



Toolkit 1:

TEN TOP TIPS FOR WELCOMING VISITORS TO YOUR CHURCH

This first element of the Divine Inspiration Toolkit acts as a checklist as you begin to explore the way in which your church currently welcomes its visitors. Try to revisit this at regular intervals and use it as you would a health-check to monitor the effectiveness of your welcome to those who visit your church.

The level of what you aim to achieve will depend upon your church's significance as a heritage building or its proximity to other 'tourist attractions' so work out your context in relation to what's happening around you.

Once you have measured your church's visitor welcome you can move through the rest of the Divine Inspiration toolkit.

1. Be Open

If you can't be open all the time agree a timetable for opening up, stick to it and tell people about it. Make sure that instructions regarding key-holders are clearly displayed on your noticeboard. If key-holders are thin on the ground you might think about an automatic locking system.



2. Be Inviting

Use words like 'WELCOME TO ALL' and 'COME IN', 'EXPLORE', 'FEEL FREE'. Visitors need to know, before they get to the door, that they have permission to come in and that they are allowed to enjoy the space. Make the invitation using warm and unconditional and inclusive language.



3. Be Hospitable

We can't all be expected to refreshments on a regular basis but a bottle of water and a bowl in the porch for a thirsty dog is a simple, hospitable act that costs nothing. Some churches are happy to have a kettle and a tin of biscuits on a tray for visitors, especially in places where pubs and cafés are few and far between. If you have a WC, say so. If you haven't, make sure you say where the nearest one is.

4. Be Communicative

Visitors like towards notice-boards. Make sure they are up to date and well organised, showing what your church and your wider community are up to. They will be your first opportunity to connect with your visitor and make a positive first impression. Make sure you have a picture of your smiling vicar and other images of your church life to show that you are a living, healthy place for worship and fellowship and not just for Sundays.

5. Be Clean and Tidy

Visitors will notice what your church smells like. A dust-free, well-presented, fragrant environment says much about you as stewards of your building. Clutter and musty aromas suggest neglect so show that your church is loved and get rid of everything that you don't use or need.

6. Be Accommodating

A space reserved especially for visitors shows that you have thought of their needs. A small, folding table with flowers, information about your church and community and a visitor book inviting comments can be moved away during worship if space in your church is tight. Make sure it's close to the door so they can't miss it when they enter the building.



7. Be Interesting

Make sure that any leaflet or guide booklet you produce is easy to read, engaging and digestible in ten minutes flat. You may not be able to tell your whole church history in one sitting so be selective. Quirky stories about people and events are far more interesting than a list of the names of the last fifty vicars! Less is definitely more in terms of quantity of text. Make sure you have information available in large print also and in some 'honey pot' places a translated leaflet may be useful.

8. Be Professional

An in-house style is easy to achieve. Your notice-board, leaflets and signage should show some commonality. Use the same font, colours and themes throughout and this will allow visitors to explore with confidence. Remember, that you will need permission from the DAC if you want to fix permanent signage to walls.

9. Be Sensitive



Many visitors will be looking for quiet and a place for reflection. Communicate a 'power of place' by using good lighting and creating spaces for stillness, peace and prayer. Welcoming visitors to your church building is less about tourism and more to do with your church's ministry to strangers. If you can, allow visitors to light a candle and make sure you have some low key, easy to digest resources for prayer or meditation on hand and free of charge.

10. Be Memorable

The greatest compliment to you will be a returning visitor or one who tells their friends about their experience at your church. Make sure they take away a positive memory of the time they spent with you and, as they leave, invite them to come and see you again.

Divine Inspiration gratefully acknowledges financial support from English Heritage Inspired programme and the Diocese of Coventry from 2006 to 2012

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Updated February 2014
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