

Sharing in the Life of a Small Congregation

(Notes by Joyce Sasse, taken from an article by Bishop David Walker, England. May 2009)

Whether we are many, or whether we are few, sometimes it is helpful to stand back and take a look at the variety of persons who are involved in the congregation of small communities. The diversity of purpose and interests give important clues about how community-life might proceed.

Established Residents: are people who have lived in the locality the longest and have an innate sense of being rooted here. Most are open to the active participation of others, but often balk if changes happen too fast.

Commuters: may or may not be long-time residents. Circumstances take them out of the community frequently. Time and energy, spent both working and living, limits their ability to participate to any great extent.

Privacy Seekers: some people move to the countryside to get away from the intrusion of urban life. They may maintain strong ties outside the community but often have a strong sense of belonging to the property where they live.

Life-style Shifters: Some urban dwellers experience an attachment to the countryside and make a definite move to be part of the rural community. Many times they are people who have connections with the community and come after retirement. Becoming involved in local activities gives them a good sense of belonging.

Absent Friends: Former residents and descendants of such keep in close touch with the community even though they have never lived there. It is most likely they would want things to remain as they once were and may be generous in seeing that the building is restored.

The Vulnerable: Individuals and families who are forced to live in a place where they don't really feel they belong (because of housing or finances). They feel they have no people or institution to which they can turn for support.