**Breakout Questions (1)**

* If you had been Pauline’s mother, how would you have felt in that situation and how would you have dealt with it?
* If you had been the person from church who interacted with Pauline’s mother, what were the reasons for the message given to her?
* What should a 'good welcome' look like? How would you hope the new visitor to the church goes away feeling?

A few comments from our group - we thought that Pauline's mum was resilient going back. We recognised that the familiarity of the hymns might have been rare familiar things when most of life was unfamiliar may have been important to her. We also talked about how the vicar didn't want to rock the boat with his conversation. It is a concern that sometimes churches become clubs rather than places where people live out their faith. On the issue of welcome, we reflected that a good welcome is difficult because everyone is different and sometimes welcome can be overwhelming. Having a welcome message and a welcome team who are trained to be sensitive and understand some of the difficulties is helpful.

One good practice shared was that Pastoral Visitors had the responsibility during coffee after the service to look out for new people, ensuring they were greeted warmly.

It's hard to image life in the 60's, possibly living under suspicion and curiosity at difference. We felt shocked at how Pauline's mum was treated, it would put most people off going to church ever again. We wondered if the vicar was under pressure from the congregation, but felt he had not made an effort to speak to her. The gospel is clear that everyone is welcome.

The first church I went to when I came York for Uni invited me to their harvest supper, so I went and took a friend. We sat at a table and had numerous people come and tell us how friendly this church was whilst not having anyone sit with us. We were the last table to be filled. Safe to say that I didn't feel very welcome and didn't return! If you're friendly, show it rather than say it.

**Breakout Questions (2)**

* What do you do at your churches to offer a ‘good welcome'?
* Is there anything you think you could do better?

We talked about one church where the welcome team share a little about what the service would be like to give people an idea of what to expect, and others who identified that this might something positive that they could encourage their welcome team to think about.

We also reflected that a good welcome team is important but the congregation also needs to show a welcoming attitude - breaking into cliques where no one talks to the newcomer over coffee, or individuals who are openly hostile (e.g. towards babies/children and their needs etc) can completely undo a good welcome

Considering the outreach we provide and involving as many people as possible: walking groups, sweaty church (!!!) games nights, community gardens. Welcome to the people, not just the church.

We heard how people offer to sit with those who are new. Inviting people to stay for coffee and taking them through to coffee. Offering a continuous welcome, not just the first time.

The value of welcome packs available with up to date info by hand and online

Welcome packs that include invitations to groups etc.

Just to summarise as you missed some of that I think. Important to be an open church and welcoming to everyone, those who are there every week and new people. Engage with the community and remove barriers eg. cost

Someone who has food allergies would immediately feel safer if this was taken into consideration and publicised, just like it is in various restaurants..... just to bear in mind if food is used in this way to welcome people

I reflected on how the welcome needs to extend from someone's first visit too. Help them still feel included.

To Pauline Thank you for sharing that story - very powerful. All has taken place in my lifetime. Your approach gained a lot of engagement. It was excellent.

Ebor Lecture (Online and Onsite in York Minster) 21 May 2025 at 7.00pm. Prof. Lisa Oakley, expert on safeguarding and spiritual abuse, title TBC. Free tickets on Eventbrite. Ebor Lectures | York St John University