

“What to do...?”

A real welcome

- a water bowl for dogs in the porch; a boot scraper for walkers; welcoming tubs of flowers by the door; perhaps provide tea/coffee/squash and biscuits for visitors to help themselves.

A place for prayer

- provide prayers for people to use; have slips of paper for prayer requests and put them in a book once a week; where used, keep sanctuary lamps lit to create an atmosphere of prayer.

A place for children

- provide a table and chairs for children and paper and crayons for them to draw with; have displays of children's work; provide books and soft toys.

Signs and texts

- to give simple explanations of the meaning of the font, pulpit, lectern etc, and of significant areas.

Cards and Sales

- have guide books, postcards, and low-cost souvenirs and cards for sale (which often attract people to the Church), leaflets and books on Christian belief, and information about local events.

Display boards

- photographs showing “who's who” in the church community; pictures of charity and mission work supported; diagram of Mission Partnership/Deanery/Archdeaconry/Diocese.

A place for community events

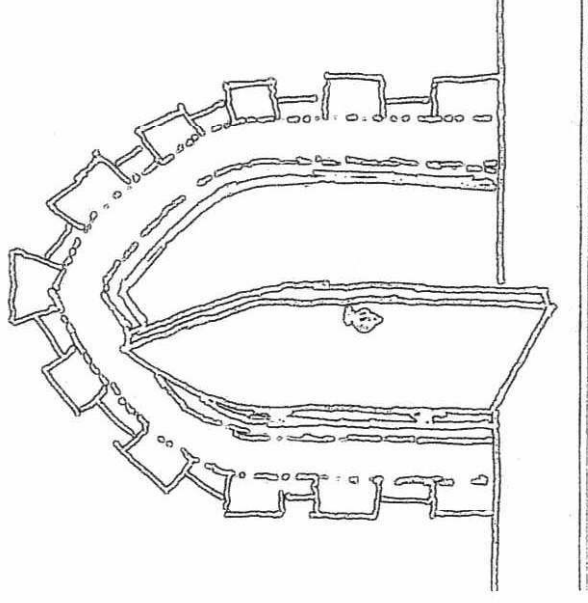
- make the church available for concerts, plays and art exhibitions etc., and consider adapting the building for multi-purpose use, with provision of toilets, kitchen etc.

FURTHER INFORMATION FROM www.ecclesiastical.com
click on ‘insurance’ followed by ‘church insurance’

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Leaflet devised by Canon Philip Norwood on behalf of the Gartree Mission Partnership. Further copies available from:
LeicesterShire Historic Churches Trust, 20 Gumley Road,
Smeeton Westerby, Leicester LE8 0LT. Email:
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OPEN CHURCHES



Why and How to Open your Church daily or regularly

The circumstances of each of our churches are different, but many of the suggestions in this leaflet may be relevant to your church

“Why....?”

Churches witness to God's love for the world

Churches often have a spire or tower saying to all, “God is here!” If they then fail to welcome visitors, that provides a false witness.

Churches were built for the whole community

To keep them closed to all but a few on restricted occasions says that they belong to a chosen few only.

Churches are a sign of the Kingdom of God

What a variety of opportunities we have to share the Gospel message inside and outside our church buildings!

Church buildings can be ‘wayside shrines’

Whether there is a regular service or not, churches can still provide an opportunity for people to meet with God in a special way.

Information

Churches are often the main sources of information about the life of the local area.

Maintenance

Problems that need to be dealt with are spotted more easily in Churches that are regularly open. Fewer people need to hold keys to the church.

Insurance

Insurance companies often encourage churches to be open during daylight hours. It can be less expensive to replace stolen items than to repair damage caused by break-ins; and having the possibility of people calling in at any time can deter thieves. Churches can sometimes be insured for 24-hour opening for an additional charge.

Contact your church insurers to discuss what pattern of opening might be appropriate for your church.

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“How...?”

Have a small team of people

- to take turns opening and closing the church; to check daily on cleanliness and tidiness; to keep posters up-to-date; to empty wall boxes; to provide things visitors need. Perhaps investigate the possibility of timed automatic locking and unlocking. Set up a reporting system so that people who open, close or check your church on their own report to a partner or colleague once this has been done.

Arrange duty times

- so that cleaners and flower arrangers etc. are around at various rather than predictable times.

Have good quality signs

- to the Church; for parking; offering a welcome; advertising services and events; giving telephone numbers for the keyholder(s) to cover times when the church has to be closed. A sign that says “CHURCH OPEN” can deter thieves who cannot be sure that no-one is around. An “A-frame” sign which can be put out and put away is useful.

Install security lights

- lights for the main entrance and path; lights to come on by sensor inside the building; if necessary, consider CCTV.

Protect valuable items

- lock away all precious crosses, candlesticks etc. and replace them with wooden ones; mark valuables with security code or Smart Water; photograph all valuable items; chain valuable pieces of furniture; inhibit loaded vehicles from driving away from the door. If you have a safe or box for donations, take advice regarding their security.

Safety first

- hide or lock away all matches, lighters, scissors, sharp knives, etc.

Access for people with a disability

- assess paths, steps, rails, light levels etc. with various needs in mind.

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