

MAKE DISCIPLES,
Transform Lives.



BECAUSE VIBRANT
CHURCHES MATTER

VIBRANT CHURCHES MATTER

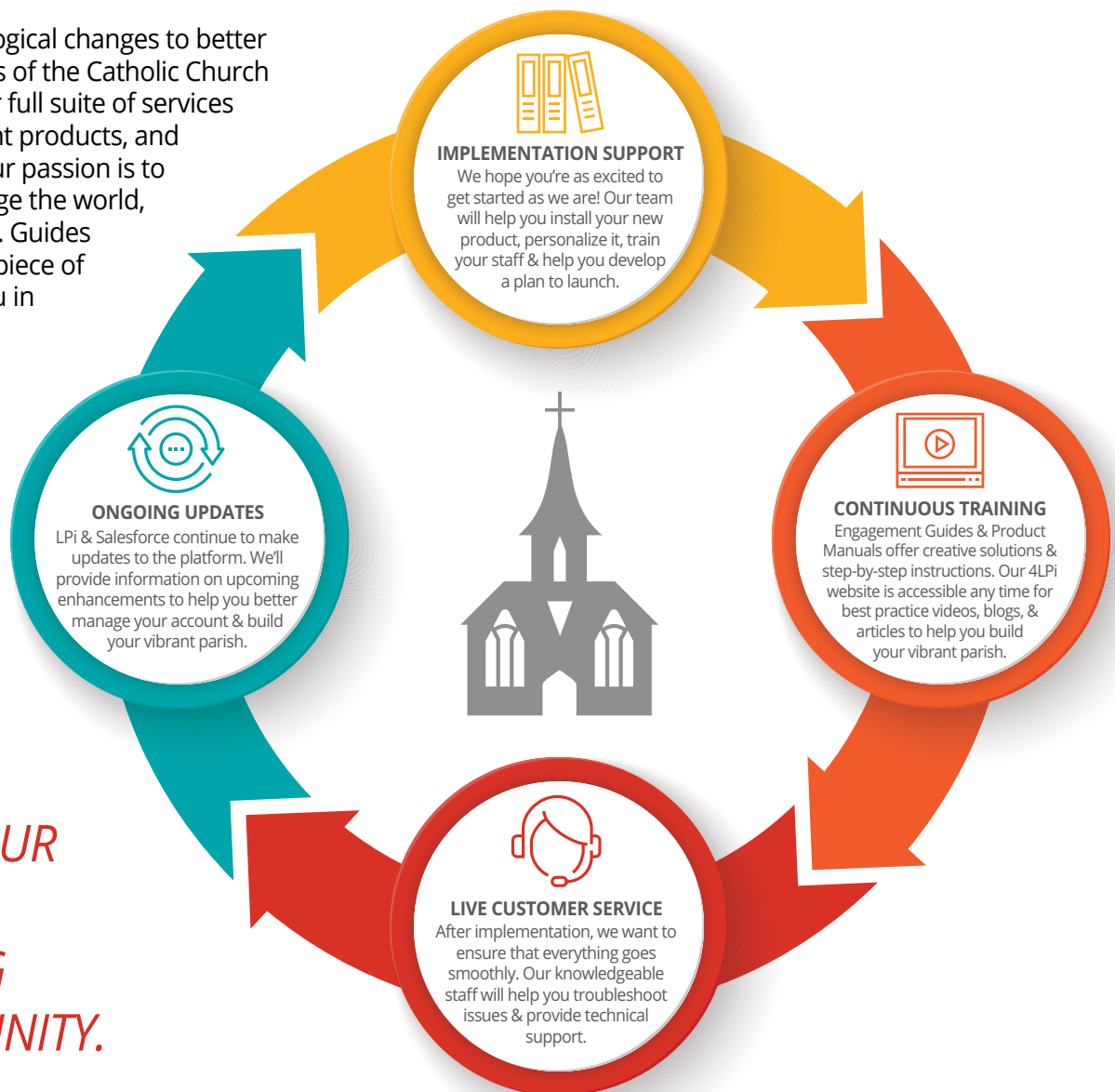


Your parish has hopes and dreams and plans to get there. At LPi, we believe that vibrant churches matter. Over nearly five decades, we've helped thousands of parishes across the country intentionally communicate with their parishioners, grow their engagement, and advance a stewardship way of life.

We've embraced technological changes to better serve the emerging needs of the Catholic Church in the modern world. Our full suite of services provides digital tools, print products, and stewardship coaching. Our passion is to help our customers change the world, one parishioner at a time. Guides like this one are just one piece of our efforts to support you in your mission.

At LPi, we're proud to offer the tools you need to integrate your data and enhance your communications. We know that when the infrastructure of a parish is operating smoothly, you have more time for what really matters —

**ENGAGING YOUR
PARISH AND
EVANGELIZING
YOUR COMMUNITY.**





CALLING PARISHIONERS TO TRANSFORMATION

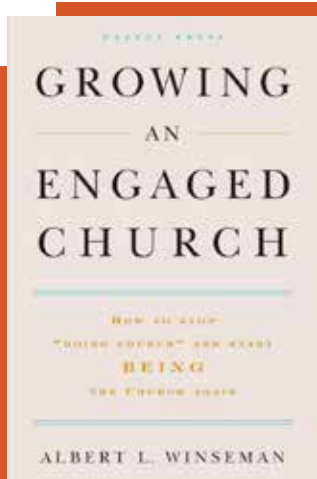
James loves his church community. He gives of his time to the monthly food drive by picking up all the donated food and carrying it to the local food pantry. On many occasions, he has stopped by the grocery store and used his own money to add some items that he saw were lacking in the collection. James helps as an usher at Mass every three weeks and helps count the offertory every other week. He and his family attend many of the parish social events, and he has a great relationship with the pastor. He truly loves his parish. However, he does not know Jesus.

For many in Church leadership, it would be simply wonderful to have more people like James! Engaged parishioners who offer their gifts and talents freely and function as real stakeholders in their community are sometimes hard to find in large quantities. In fact, we need to cultivate in people a real sense of belonging to something larger than themselves. A parish community cannot accomplish much if there are only a few hands to do all the work. A community is not really a community when everybody only attends once a week for an hour and then thinks little of that experience for the 167 hours before the next Mass.

On the other hand, engagement is important but it should never be the ultimate goal. It is a pathway into something much greater. Some people thrive on community and spend many hours doing many things. That does not mean they know why most of those things are important. Their relationship is with the community and not really with the One who calls them into that community. They have accepted an invitation to a banquet without yet knowing the host who sent the invitation in the first place.



THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGEMENT



The book, ***Growing An Engaged Church***, by Al Winseman has influenced the Church quite profoundly in the way we speak about and seek to quantify engagement. Questioning the difference between membership and attendance was a huge step in this book alone. In the Catholic Church, we used to think of a “parish” as including all those within a certain geographic area. Canonically, this definition of a parish is still true. We are certainly called to care for and evangelize those in our immediate midst in a primary way. However, today we need to understand more fully who are truly engaged members, especially as churches close, are clustered into larger communities, and face budgetary shortfalls. We have grown little fruit by simply letting people come and go as they please and praying that Jesus will somehow show them the way. In fact, Jesus has his Church to serve as the instrument for showing the way.

In an age where we are looking for signs of vibrancy and a Church that continues to preach the Good News well into the 21st century and beyond, Winseman reminds us that engagement drives outcomes. Most of what a parish may seek, such as increased offertory, greater Mass attendance, and more hands to share the load, are results of engagement.

Although the Church is very different than a business or civic organization, any organized group of human beings needs their members to feel connected to something that feeds them and they can invest in with a purpose. If you



want to see any type of fruit in your community, people must be engaged, and engagement is not something you can simply guess about.

We have for too long in the Church measured successes by how we feel or by what we simply see with our eyes. What we feel can be a result of our own bias, and sometimes we see what we want to see. Engagement needs to be measured. Engagement goals need real metrics by which to be measured and realistic targets based on concrete baselines. For Winseman, there are four key indicators of engagement for the spiritual health of a church: *life satisfaction, invitation, service, and giving*. Are people leading joyful and fulfilling lives? Do they feel welcomed by the community, and are they interested in inviting someone else? Are they moved to serve others? Do they give freely in a gracious manner?

If you guess at these answers, you might not only be wrong, but you risk missing opportunities for fruitful evangelization. The modern Church must be willing to accumulate, analyze, and use data to help chart the course for a community. In this process, guessing is gone and real answers can be given to the questions asked above and beyond. This is why companies like **LPI** are working hard to provide tools to the Church that can make this type of process possible.

Once you are able to have a clear snapshot of engagement in your parish, you can work on ways of driving that engagement further. **WeGather** from **LPI** not only provides a way to look at the data of engagement, it provides ways to engage people more fully in their community. Think about the areas that Winseman identified above. Can you make the entrances into giving opportunities more easily accessible? Can you enable parishioners with greater access to their engagement profile, allowing them to see where they are in their giving patterns and service? It is almost strange to ask in this manner, but can you

increase their engagement by more fully *engaging* them?

Useful data exists all around us. How many bulletins do you need on a typical Sunday? How many people attend Mass? How many households give of their finances at least once a month? Each piece of data has power in itself to drive decisions. However, real power is gained when all the data is in one place and can be manipulated together to see the bigger picture.

The reason why all this is important is because we live in a time in history where technology can help us like never before. Entities outside of the Church, big and small, are using data to sell you things, determine where to build factories or homes, and offer services to the people who need them the most. The Church has the command to preach the Good News to the ends of the earth, and we need more committed people to be more effective. There is no institution in the world that has a greater mission and reason to use the modern tools available to engage people for good.

All that being said, engagement is only part of the equation. Remember James? He has found his way into being engaged and is a vital part of his community. That community needs to find more people like James. He is not only an outcome of the parish's engagement efforts, he is driving engagement as well by his actions and commitment. Yet one day his parish, along with all other churches, will be no more, and all that will remain is God and those He calls His own. All earthly time spent in engagement is finite, but good stewards of that finite time use it to lead others in a relationship with Jesus Christ, the One for whom time is infinite.



ENGAGEMENT SHOULD LEAD TO DISCIPLESHIP

James is the person
every parish wants,
but Jesus wants
him more.

James is doing all
the right things, but
he has yet to uncover
the one action that will
make all other actions pale in
comparison: to love the Lord with
all his heart and soul. James does
not know this because he has yet to
have a deeper relationship with him. Jesus
remains a theological construct or simply the
One he hears about in the readings at Mass.
He serves Jesus and is a follower, but he does not
really know him.

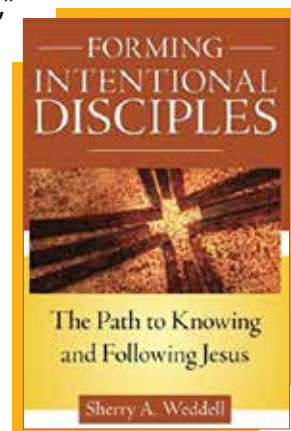
Engagement for engagement's sake does produce
positive outcomes, but as Church, we are called
to more than just getting people connected or
involved. We are about helping people to experience
transformation. We want the baptized to realize their
baptismal call and to embrace the new creations
they have been made in Jesus Christ. We want the
unbaptized to see this transformation and be drawn
into giving their lives to him as well.

If you call to mind the old song "They'll Know We
Are Christians", people will know us by our love. The
action may be service or work, but the motivation
and intention is love. Collecting food or clothing
for the homeless and serving at the soup
kitchen are good and honorable actions,
but an atheist knows those are good
and honorable things. What
difference does it make that we
are disciples of Jesus Christ?

Our stewardship is a way of life, not a series of
activities, and the reason why we do what we do is
our love for our Lord.

So now that James is engaged, how can we lead him
toward a relationship with Jesus? In her landmark
book "**Forming Intentional Disciples**,"
Sherry Weddell speaks about the five
thresholds of conversion:

*Initial trust, spiritual
curiosity, spiritual
openness, spiritual seeking,
and finally, intentional
discipleship.*



We must be willing to look at James
and be honest about where he is
in this journey of conversion. There are people in
parishes everywhere that "do stuff," but they run
from any activity that is deemed too spiritual. They do
not see the two experiences as connected. However,
many engaged do find themselves with a certain level
of trust, whether it be in their pastor, their parish, or
their faith. We let them down when we shy away from
being bold about the Gospel, especially when they
might be willing to listen.

Weddell's work has become so popular because the
Church understands now the results of a sometimes
strictly cultural Catholicism. Many former Catholics
look back on their experiences and wonder "Did it
really make a difference?" We seek now to take a step
back and understand how real evangelization works.
For too long we have been frightened of the word
evangelization. Now we are even more frightened by
closing churches and dwindling congregations.



Formation that seeks to introduce Jesus Christ the person, and not just Jesus Christ the doctrine, is key. Encouragement from those trusted individuals and partners is crucial. The use of technology and all modern communication means we can reach more people at several different levels. With something like **LPI's WeGather**, all the resources of the parish are at the seeker's fingertips. At the same time, parish leadership has the data on how those resources are being used and insight into how engagement is growing in their community.

Sharing data, such as where a person stands in their financial stewardship to a community, can also do much to promote a sense of trust. This differs from a once-a-year statement. There is full disclosure at all times. A parish can also clearly show the parishioner how their contributions are being used. Thank goodness more parishes publish a periodic stewardship report, sometimes containing all aspects of people's time, talent, and treasure. In a **WeGather** environment, much of the information is readily available to all involved.

Our goal is to help move James from having his faith a part of his life to having his faith become the lens through which he sees the *entirety* of his world. Although his faith journey depends on his own intentionality and commitment, we want to use all at our disposal to help him on the way. Once he truly knows Jesus, he does not visit the Church to hear about Jesus, but comes to Church to receive Jesus and take Jesus into the world, wherever he goes. Then his stewardship in the parish will simply be a part of his stewardship way of life, seven days a week. There are many people like James out there who no longer give of themselves like they once did to a parish. One day, they decided it was time to simply do something else. They didn't know Jesus either. We wouldn't want this to happen to James.



INTEGRATE YOUR DATA ENGAGE YOUR PARISH EVANGELIZE YOUR COMMUNITY

As a parish, we open doors in welcome as strangers become family. We observe, absorb, and assess. We create new solutions. We till the soil of human hearts. We sow the seed of the Gospel. We reap a harvest and celebrate as community. Together we grow, together we celebrate, together **WeGather**.



DYNAMIC WEBSITE

Welcome visitors with a state-of-the-art web presence.



INTERACTIVE COMMUNITY

Gather parishioners in an online social network with member profiles, family relationships & ministry groups.



ONLINE GIVING

Harness the power of Salesforce to manage your giving opportunities & analyze the results.



CLOUD BACKUP

With auto-updates to the cloud guaranteed by Salesforce, never fear a data loss.



MULTIPLE PERM. LEVELS

Offer people the functionality they need while protecting sensitive information.



CONNECTED BACKEND

Every donation, community action, or mobile update syncs instantly.



SACRAMENTAL LIFE

House your records, schedule religious education & provide formative content to your parishioners.



MANAGE FACILITIES

Schedule rooms & track your calendar for all parish events.



PARISH LIFE

Easily manage volunteers, events & ministries to connect & grow together as a parish.

INTERESTED IN LEVERAGING YOUR DATA?
Contact us to learn more: WWW.4LPi.COM/WEATHER