshop offers not only a chance to '**learn by doing**' i.e. trying out the meeting structure itself - but an opportunity to **form relationships** with other welcomers. *Good relationships* and a *sense of doing something worthwhile together well* are generally the key motivating factors required to sustain any voluntary ministry...

### 5. How can the programme attract returners when they are not already part of the congregation?

A 'spirit-led' ministry, Landings functions quietly in the background of parish life - a place where, at least initially - returners tend to be most comfortable.

Participants are drawn to the programme by Landings '**visuals**' in public places. Literature is distributed at **Midnight mass**, the **Easter Vigil**, **baptisms**, **funerals** and **weddings** and is also left 'lying around' - particularly at the back of the church. In addition, welcomers are trained to give short **promotional presentations** in key places out with the parish...

The Landings programme contributes to the creation of vibrant, outwards-looking, ever-changing 'mini-communities' within the fabric of the parish. The **sharing of group members' faith-stories**, in strict confidence, is key to this. The resulting spirit of **trust, warmth and openness**, colouring parish life, can **draw enquirers** both new and old.

## 6. Is there active recruiting?

The most effective witnesses to the effect of the programme are **returners themselves**. Often they do the most 'recruiting'. Drawn by their active witness, their friends often join the subsequent 'run' of meetings.

In addition, the training workshop at the programme's outset (and 'role-sharing' in the small group once the programme is underway) give welcomers the **confidence** to make short presentations in other situations; e.g. marriage preparation courses, baptism courses, meetings for the parents of children being initiated for the sacraments etc. Research shows that these are the situations at which prospective returners present themselves...

## 7. What if no returners come?

The programme's success is not dependent on its immediate uptake by returners.

Often, groups find that welcomers are in fact 'returners' themselves... It can be an enriching experience for welcomers to experience a series of Landings meetings themselves before embarking on the task of welcoming others...

Trying any new product or voluntary commitment is a **process**. Trust is gained in stages. Returners report that it can take up to three years to reach the point of deciding to come along! Other parish groups may need time to come to trust the programme too.

**Prayer** is the bedrock of the programme's success; it is recommended that prayer communities and the parish itself are requested to *hold the process in prayer* prior to and throughout Landings meetings.

**Going on retreat** together has proved important in preserving the energy of groups who attracted returners later rather than sooner...

## 8. What part do clergy have in the programme?

The parish priest **initiates** and **supports** this lay-led programme: he selects welcomers initially and can prepare the parish in many ways to undertake the programme in the church's prayer and liturgy. Thereafter he supports the ministry, celebrating Mass during the closing retreat.

## 9. What is the effect of this ministry on the parish or church in general?

Fr. Jac Campbell, Landings' founder, described Landings as '...a programme to **empower lay Catholics to evangelise**'. As such it effects more than outreach to potential returners. It **enlivens the faith lives** of welcomers and returners alike, acting as a **precursor to catechesis** by implanting in participants a '**thirst for more**'...It feeds into and enriches parish ministries across the board, as returners - their disappointments behind them - alive with gratitude and joy at being re-integrated into the heart of the community, cannot do enough to serve it...

The Landings programme is 'inclusion in practice': a living witness to the reconciling power of Christ; a powerful new means of enacting Pope John Paul II's 'New Evangelisation' - and an embodiment of the six Mission Priorities in Pope Benedict's 'Some Definite Purpose' as outlined in English and Welsh Bishops' Conference Papal Visit Legacy Resources, 2011.