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Language and communication

As far as possible, use inclusive language and be alert for jargon. Expect whoever is leading (including the Church Leader) to introduce themselves. Be aware that not everyone can stand – so make the invitation ‘Can I ask/invite those who are able to, to stand’. Give clear directions and page numbers throughout the service, particularly at a service like a baptism where there will be people present who seldom or never go to church.

Everyone’s a Welcomer

Don’t leave the responsibility for welcoming people to a small group. Expect everyone in the church family to talk to new people – encourage them to use open questions, and provide them with possible conversation starters. People will need repeated encouragement to engage with those they don’t know – so keep on reminding them. And service leaders do well to keep an eye out for newcomers and model engaging them appropriately.

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Children and families

Even if you do not normally have children or families in church, expect that they may appear (especially in holiday times). Have a story bag available, along with space to run around and somewhere that parents can take babies who are fractious. If children are there, explain what is happening in age appropriate language. And encourage the congregation to warmly welcome and embrace all ages, even if they challenge the normal serenity of the service!

Follow up and details

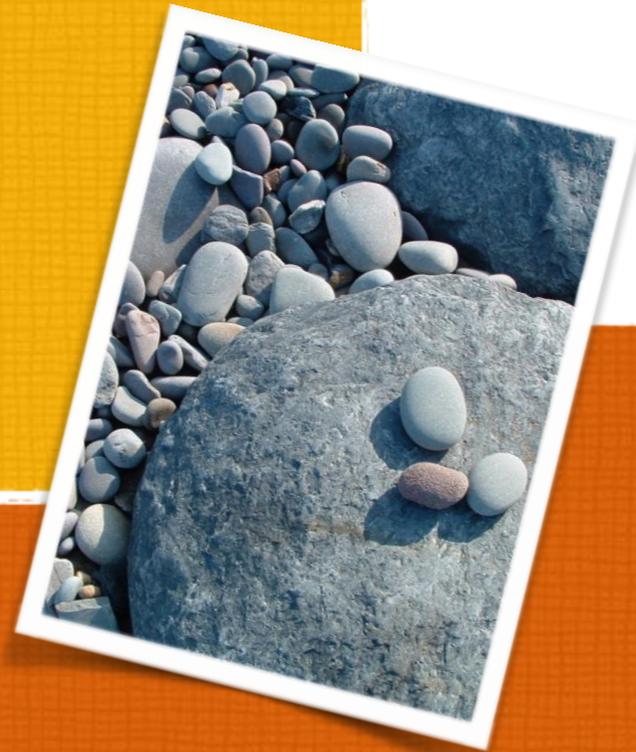
Have a Newcomers’ Card with details of address/phone number/email and invite people to complete, especially if they are local and not just visiting the area. Have a standard Welcome Letter (one for visitors, one for local people) which is (e)mailed to them during the following week, thanking them for coming, and inviting them to come again, or perhaps highlighting a special service or event that is coming up.

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Hints & Tips

Welcome



Me reach
In reach
Out reach

Welcome

As part of the **God for All** vision to help everyone across Cumbria discover more of God and God's purpose in their lives, how can we ensure that we offer a warm welcome to everyone who comes to our church? Many people are likely to make up their mind about coming back again within the first few minutes of being there. People come into church for a variety of reasons. Several arrive looking for somewhere that will offer them a place of safety, acceptance, and belonging. How can we do our best to meet this need, especially when some people are in search of space to be quiet and others are looking for conversation and engagement? Do not underestimate the importance of a good, well thought-out welcome! What follows are some suggestions and ideas for strengthening the welcome that we give to the visitor.

1

Start outside

Is the noticeboard attractive, clear and readable with service times easily seen and contact details for the church leader (or other key person) highlighted? If the entrance door isn't clearly seen from the gate, is it worth signposting it? Is the offer of what's inside clearly stated, for example "Come inside for a warm welcome, good coffee and the opportunity to discover God's love?"

First impressions

Look at ways of making the entrance space appealing – perhaps a flower display, noticeboards that provide a current flavour of what the church offers, and that are clean and clear in design. For many people the first stop on arriving in church is the toilet. Are they well signposted, easily accessible and attractive? It can also be helpful to design, and display, a statement that welcomes all, and which reflects your intention and culture.

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Create a Welcoming Team

Train a team to welcome everyone sensitively – it is helpful if they wear name badges. Ensure that newcomers have any books/notices and are offered the opportunity of being asked where they might like to sit. If appropriate, introduce them to a regular church member (by name). Work with whole church so that everyone sees their responsibility to welcome others – not just the formal Team. Ensure members of the Welcome Team remain at back of church to greet latecomers.

Be prepared

Make sure there are enough books and notice sheets for everyone – and that page numbers for liturgy and readings are clearly printed. Even if you do not normally expect to have children, have some provision for any who might attend. Are there supplies of gluten free bread, and non-alcoholic wine for those who require them?

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Be accessible

If you know someone who has a physical impairment, why not ask them to look at all you provide from their perspective, and report back to you with suggested improvements? Is there step free access? A choice of places for wheelchair users to sit within the main body of the congregation? Accessible toilets? Large print copies? A Loop system? Is all printed material 12pt font size or larger? Are there copies of the liturgy that are child friendly?

Be clean and tidy

Visitors quickly notice if a church looks and feels well cared for. Try to avoid clutter in corners or musty aromas. If you haven't used some piece of furniture or equipment for a year, perhaps ask whether you need it. If heating is a problem, how might you compensate? Well-sited lighting (perhaps some floor standing spots/lights) can help create a warm ambience. Noticeboards need to be up-to-date – once a notice looks faded or dog-eared, remove it.

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