

# Extending our Welcome

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*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers,  
for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.  
Hebrews 13:2*



**Diocese of Monmouth**  
**Esgobaeth Mynwy**  
Yr Eglwys yng Nghymru  
The Church in Wales

## Introduction

The Diocesan Vision focuses on five branches:

### Discipleship, Stewardship, Social Justice, Equality and Diversity, Environment

These are fundamental in living out our faith and sharing it with others. At the heart of the vision is a desire for growth motivated, not by a desire to preserve the church, but because the Christian message is good news for all. It is a message we can share joyfully and warmly. Some of you will have used the diocesan discipleship course, *Croeso*. That thinks about 'Why welcome is important', 'Who do we welcome', 'What does "being welcoming" really mean' and 'How welcome changes lives' and about our recognition of welcome as something we do because we are loved by God and want to share that love widely.

A culture of invitation and welcome is really important in revealing an authentic desire for growth. This guide helps us think about some practical ideas of welcome which is something that, if we're going to do it really well, needs reflection and planning.

The resource will help us reflect on many aspects of the welcome (website and social media are not included in this guide) that is given to anyone who comes in through the door, or to those who walk past the church and may be tempted, or not, to come in...

It is a resource to use across a ministry area, helping to reflect on areas of skills and expertise as well as good practice that can be shared.

What is important, essential even, is to recognise that our welcome to people, spoken or unspoken, is vital – we are not simply welcoming people in our name, or in the name of the church, but in the name of God.



# Session 1

## Welcome – a wide and rich ministry

Churches welcome in a wide variety of ways, some do it really well, whilst others sometimes struggle. Even small changes can often make a big positive difference. It's important to recognise where particular churches have certain strengths or weaknesses.

The following list holds some examples of things that may help. Work through the points below and think about the churches in your ministry area where these things are done really well. Then think about how they can best be shared in other churches and set priorities where to do that. It's important to recognise that we can't do everything at once (as much as we might want to!). Be ambitious but be realistic!

<b>Task</b>	<b>Where in the ministry area is this done particularly well?</b>	<b>What other churches in the ministry area could benefit from this now (then consider how good practice will be shared)?</b>
Greeting warmly at the door		



<p>Handing out appropriate books – and explaining where they’re needed</p>		
<p>Chatting to newcomers to welcome them/put them at ease</p>		
<p>Trouble shooting – knowing what to do if someone is ill or upset</p>		
<p>Helping people with mobility problems</p>		
<p>Getting the church ready in good time e.g. lights/heating/notice sheets ready</p>		



<p>Making a note of regulars that are missing or whose attendance is dropping off so you can check if they're ok</p>		
<p>Being available and able to answer questions e.g. toilets, contacts</p>		
<p>Spotting possible needs – being a listener/befriender – and able to refer on to others if needed</p>		
<p>Opening the church and welcoming visitors/enquirers during the week</p>		
<p>Providing info about the building to visitors/enquirers</p>		



Providing info/talking about faith or the life of the church		
Providing a place and resources for quiet prayer during the week		
Tea/coffee or other hospitality – After worship? During the week?		



## Action points

## What visitors say

It's important to do some self-reflection on our welcome, but it's easy for people who attend church week by week to miss out on things that are important to people attending for the first time or who don't come regularly. This is their church too, and they are entitled to feel as welcome as anyone else.

William Temple, a former Archbishop of Canterbury, famously said, "*The church is the only institution that exists for the benefit of its non-members*" – it's not absolutely true in that it exists for all, but it is something to keep in mind!



Here are some comments from people who have visited a church:

*'I was so relieved to be given a book that was easy to follow.'*

*'It was nice to sing some hymns I knew, but good to learn some new ones as well.'*

*'We were excited about going to church to hear our banns read, but scared too! But as we walked in there was someone to meet us and they asked if we'd been before. We said we hadn't and they offered to introduce us to someone we could sit by who could help us through the service.'*

*'My husband had just died and it was such a long time since I'd been to church but I wanted to go and try and find some comfort. I sat at the back and just listened to the service. When I couldn't stop the tears and I ran out of hankies a woman quietly brought me some tissues and sat with me. I didn't feel so alone anymore, and I think I might go back.'*

*'I sat quietly looking at the beautiful hangings on the altar, thinking what a lovely church it was and so peaceful. Then the woman who had given me a welcome leaflet started complaining to her friend about the state the church hall had been left in after a children's party. The things she said about that family just weren't Christian...'*

**What do people say when they come to our church? Do we know?**

**Perhaps a comments or suggestions box clearly marked at the back of the church will offer some guidance.**

A calling of the Anglican Church is to serve and witness to the people living in the communities in which each church is physically located. To know how best to extend a welcome to the wide range of people living in your neighbourhood, you need to know who they are and what matters to them.

Who, in your community, do you welcome sometimes or occasionally ?

Who do you never see ? Why might that be ? What opportunities do you have ?





## Some homework!

### Our unspoken welcome – outside...

Much of our welcome is about people and relationships, but sometimes perceptions can hinder us even getting the chance to welcome people! Some of those perceptions come from the look of our buildings, church grounds and signs. It would be good if a number of people could arrange to go and take a look at churches. In some places you might want one group to go around all the churches, in others it may be wise to 'allocate' churches to particular people/groups.

### When you get to the church you're visiting:

Start outside – if there are several of you, spread out in all directions, say 100 metres away from the church. Then walk back towards the church as if you are a newcomer, visitor or enquirer.

### *Think about:*

- Does the outside look welcoming? Alive? Derelict? Appealing? Off-putting? Intriguing? A holy place?
- Does the outside speak of a living community of faith? If so, in what ways?
- Notice boards – are they tidy/untidy? Out of date/current? Informative? About what – are they things which make the church look alive, appealing, interesting, 'in touch', caring etc. or are they full of rotas, for example?
- Do you know what is on and when from what you see? Is there anything to take away, e.g. information about the church, magazines, weekly bulletins, diocesan information, information about faith?
- Can you see details of a website/Facebook page? A contact email/telephone number?
- Is the church open/closed on a regular basis through the week?



- How do the church grounds look? Tidy, cared for, scruffy, neglected?
- Is there reasonable car parking?
- What is access like for those with particular accessibility needs?
- If you have never/hardly ever been in a church before, what would encourage you to take a step inside?
- What are your first impressions? Do you want to come back?

***How do you feel about the unspoken welcome given? What was good? What was not so good?***

***What could we do, or develop?***

***Perhaps make a chart with the following columns:-***

- Ideas/suggestions*
- How could this be achieved?*
- Who we would need to discuss this with to take the idea forward?*
- Priority – High, medium or low*



## Session 2

# Doing welcome well

### Opportunities for welcome

It is good to be pro-active in our welcome and this means being invitational. There are lots of opportunities to open our churches for special occasions (as well as leaving churches open for private prayer). The more things we do across the ministry area, the greater our chances of offering a good welcome!

#### *Examples of special services that may be held:*

Example of service	Where in the ministry area is this done?	Where might this be worth doing?
Life events (baptisms, weddings, funerals).		
Annual Memorial Service – people who have lost loved ones in the past year can be especially invited but with an open invitation offered to anyone.		



<p>Thanksgiving for marriage service – those who have been married recently can be invited along with families and friends. It’s also an opportunity for anyone to come and celebrate this gift.</p>		
<p>A similar service to that above can be arranged for baptism families.</p>		
<p>Community thanksgiving service – e.g. invitations to schools, local politicians, shops, charity workers, funeral directors, sports clubs, etc. Give thanks for all that happens in the community and pray for those who help to make the community positive.</p>		



<p>Songs of Praise services.</p>		
<p>Pet blessing services.</p>		
<p>Many church festivals also provide opportunities for inviting people.</p> <p>Christmas and Easter are crucial times to be busy in our outreach, but think of other festivals too – e.g. Harvest, Pentecost, All Saints, Epiphany, etc.</p>		

**Think of other services that are already done and which could be shared more widely!**



## Creating a welcoming church outside of services

**To open or not:** More and more churches are recognising that there is an opportunity for outreach to many people outside of regular worship. Offering a quiet place to sit or pray is important. Ecclesiastical Insurance are generally happy for churches to be opened during daylight hours, as long as valuable items are locked away. Perhaps think about ways of arranging for the church to be open.

**What churches do this well? Where could it be done better? Action points?**

**A 'welcome' board:** What do you see as you first walk in? What about a changing display which welcomes visitors and describes what is on this week? This could be as simple as a flip-chart board or a computer display. It might be an A Board that you can put messages on.

A 'Who's Who' board can also be a useful form of welcome.

**What churches do this well? Where could it be done better? Action points?**



**Welcome leaflet:** Many churches have leaflets describing the building, but fewer describe the life and witness of the church today. Churches may be places of great interest, but they must be more than that and they must offer something that introduces visitors to the life of the church, the faith that draws people to worship, and a life of discipleship.

**What churches do this well? Where could it be done better? Action points?**

**Giveaways:** *'please take a card to remind you of your visit'*: Some churches have started offering visitors a free postcard or prayer card as a reminder of their visit.

**What churches do this well? Where could it be done better? Action points?**



**Remember to share our faith:** Find ways of telling the story of faith through parts of the buildings and through literature that's available to take away e.g. a leaflet or notices explaining the significance of the font, a place of welcome as we celebrate God's grace; the pulpit, as we consider God's message for us; the altar/communion table where we remember God's immeasurable and unchanging love for us; leaflets about the Christian faith.

**What churches do this well? Where could it be done better? Action points?**

**Action:** Some churches have candles to light, others invite people to place a pebble in the water of the font as they offer a prayer. If the church is busy, make sure there is a quiet area set aside for prayer.

**What churches do this well? Where could it be done better? Action points?**





**People with disabilities:** Some of our church buildings are not easily accessible for the less mobile, but there are lots of things that we can do to help improve access and make life more comfortable in all kinds of ways for people who come with disabilities, whether those disabilities are visible or hidden. Think about what can be done to improve things for those who are less mobile, those with hearing or sight problems, learning disabilities, dementia, autism, mental health issues, etc.

**What churches do this well? Where could it be done better? Action points?**

**Children:** We talk about children being important, but sometimes we don't make our buildings or our welcome seem like this is true. What is your church doing for children?

**What churches do this well? Where could it be done better? Action points?**



**Welsh Language:** As the Church in Wales, we have a rich heritage and culture to offer. For many people, a recognition that their language is valued in their church is important.

**What churches do this well? Where could it be done better? Action points?**

**Help:** Details of how to contact someone in an emergency, such as the Priest should be available, but it may also be useful to offer information from other organisations such as The Samaritans, Child Line, Local Social Services, etc.

**What churches do this well? Where could it be done better? Action points?**



**Lights and music:** Some churches have lights on sensors, which come on when a person enters the building and remain on for a set time. It can also be good to have gentle music playing (it needs to not be intrusive though).

**What churches do this well? Where could it be done better? Action points?**

**Giving;** Many people welcome the opportunity to contribute to the work of the church – however if the church is unattended, empty any donations box regularly (and make this clear on a notice). There are now lots of ways of giving money such as card machines, QR codes, direct giving, etc. Make sure there are opportunities for people to give and include details of how their contributions will be used.

**What churches do this well? Where could it be done better? Action points?**



# Session 3

## Worship and Hospitality

### Worship

When we're used to a particular style of worship it's very easy to become a little complacent about it, and we can fail to notice how it is perceived by a newcomer, visitor or enquirer. Ministry areas give us an even greater opportunity to reflect on the variety of worship we offer, recognising that there isn't a 'one size fits all' style. Different people will be drawn closer to God in worship through different styles. Different churches have different gifts of worship that can be offered. Some churches will offer a wide range of worship styles themselves.

Worship should be a top priority for every church and it is good practice from time to time, to carry out a review of worship. Below are some top tips for doing hospitality well – think about these things and reflect on which churches in your ministry area do this really well and how improvements can be made in other churches.

### Top Tips for Worship

- Make the welcome good at the church door. Smile! Be friendly and show you're pleased to see the person coming in! Offer help if needed (with explanation of books/news sheets/help with any mobility issues). Make sure large print books/ sheets are available.
- Look out for newcomers/occasional visitors and make sure they're welcomed. Give them a leaflet with more details about the life of the church. Make the leaflet attractive and invitational.
- Be welcoming, but don't overdo the welcome! Some people need to slip in quietly – be sensitive to the messages they're giving.
- Encourage members of the congregation to chat to visitors, but again not to overdo the questions! Welcome is the role of the whole church.



- Make it easy for latecomers to slip in without being embarrassed. Make sure there is someone to greet them quietly and help them get books and find somewhere to sit.
- Prepare for the service well and start on time.
- Lead worship confidently. Use a microphone if there is one. Don't rely on 'I speak loudly enough'. Think of the loop system too if there is one.
- Is there provision for children? Are children/ young people included in the worship?
- Make space for some quiet in the service.
- Is there guidance on page numbers and which book to use (if there is more than one)? If you're using books, maybe design an attractive bookmark printed with some simple information and page numbers to help visitors find their way around a service. Use the back to give them something interesting to take away, or as a contact card for them to leave.
- Choose hymns/ music that enhance the sense of worship.
- Make sure readings are clearly read and that intercessions are offered sensitively (and understandably – don't be unnecessarily wordy!).
- It should be clear that prayer is an important part of the service.
- Use some Welsh words/phrases in the service where possible. We are the Church in Wales!
- Invite people to stay for refreshments after the service (if there are refreshments!).
- Say good-bye as warmly as you said hello.



## Hospitality

Some churches have a great reputation for hospitality – others don't!

Great hospitality doesn't have to be expensive and it is incredibly important. Below are some top tips for doing hospitality well – think about which churches in your ministry area do this really well and how improvements can be made in other churches.

### Top Tips for Hospitality

- Hospitality is worth investing in - get the good biscuits and coffee.
- Consider variety, decaf coffee, herbal teas and green teas.
- Invest in mugs. Cup and saucers are not practical, they are difficult to hold, especially if you have mobility constraints.
- Some people have allergies, so provide alternatives and ensure the ingredient content of food is easy to find out.
- Actively invite people to stay for coffee.
- Ensure that people are not left with no one to speak to. Notice if everyone is just talking in their friendship circle. Draw other people into the conversation.
- Always put out extra chairs beyond those you expect to come.
- Don't start to clear away until only the core group are left.
- Don't turn the lights out as a hint to leave. Politely use words to explain your time limitations if you really need to.



- Also think about hospitality for different occasions – what you might need for Messy Church will be very different from what you will need for an Afternoon Tea.
- If in doubt, love as you would want to be loved.

### **Some things to think about**

*The Church in Wales is a Fairtrade Province – do you use fair trade ingredients? There are some really good Fairtrade products available.*

*Would you be happy to use the tea and coffee you serve in church in your own home?*

*Be hospitable to one another without complaint. As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the grace of God.      1 Peter 4: 9,10*

