

Welcoming
in the
world: open
your church
and make it
flourish!

Edmund Harris
Care of Churches
Officer



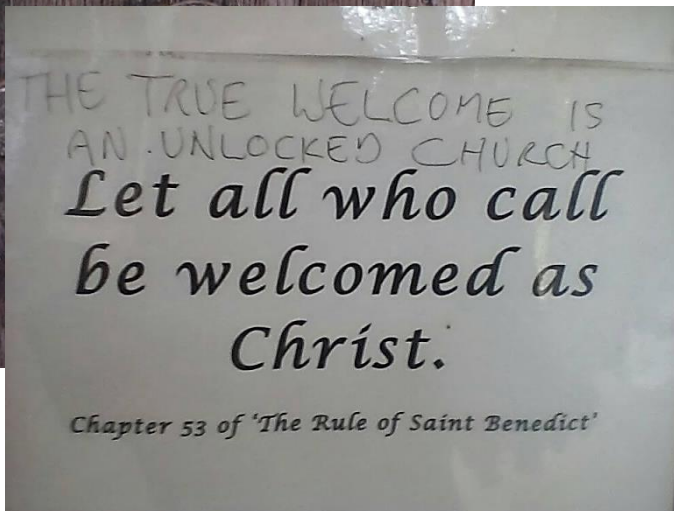
Why open your church?



God our Heavenly Father,
make, we pray,
the door of this church
wide enough to welcome all who
need human love and fellowship
and your Father's care,
but narrow enough to shut out
all envy, pride and lack of love.
Here may the tempted find help,
the sorrowing receive comfort,
those who regret doing wrong
be assured of your mercy;
and here may all your children
renew their strength
and go on their way rejoicing
in hope and peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

by Bishop Thomas Ken (altered)

- Church buildings bear witness to the Christian faith. A locked door is a universal symbol of exclusion, while an open church expresses God's welcome, His presence, His creativity, His justice, His healing and His forgiveness.
- A closed church is dead to its community, but...
- An open church turns passers-by into friends and worshippers.
- Church buildings embody the truth that the Church is the only human institution that exists for the benefit of those who are not its members.
- Open your doors and people WILL come in!



THE TRUE WELCOME IS
AN UNLOCKED CHURCH
*Let all who call
be welcomed as
Christ.*

Chapter 53 of 'The Rule of Saint Benedict'

Who wants to come in?

- Tourists

‘In 2015, heritage tourism generated over £3.2 billion in spending by domestic and international visitors in the South East. In total, it is estimated that there were 2.5 million heritage-related domestic overnight trips, 28.3 million domestic day trips and 2.4 million international visits to the South East in 2015’. (source: ‘Heritage Counts’)

- ‘The internet’s second-biggest earner’
- Community groups
- Musicians and artists
- Freelancers

What brings visitors in...

Church
Open
for
Prayer
Quiet
Peace

**WELCOME TO
CHRIST CHURCH**

The church is open.
The door may be closed to keep
the weather out,
(if the door is closed push it hard)
but you are very, very welcome
to come on in to look around,
to pray or to enjoy the peace
and beauty of this building.

All the locations have one
**Commonwealth
War Graves**
www.cwgc.org


Church
Open
All
Welcome

St. Andrew Church

**WE
ARE
OPEN**

**PLEASE
COME IN**

**THIS
CHURCH
IS
OPEN**

**COME IN
LIGHT A CANDLE
& SAY A PRAYER**

COME AND VISIT ALL HALLOWS

REGULAR SERVICES - PRAYER & REFLECTION
MUSEUM - BRASS RUBBING - TOURS - CONCERTS

KEY PERSONALITIES:
JOHN FISHER * ARCHBISHOP LAUD * SAMUEL PEPYS * WILLIAM PENN
JOHN QUINCY-ADAMS * ALBERT SCHWEITZER * TUBBY CLAYTON

THE OLDEST CHURCH IN THE CITY OF LONDON

WWW.AHBTT.ORG.UK

... and makes them feel welcome



When opening your church, do:

- Keep the church open all the time during daylight hours
- Have a 'visitor information' section on your website/social media platform and keep the information up-to-date
- If you can't open all the time, do have regular opening hours, clearly advertised on-line and on a noticeboard at the church if that isn't possible, OR;
- Have details of places from where the key can be obtained, clearly advertised on-line or on a noticeboard at the church with the local dialling code and clear directions;
- Spread responsibilities for locking and unlocking evenly and have a rota
- Keep noticeboards up to date with details of services and events at the church

When opening your church, do (cont'd):

- Warn visitors if a church won't be accessible at a time when it would normally be;
- Have photographs of people from your worshipping community to introduce them;
- Have details of where to get pastoral support and an area for quiet prayer and contemplation;
- Have a brief guide setting out the 10 things in your church that any visitor should see and (a) more detailed guide(s) for the enthusiast or specialist (and keep them stocked up);
- Put facilities like the toilet at the disposal of visitors (or say where the nearest public toilet is);

When opening your church, do (cont'd):

- Have a visitor's book;
- Remember that lots of people are wary about stepping inside churches and may never have been in one before;
- Warn people about obstacles (low doorways, poorly visible changes in floor level, etc);
- Have instructions on where to find light switches and how to use them if it's a dark interior, or install separate spotlights to illuminate notable features;
- Have information about other historic churches/sites in the locality with which you can combine your visit;

Don't neglect essential visitor information!



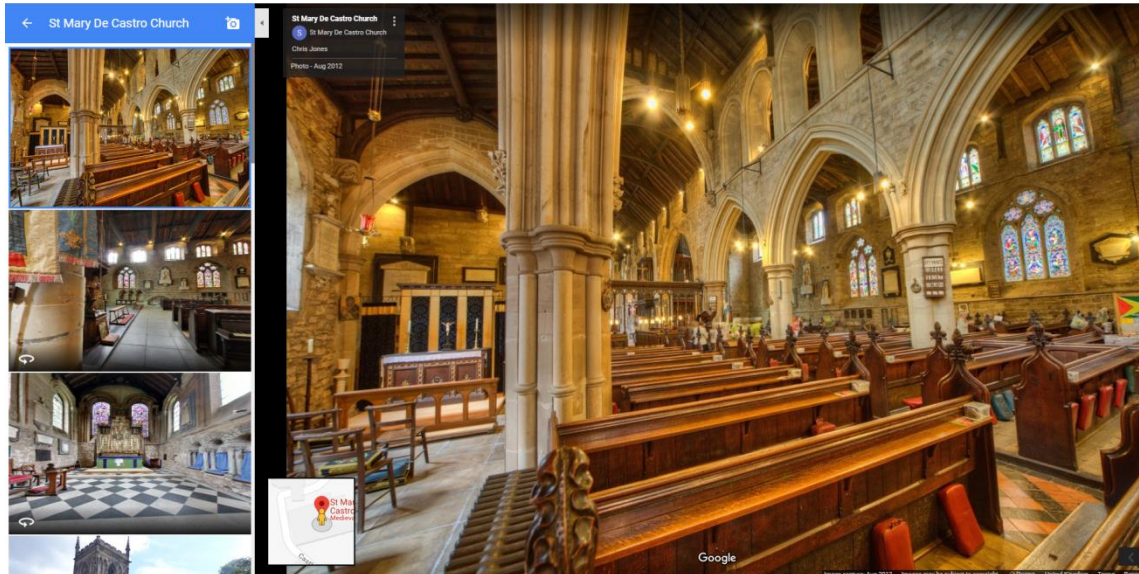
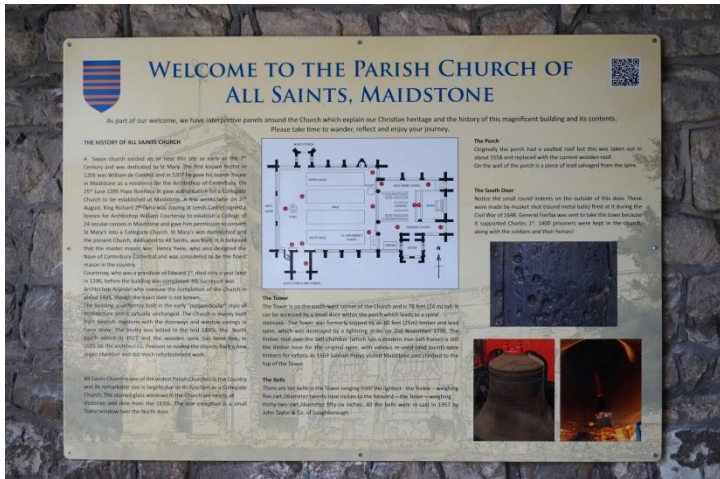
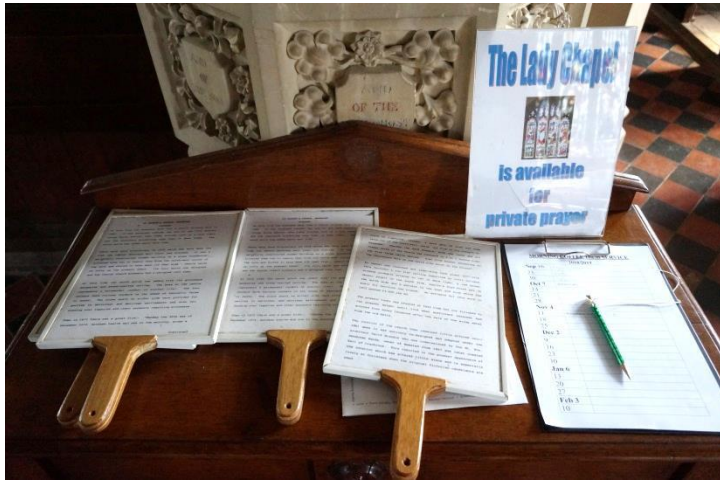
Looking after volunteers

- Think about formalise your relationship with your volunteers by getting to them to sign up to a volunteer agreement which should make clear what you expect from them and what they can expect from you.
- Carry out a risk assessment to identify all the exits, entrances and viewing points so that they can be stationed in a place where people entering the building are easily visible and can leave it quickly in an emergency.
- You might want to have your volunteers working in pairs for extra safety.
- Have an induction session, taking them through the procedure of opening up and locking up, managing keys and so on. Make it clear that they should think about their own safety first. They're not professional security guards – the building is the responsibility of the vicar and PCC.
- Include in the induction session some training and guidance so they feel confident about their role. They need to make their presence felt but not to intimidate visitors by being too clingy or making them feel like they're viewed as a potential threat. Think about issuing them with name badges.
- Make sure your they're properly briefed about looking after the building, whom to contact in the event of an emergency and so on and put together a brief handbook or ready reference sheet.
- Your volunteers will also need guidance on how to deal with questions about faith and what to do if someone in distress needs support. Is there a trained counsellor or member of the clergy who'd be willing to have their contact details included in the information sheet? Are any of your volunteers first-aiders? If not, could you organise training? Decide a set policy on the help you offer to people in need (e.g. the homeless)
- Above all, make sure your volunteers feel comfortable and valued! Thank them regularly – you could organise social events for them – and make sure they are well provided with refreshments while they're on duty.

Good communications and interpretation, old and new

Internet resources and platforms to consider:

- Facebook and Twitter (for parish and visitor information)
- Geograph.org.uk and Flickr for images
- Wikipedia and Wikipedia Commons for background information
- Wix.com and Weebly.com for building websites



Getting the message out – www.achurchnearyou.com

- Do make sure that opening times are clearly advertised to avoid getting inundated with enquiries!
- Do have a contact number that works outside office hours
- Do include the postcode of the church for anyone using satnav

The screenshot shows the website for St Peter the Apostle, part of the 'a church NEAR YOU' initiative. The header includes navigation links for 'THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND', 'A CHURCH NEAR YOU', 'THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY', and 'THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK'. A tagline reads 'A CHRISTIAN PRESENCE IN EVERY COMMUNITY' with a 'LOGIN' button.

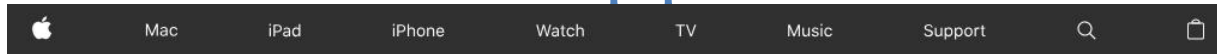
The main content area is dark blue and features the breadcrumb 'Church of England → Diocese of Canterbury → St. Peter in Thanet' and the title 'St Peter the Apostle'. A 'Get in touch' section provides the following information:

- Parish Office
- Home icon: Hopeville Avenue St Peters Broadstairs Kent CT10 2TR
- Phone icon: 01843 866061
- Email icon: [E-mail](#)

To the right is a Google Map showing the church's location in Broadstairs, Kent, with a crosshair marker. The map includes labels for 'St Peters', 'Broadstairs', 'Viking Bay', and 'North Foreland Golf Course'. Map controls like 'Map', 'Satellite', and zoom in/out buttons are visible.

The footer contains copyright information: '© 2018 The Archbishops' Council' and a list of links: 'Accessibility', 'Terms', 'Editor Help', 'Privacy', 'Safeguarding', and 'Built by THE DEVELOPER SOCIETY_'.

Getting the message out – the Keyholder App



App Store Preview

This app is only available on the App Store for iOS devices.

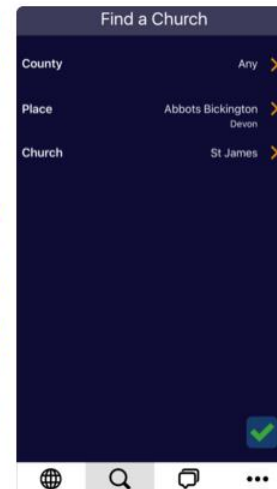
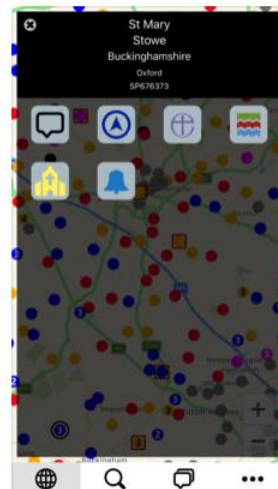
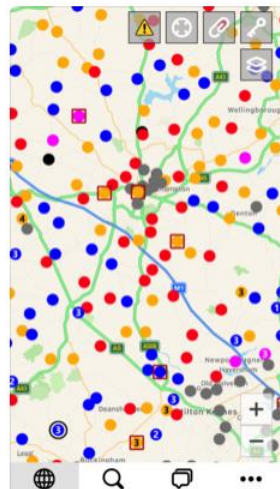


Keyholder for Parish Churches 4+

C B Newham

Free - Offers In-App Purchases

Screenshots iPhone iPad



Access all areas!



Security – some key precautions

- Lock away valuable items (e.g. things made of silver, brass or pewter) in a secure area and put less valuable substitutes in their place. Make sure you have a good record of them, including photographs, using the Object ID Standard. Mark valuables with security codes or SmartWater.
- Put electronic equipment and anything used by your worship group in a lockable area
- Small, easily portable items of furniture can be especially vulnerable: chaining them to the floor or wall deters would-be thieves.
- Install an alarm system, CCTV or security lights triggered by a motion sensor system.
- Remove all unwanted combustible items. Keep any stands for votive candles well away from anything flammable. Instead of leaving matches, light one or two candles from which visitors can light their own.
- Use a table-top donation box rather than a wall safe. If you are unlucky enough to get robbed, no physical harm will be done to the building. Empty it regularly and display a clearly visible notice to this effect.
- Tell your neighbours (residents, local shops and so on) that you are opening the church and inform them of the opening times. Tell the police, particularly your Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).
- Pass on any new advice on security from the Diocese and the Police to anyone regularly using or looking after the building. Old threats change and new threats appear all the time, so it's important to be well informed.

Still got questions? Ask the expert!

Rebecca Chantler Dip CII

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“...if at all possible your church should be left open during the day for those who wish to pray, or who wish to find a place for quiet contemplation and for community activities. The presence of legitimate visitors will also help to deter those with a criminal intent. It is not the policy of EIG to ask for churches to be kept locked during the day.”

Automatic locking devices: pros and cons



The ENTRANCE
DOOR will
Require
Ring Hatch Handle.



This Requires
OAK Box Housing
TO DOOR Jamb.
With
OAK Block mounted
TO DOOR
TO RECEIVE Bolt.

Advice from The CCT

- They are unreliable and need regular attention (daylight saving causes problems)
- They rely on visitors properly closing the door to ensure the mechanism aligns in order to function;
- All it takes to overcome such a lock is for someone to put a twig/branch/stone at the base of the door;
- If there is a power outage, the lock will fail in open mode;
- They can lead to neglect of a building and discourage passive surveillance.

When opening your church, don't:

- Keep the church locked because of something bad that happened 40 years ago;
- Say, 'Oh there's no point in opening our building – there's nothing interesting about it, who'd want to see inside?'
- Forget that if you have an internet presence, you could well get visitors travelling a long way to see the church ('The internet's second biggest seller');
- Cover up features of interest (e.g. brasses)
- Forget that people who are turned away won't come back;
- Forget that visitors who feel welcome are potential future members of the congregation and friends of the church!

What puts people off



Further reading

- National Churches Trust toolkit on open churches
<https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/open-churches-toolkit>
- Diocese of London toolkit on open churches
www.london.anglican.org/support/buildings-and-property/open-churches-toolkit/
- EIG guidance on church security
<https://www.ecclesiastical.com/risk-management/church-security/>
- Churchcare guidance on security
<http://www.churchcare.co.uk/churches/art-artefacts-conservation/protecting-treasures>