



Diocese of Canterbury
CHANGED LIVES ➞ CHANGING LIVES



INVITING VISITORS INFORMATION PACK

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A message from Bishop Rose



Rose Hudson-Wilkin

Bishop of Dover

This is an exciting project which aims to fling wide the doors of our parish churches and embrace our visitors in a way that enables them to engage with all that our buildings have to offer. Our churches provide us with unique spaces offering an oasis of peace and tranquillity; the symbols we see speak of God's presence and openness to all who enter.

+ Rose



201

There are 201 parishes that make up the worshipping communities in our diocese.

327

We have a total of 327 churches in our diocese, all with a unique story to tell.

Welcome

Churches are places of history, faith, and community, yet many people may not know they are welcome to explore them. Our Inviting Visitors Campaign aims to help churches across the Diocese of Canterbury open their doors wider and create meaningful connections with visitors.

Guidance

This pack provides practical guidance on making your church more welcoming, supporting you in inviting and engaging with different types of visitors—from tourists and heritage enthusiasts to those seeking peace and reflection. It also includes essential advice on managing security and health & safety considerations, particularly when opening your church for longer hours.



Inspiration

Whether your church is looking to increase footfall, share its rich heritage, or simply create a more inviting atmosphere, you will find the tools and inspiration you need to get started.

Why invite visitors?

Inviting visitors, whether these are from near or far, into your church building is an act of outreach and brings many benefits, including:

- Increasing the number of people engaging with your church building;
- Helping others appreciate the significance of places of worship;
- Attracting new volunteers and supporters;
- Encouraging donations, including one-off and regular gifts;
- Inspiring people to leave a gift in their will, helping to support the church's future;
- Enhancing eligibility for grants;
- Raising awareness of church services and events;
- Greater footfall, contributing to improved security;
- A possible focus for your church's Mission Action Plan.

Opening your doors more widely not only enriches those who visit but also helps sustain and strengthen your church for generations to come.



Who might like to visit your church?

Think about the different people who may come to your church, each with their own needs:

- Tourists interested in the history and beauty of the place;
- Local community members looking for a reflective space;
- Walkers passing through;
- Pilgrims on their way to Canterbury, seeking spiritual enrichment and rest;
- Visitors paying their respects at the graves of loved ones;
- Those looking for a quiet space to pray, meditate, or just relax;
- Families with children who want a welcoming place to explore;
- People with restricted mobility who need easy access.

Regardless of the reason for their visit, strive to make the experience meaningful and rewarding for your guests.



Who might like to visit your church?

Champing™ is a one-of-a-kind way to spend the night in a historic church. Created by The Churches Conservation Trust, the national charity caring for churches at risk, it offers a chance to enjoy camping with a special heritage twist. Guests bring their sleeping bags and stay in comfort among centuries of heritage, with breakfast provided locally. For churches, Champing offers more than just an alternative income stream, it's a way to welcome new visitors, share the story of the building, and foster a deeper connection with the wider community. By opening doors in this creative way, churches can raise valuable funds for ongoing care and preservation of their building.

Benefits of Champing for Churches

- Generates income – provides a valuable new revenue stream to support ongoing care and mission.
- Welcomes new visitors – attracts people who might not otherwise step inside a church.
- Raises awareness – shares the story and heritage of the building in a memorable way.
- Builds community links – connects with local cafés, pubs, and businesses through breakfast partnerships.
- Supports preservation – helps safeguard historic churches for future generations.
- Creates unique experiences – offers guests a powerful and meaningful encounter with sacred space.

To find out more on how your church can offer the Champing™ experience to visitors visit www.champing.co.uk

Enhancing visitor experience

Finding the church

- Is the church easy to find with clear signage and online instructions?
- Is the entrance to the churchyard clearly marked and inviting?

Parking

- Is it easy for visitors to find parking information online?
- Are there designated spaces available for individuals with restricted mobility?



Access

Helping visitors plan is important—make sure any access challenges are clearly communicated online.

- Are pathways to the church suitable for prams and wheelchairs?
- Are there any uneven or slippery areas along the churchyard path?
- Are handrails available for those with limited mobility?
- Do you offer toilet and baby-changing facilities?

Churchyard

- Is there a clear graveyard plan available which is easily accessible to visitors?
- Are the watering and refuse areas clearly marked for those visiting graves?
- Are the grassed areas well-maintained and free of litter?
- Is there enough seating in the churchyard for visitors?
- If not, would providing folding chairs during the summer months be helpful?

Children

- Your church could become a welcoming space for children and their carers during walks or outings.
- If you don't already have one, consider creating a dedicated children's corner with colouring sheets featuring Bible stories, church festivals and saints, along with colouring pencils, clean toys, and books for children to enjoy.

Enhancing visitor experience



Signs and noticeboards

- Is the overall presentation neat and inviting?
- Do any of the notices need updating?
- Could some of the less visitor-friendly notices (e.g., flower rota, insurance certificate) be relocated to the edges, allowing the more engaging ones to take centre stage?
- Does the signage convey a warm welcome, encouraging people to enter the church?
- Are any signs in need of cleaning or repainting.
- Does any language on the signs need to be simplified or made more friendly? For example, instead of "Keep off the grass," consider "Please stay on the paths."

Porch

As the first point of entry, the porch creates an important first impression.

- Is there a welcoming sign near the door, inviting people to come inside?
- If there is a noticeboard, is it clean, tidy, and up to date? Does it include service times and contact details for clergy or lay leaders?
- Is the door easy to open?
- If not, is there a sign with clear instructions on how to open it, inviting people to do so?
- Would placing a "Welcome" A-board outside the porch help let passers-by know you're open and ready to welcome visitors?

Inside the church

- Consider adding a sign inviting visitors to turn the lights on (and off when they leave) or to make themselves a cup of tea, if you have the facilities.
- Is the church clean and clutter-free? If not, consider asking someone outside of the church community to cast a fresh pair of eyes over the building.
- Are the edges of steps clearly marked for safety?
- Is your welcome area or table clean and inviting?
- Is there a visitor book and pen, clearly visible for guests to sign?

Enhancing visitor experience

History, art and culture

- Do you have information about the history and any significant features in the church? Is it interesting and easy to read?
- Using signposting in specific areas, such as 'Look Up,' can encourage visitors to notice and appreciate features such as a ceiling of architectural interest.
- If you have good internet or 4G mobile connectivity, consider using QR codes to link visitors to additional online information about your church.
- If you are in an area with limited internet connectivity or weak 4G signals, consider installing an Info-Point, which provides site-specific multimedia content directly to any mobile device. For more information see: [Info Point - Info Point](#)
- Investigate the brand new ChurchExplorer app from at-creative which supports indoor church building tours, churchyard trails and multi-church tours (including pilgrimages). Encouraging giving is central to the app and donation links can easily be added. For more see: [ChurchExplorer app - AT Creative](#)



Faith

For visitors interested in learning more about Christianity, is there information available for them to take away? For example, [The Pilgrim Way \(A Guide to the Christian Faith by Stephen Cottrell, Steven Croft, and Paula Gooder\)](#) is a great resource.

- Does the information look current, appealing, and well-presented?
- Do you have resources for visitors who may be grieving or experiencing mental health challenges, such as depression or anxiety?
- Are there clear contact details for someone visitors can reach out to if they want to learn more about Christianity or simply need someone to talk to? Are these details easy to find?
- Are the contact details for reporting safeguarding concerns clearly visible and easy to find?

Encouraging Visitors to Participate and Connect

- For visitors who may feel unsure about praying, is there a simple prayer displayed to help them get started?
- Is there a dedicated space where visitors are invited to pray? Consider offering Bible verses to pray with or prayer stations. See [How to make a Prayer Jar](#).
- Is there a place for visitors to leave prayer requests? Is it clearly marked and well-kept?

Enhancing visitor experience

Communicating What Happens in Your Church

Think about ways to communicate the current activities in your church, particularly to those who may view the building as a relic of the past rather than a vibrant part of the present.

- Is there clear information about your services, along with an invitation for visitors to attend?
- Would a photo of a service help visitors know what to expect?
- Are there details about courses or events, such as Messy Church, happening at your church?
- Does this information look current, well-presented, and inviting?
- For more detail see *How to reach potential Visitors: Your Communication Strategy* on page 11.

Keep improving your welcome

- Once you have made improvements to enhance your welcome, continue to maintain the quality of what you offer.
- Regularly check noticeboards, keep the church clutter-free, replenish materials, and introduce fresh ideas or activities to give returning visitors something new to experience.
- Decide who will be responsible for these tasks and how often your church should be checked to ensure it is always inviting.



Security and Health & Safety

Ecclesiastical, the leading church insurer, encourages keeping church buildings open to the public during daylight hours whenever possible, as this can significantly enhance the security of your church. They provide the following tips for maintaining both openness and security.

Churches wanting to be open must find the right balance between accessibility and security. This means taking a few key steps:



Inform

Ensure local residents know that the church is operating an open-door policy so that they can observe activity



Encourage

Encourage local people to pop into the church while passing by.



Rota

You might like to draw up a rota of volunteer stewards to be present in church. This could also be members of the wider community as well as the congregation. But don't forget to consider their personal safety if, for example, they might be alone in church at any time.



Storage

Create a secure storage area where all valuables can be locked.

Ecclesiastical also states that there is no impact on the church insurance premiums if a church is open during daylight hours and proper risk assessments have been completed.

If you have any concerns, please speak with their customer services team on 0345 777 3322.

You can find out more by consulting Ecclesiastical's website:

[Open Churches | Risk Management](#)

You can find out more about risk assessments on its webpage:

[Managing Safety at Your Church | Risk Management | Ecclesiastical](#)

How to reach potential visitors: your communications strategy

Think about what your message is and the audience you are trying to reach. In particular:

- Members of your local community
- Tourists
- Pilgrims
- Walkers
- Families with children

Make sure regular or occasional opening times are available on your website. You could also use a banner outside the church.

How could you connect with each of these groups and what their interest might be in your church building? You can develop a simple communications strategy for each group.

Your website and social media will play a key role in this. Make sure to use plenty of images, ensuring you have permission for any photos or videos featuring individuals.

For more ideas on promoting your church, see [100 Ways to Get Your Church Noticed](#) by Neil Pugmire, as well as the recorded webinar inspired by his book available on the Church Of England's website [Get your church noticed - Church Support Hub](#).



How to reach potential visitors: your communications strategy

Groups of possible visitors	Reason for visiting	Various platforms for communicating with and reaching visitors	Details visitors will appreciate seeing on your website
Members of the local community	Peace/quiet A place to pray and feel connected	Website Local Facebook Group Fliers in local café/sent out through local school	Opening times History of the Church Upcoming community events
Tourists	History and art	Website Tourist Board ChurchExplorer App	Opening Times History of the Church
Pilgrims	A spiritual staging post on their way to or from Canterbury	Website British Pilgrimage Trust website ChurchExplorer App	Opening Times Links to British Pilgrimage Trust website
Walkers	Somewhere to stop, make a cup of tea and use the toilet	Website	Opening Times Publicise available facilities
Families with children	A place to visit with small children	Website Local Facebook Group Fliers in café/sent out through local pre-school	Opening Times Publicise children's corner and available facilities

Encouraging donations from visitors

The primary reason for inviting visitors into your church building is to share its peace, spirituality, architecture, and history. Additionally, opening your doors more frequently increases opportunities for people to donate towards the care of the church building and support its mission and ministry. To facilitate donations, it is important to offer as many ways for people to give as you can. These might include:

- A wall safe;
- A contactless device, such as [CollecTin More](#) or [PayazGo](#), can be a great addition. [Parish Buying](#) supplies these devices to churches at a discounted price. The necessary Give A Little software is currently provided free via their website. If you don't already have a Parish Buying account, you'll need to register first;
- Online giving accessed via a QR code. See [Online Giving](#) | [The Church of England](#) for more details;
- Information about how to sign-up to give regularly via [Parish Giving Scheme](#) or standing order; PGS can also be used to facilitate one-off online gifts via a QR code.
- Information about leaving a gift to your church in a will. See [Legacy](#) | [The Church of England](#).
- Please contact generousgiving@diocant.org for more information and assistance.



Materials to complement your visitor experience

To help you create a warm and welcoming atmosphere for visitors, it is important to have clear, engaging, and informative materials available. We have created some templates that you can easily personalise. You can access these templates via the Canva links to tailor them to your church's needs. Alternatively, if you would like assistance in creating these materials, please contact generousgiving@diocant.org



Retractable banner

A professional and eye-catching option, costs around £70-£80.

[Banner template](#)



Pew Cards

Perfect for leaving in the church for visitors to take as a memento, with the option to donate a later date. Costs around £60 for 250 cards.

[Pew card template](#)



Welcome leaflet

A guide to help visitors explore the church confidently. Costs around £65 for 500 leaflets.

[Leaflet template](#)

Having materials, such as these, in place can make a significant difference in how visitors perceive your church and encourage further engagement. Templates for other fundraising materials are also available from generousgiving@diocant.org

Resources:

[Giving bookmark with prayer](#)

[Legacy Bookmark to encourage people to leave a gift in their will](#)



Impact on your church building

When making a change to a church building it is important to consider the permissions you need to have in place. Kevin Tucker, our DAC Secretary, and Samuel Barrett, our Church Building Support Officer, who together form our Church Buildings Team, can help inform you whether your project needs List A, List B, or Full Faculty permission.

As a rule of thumb, contact the Church Buildings Team in the early stage of a project. This will save you time and help you plan accordingly. Both Kevin and Samuel will be available to provide on and off site advice.

To contact the Church buildings Team please email cbt-canterbury@diocant.org.



Inviting visitors audit checklist

Finding the church

- ☐ Is the church easy to find with clear signage and online instructions?
- ☐ Is the entrances to the churchyard and church clearly marked and inviting?

Parking

- ☐ Is it easy for visitors to find parking information online?
- ☐ Are there designated spaces available for individuals with restricted mobility?

Access

- ☐ Are any access issues clearly communicated online?
- ☐ Are pathways to the church suitable for prams and pushchairs?
- ☐ Are handrails available for those with limited mobility?
- ☐ Are there any uneven or slippery areas along the churchyard path?
- ☐ Do you offer toilet and baby-changing facilities?

Churchyard

- ☐ Is there a clear graveyard plan which is easily accessible to visitors?
- ☐ Are the watering and refuse areas clearly marked for those visiting graves?
- ☐ Are the grassed areas well-maintained and free of litter?
- ☐ Is there enough seating for visitors? If not would providing folding chairs during the Summer months be helpful?

Signs and noticeboards

- ☐ Is the overall presentation neat and inviting?
- ☐ Do any of the notices need updating?
- ☐ Could some of the less visitor-friendly notices be relocated to the edges?
- ☐ Does the signage convey a warm welcome, encouraging people to enter the church?
- ☐ Are any signs in need of cleaning or repainting?
- ☐ Does any language on the signs need to be simplified or made more friendly?

Inviting visitors audit checklist

Porch

- ☐ Is there a welcoming sign near the door, inviting people to come inside?
- ☐ Is there a noticeboard? If so does it include service times and contact details for clergy or lay leaders?
- ☐ Is there a bowl of fresh water available for dogs?
- ☐ Is the door easy to open? If not, is there a sign with clear instructions on how to open it, encouraging people to do so?
- ☐ Would placing a 'Welcome' A-board outside the porch help let passers-by know you're open and ready to welcome visitors?

Inside the church

- ☐ Consider adding a sign inviting visitors to turn the lights on (and off when they leave) or to make themselves a cup of tea, if you have the facilities.
- ☐ Is the church clean and clutter-free? If not, consider asking someone outside of the church community to cast a pair of fresh eyes over the building.
- ☐ Are the edges of steps clearly marked for safety?
- ☐ Is your welcome area or table clean and inviting?
- ☐ Is there a visitor book and pen, clearly visible for visitors not sign?

History, art and culture

- ☐ Do you have information about the history and any significant features in the church? Is it interesting and easy to read?
- ☐ Is there signposting in specific areas inviting visitors to 'look up' if you have an interesting ceiling etc?
- ☐ Have you considered QR codes linked to your website, an Info-Point or an Explorer app to help orientate and inform visitors? (see the Information Pack for more information)

Children

- ☐ Is the church a welcoming place for children with books, toys and colouring sheets featuring Bible stories/saints/prayers and colouring pencils?
- ☐ Are these clean, and regularly maintained?

Inviting visitors audit checklist

Faith

- ☐ Is there any information about the Christian faith for visitors to read and take away with them? (see Information pack for a suggestion)
- ☐ Are there any resources for visitors who may be grieving or experiencing mental health challenges, such as anxiety or depression?
- ☐ Are there clear contact details for someone visitors can reach out to if they want to learn more about Christianity or simply need someone to talk to? Are these details easy to find?
- ☐ Are the contact details for reporting safeguarding concerns clearly visible and easy to find?

Encouraging visitors to participate and connect

- ☐ For visitors who might feel unsure about praying is there a simple prayer displayed to help get them started?
- ☐ Is there a dedicated space where visitors are invited to pray?
- ☐ Are prayer resources available?
- ☐ Is there a place for visitors to leave prayer requests?

Communicating what happens in your church

- ☐ Is there clear information about your services, along with an invitation for visitors to attend?
- ☐ Is there a photo of so visitors know what to expect?
- ☐ Are there details about courses and events happening at your church?
- ☐ Does this information look current, well-presented and inviting?

Security and health & safety

- ☐ Do local residents know that the church is operating an open-door policy so they can observe activity?
- ☐ Have you encouraged local people to pop into the church while passing by?
- ☐ Are you thinking of using volunteer stewards? If so make sure you have considered their personal safety if they might be alone in the church at any time? (see Information Pack for further details)
- ☐ Are any valuables locked away and less valuable/portable movables secured?
- ☐ Have you completed risk assessments regarding Health & Safety for both inside and outside the church? (see Information Pack for further details)

Inviting visitors audit checklist

Impact on church buildings

☐ If you need to make any alterations, have you consulted the Church Buildings Support Officer (sbarrett@diocant.org) regarding the relevant permissions needed?

Communications Strategy

☐ Have you considered how to publicise your open church to various categories of visitor using your website (also national websites), local magazine and fliers?

- ☐ Members of the local community
- ☐ Tourists
- ☐ Pilgrims
- ☐ Walkers
- ☐ Families with children

Maximising donations

☐ Do you have a self-service contactless donation device? Is it well promoted with a poster which sets out the impact and needs of your church?

[How to use your contactless device - poster template.](#)

☐ Do you have a QR code that directs visitors to your giving page, such as Parish Giving Scheme or Give A Little? Is it included on something like a pew-card that highlights the impact and needs of your church, and can be easily taken home?



Further information



Open churches

[Church Security](#) | [Risk Management \(ecclesiastical.com\)](#)

Fire guidance

[Church Fire Safety Risk Assessment](#) | [Risk Management \(ecclesiastical.com\)](#)

[Prevention of arson](#) | [Church guidance note](#) | [Ecclesiastical](#)

[Candlelit services and votive candles](#) | [Church guidance note](#) | [Ecclesiastical](#)

Health & safety

[Self Assessment for Churches](#) | [Risk Management \(ecclesiastical.com\)](#)

[Church Risk Assessments](#) | [Risk Management \(ecclesiastical.com\)](#)

[Managing slips and trips](#) | [Ecclesiastical](#)

[Church working at Height](#) | [Risk Management](#) | [Ecclesiastical \(ecclesiastical.com\)](#)

[Slips and Trips in Burial Grounds](#) | [Risk Management](#) | [Ecclesiastical](#)

Automatic time locks

[Automatic door time Locks](#) | [Church guidance](#) | [Ecclesiastical](#)

Church safes

[Purchase and installation of safes](#) | [Church guidance note](#) | [Ecclesiastical](#)

Smartwater & metal theft

[SmartWater for churches](#) | [Risk Management](#) | [Ecclesiastical](#)

[Church Theft of Metal](#) | [Risk Management \(ecclesiastical.com\)](#)

Further information

Roof protection systems

[Church Roof Protection Systems](#) | [Risk management \(ecclesiastical.com\)](#)

People on premises

[People on Church Premises](#) | [Ecclesiastical](#)

[Personal Safety Plan](#) | [Church guidance](#) | [Ecclesiastical](#)

Statutory testing

[Maintaining portable electric equipment in low-risk environments \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

[Testing requirements](#) | [Church Guidance](#) | [Ecclesiastical](#)

General resources

[Encouraging people to visit: Promoting tourism in your place of worship](#)

[Historic England: HEAG](#)





Contact the team



01227 459401



GenerousGiving@diocant.org



www.canterburydiocese.org



Diocesan House, Canterbury

Thank You



Thanks to the Exeter Diocese for ideas and wording that have contributed to this information pack.