

## **St. James's Mission Statement**

St. James's is an urban church in the heart of Richmond, Virginia. We are a community drawn together by our love of God and our desire to serve Christ in the world. We pray together, work together, learn, laugh, and sing together. We try every day to share a little bit of God's love with our hurting world. Come and join us. You are welcome here.

### **Invite, Welcome, Connect**

IWC at St. James is a Ministry that:

- Celebrates the story of Christ as an invitation to a new life
- Asks us to have the compassion and courage to open ourselves to receive others, and in so doing, be made new
- Believes that we come to this community by invitation of the Holy Spirit
- Nurtures a community ethos of authentic welcome and connection
- Promotes listening to the stories of others as a sacred act
- Values personal relationships as acts of grace

### **IWC at St. James calls us to:**

- INVITE: to appeal to others to join our community in relationships and experiences of benefit and value
- WELCOME: to offer hospitality to others that helps them feel seen and acknowledged
- CONNECT: to ensure a safe space in which we listen to the personal stories of others and discern ministries that will fulfill their passions and talents
- Support present and prospective parishioners to attain answers for:

Where do I fit in?

Can I make friends?

Am I safe here?

Can I find ways to belong and serve?

Am I seen, valued, and known?

### **Background on IWC:**

Our COVID wilderness has been trying for all of us, and while we've missed so much that we had, we've also grown and had experiences that would have been unimaginable without this past year.

***For St. James's, there is an opportunity for us to ask...***

*What do we want to keep from this past year?*

*What do we want to retain from our pre-COVID times?*

*What do we want to try that is new?*

### **Some history to start this conversation.**

*We wanted to be more intentional and friendly to the strangers among us.*

The Vestry and John all heard this deep-seated desire, so over the past 3 to 4 years, we've been on a journey to discover how best can St. James's **be better** about developing relationship with

- Those we encounter in life who might find a home at St. James's
- Newcomers who find us on their own
- Those of us who are already here but possibly not very engaged
- And those of us who are here but are seeking new or different ministries.

After serious study, research and prayer, the Vestry and Clergy enthusiastically endorsed that we adopt

### ***Invite Welcome Connect (IWC)***



### ***What is IWC?***

It's a philosophy of relational ministry that becomes the DNA of congregations as they reach out to *Invite, Welcome and Connect* with all who enter their doors. It's primarily for Episcopalians and deliberately designed to be a one size fits all - in that any congregation can use its underlying components in their church.

Developed by Mary Parmer in 2010 while she was in Texas, by 2013, it had spread to over 100 Texas congregations. The first national conference was held in 2015 and in 2017, *IWC* was incorporated into The Beeckon Center at Sewanee. As you can see, it's relatively new, but the *IWC* ministry is so powerful that many of our sister churches all over the US have adopted its philosophy.

### **Rolling Out IWC at St. James's!**

Our IWC committee was all ready to go in Feb. 2020, but then, COVID hit. We decided that instead of pushing through and just doing the official rollout, it made more sense to take a breath and spend our time going deeper so we could think more creatively about IWC and St. James's.

We didn't not "do" anything though. You might not have put it together but we've been behind many things - which include...

**Spring 2020** - our Call-A-Thon - almost 80 volunteers reached out to over 700 parishioners to just ask... *How are you doing?*

**Advent 2020** - with the help of about 60 volunteers, we painted and mailed out 400 wooden angels and wrote over 1000 Advent/Christmas cards to our parish - with much of the focus on reaching out to our "behind the scenes" ministries and parishioners - our Altar and Flower guilds, our shut-in and older folks, the ushers and Wed. night and Food Force teams etc.

**Communications** - with the help of Jay Sandusky, our new Director of Communications, and our amazing Communications staff,

- Our IWC committee pretty vocally supported getting the staff in place sooner vs later...
- We recruited a few others and basically went through every page of our website to note what needed to be updated and which links were broken
- We were behind the postcard sized note in your Easter mailing from John that had all of the ways to get our information electronically
- So you no longer have to hunt for your zoom link, we were also behind getting an email on Sunday and another one on Wednesday that has the links - the time - and the topic for the programs/services on those specific days.
- We are SO CLOSE to having our newly re-designed website at [doers.org](http://doers.org) ready to be launched - and *Invite Welcome Connect* is embedded in the DNA of what you'll see! This is super exciting to us - and we think you'll also be impressed and excited as well.

**Lent House Churches 2021** - 3 members of our IWC committee called all of the "Newcomers" since 2017 (about 100 singles/couples - with about 25 having joined us during COVID times!) to invite them to participate in a House Church. A large number actually signed up, and a fair number took on leadership roles. I called about 35, and reached maybe 20 of them and came away with several ah-ha's

- Not all, but most, were pretty definitely on the younger end of the age spectrum
- They were actually all engaged with St. James's - and happy to get a call
- Most knew about the House Churches - they just hadn't signed up

### ***How Can You be part of the rollout?***

#1 - We need your input so that feedback - and ideas - have as broad a reach as possible. This email is to introduce you to IWC so that what you think can be part of our future.

#2 – Attached to this email is a survey. We really want your hopes and dreams for what you'd like St. James's to be as we move forward. In addition to the survey, on **Sun. May 2 at 5pm and Wed. May 5 at noon**, we'll have zooms that will be open to everyone for their ideas on each of the 3 areas...

#3 - The real goal of all of this is to brainstorm and dream about ***how can we best...***

- *Invite* new and returning Folks to St. James's
- *Welcome* them when they're here
- and Help all of us *Connect* so that we are fed on our faith journeys

#4 - To help you get a more sensory idea about IWC, here are 2 videos plus our IWC Statement (that Andy Smith distilled from the book).

- The St. James's IWC Statement (attached)
- Short: <https://vimeo.com/418917970>
- Long: <https://vimeo.com/418944646>

### **St. James's Invite Welcome Connect Committee**

Andy Bennett – vestry  
Christie Hartwell – vestry  
Frank Elgin  
Jennifer Pollard  
Kirkland Hagerty  
Andy Smith

Pam Goggins  
Patrick Strickler  
Leigh Hulcher, vestry/chair  
Hilary Streever  
Blake Singer