



# Toolkit 1:

## TEN TOP TIPS FOR WELCOMING VISITORS TO YOUR CHURCH

1. **Be Open** If you can't be open all the time decide a timetable for opening, stick to it and tell people about it.
2. **Be Inviting** Use words like 'WELCOME' and 'COME IN', 'EXPLORE', 'FEEL FREE'. Visitors need to know that they have permission to come in and that they are allowed to enjoy the space.
3. **Be Hospitable** We can't all be expected to produce farmhouse teas at the drop of a hat on a regular basis but..... a bottle of water and a bowl for a thirsty dog is a simple, hospitable act.
4. **Be Communicative** Visitors love notice-boards! Make sure they are up to date and well organised, showing what your church and your wider community are up to. Use them as an opportunity to connect with the visitor.
5. **Be Clean and Tidy** Visitors notice smells! A dust-free, well presented, fragrant environment says so much about you as stewards of your building.
6. **Be Accommodating** A space reserved especially for visitors shows that you have thought of their needs. A small table with flowers, information about your church and community and a visitor book inviting comment can be moved away during worship if necessary..
7. **Be Interesting** Make sure that any leaflet or guide you produce is easy to read, engaging and digestible in ten minutes flat. Quirky stories about people and events are far more interesting than a list of the names of the last fifty vicars!
8. **Be Professional** An In-House Style is easy to achieve. Your notice-board, leaflets and signage should show some commonality. Use the same font, colours and themes throughout.
9. **Be Sensitive** Communicate your 'Power of Place' by using good lighting and creating spaces for stillness, peace and prayer.
10. **And Finally ...Be Memorable** The greatest compliment to you will be a returning visitor or one who tells their friends about their experience at your church.

*If you would like help or support with any of the issues highlighted here please contact Divine Inspiration on 024 7652 1346 or by e-mail on [helen.mcgowan@divine-inspiration.org.uk](mailto:helen.mcgowan@divine-inspiration.org.uk) .*

*The full Toolkit can be downloaded from the Ambassador page of the website Go to [www.divine-inspiration.org.uk](http://www.divine-inspiration.org.uk) for more information and advice to help you improve your church's welcome to visitors.*

*Divine Inspiration gratefully acknowledges financial support from the following:*



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## Toolkit 2:

# Interpreting your Building for Visitors

Visitors to your church building will encounter you in a variety of ways and for many different reasons. They might be a regular church 'crawler' with prior knowledge of what to expect, or someone for whom church buildings are a complete mystery - they may never even have made a visit to a church building before. You can't make assumptions about why they come - but you **can** be ready for them.

Having a plan to welcome those who visit you must be seen as a complementary part of your churches ministry. Welcoming them, unconditionally and 'in absentia' is a challenge but getting this right can make a huge difference to the way that visitors understand you and may encourage them to learn more.

Some visitors will just want to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of your church – we know that church buildings can offer a tremendous 'power of place' - but others will be thirsty for facts and may be looking for more information. Telling the story of your church will encourage visitors to linger a while longer and will help you to build a relationship with that visitor on a new level.

## Before you start

Assemble a team of people who understand and enjoy your church's heritage and who appreciate the importance of welcoming visitors to your church. You might include a member of your local history group who will be able to put the story of your church into a wider, community context. Think about the kinds of people who generally come to your church and how you currently welcome them. You might like to look at the first part of our Toolkit '**Ten Top Tips for Welcoming Visitors to your Church**' to get you started. The next step is to look at how you interpret your history and heritage. How do you currently do this and how might it be improved? Does it look tired or out of date? Could it do with revamping or updating?

None of this should cost excessive amounts of money. It is not necessary to produce glossy, heavyweight books in order to share your story. It is very simple to produce impressive looking material on a personal computer as long as you follow some simple rules.

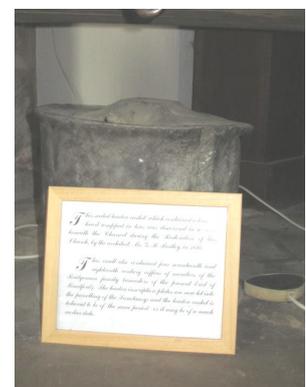
## Do some research

You may already be using a booklet or guide. If so, this may have been written some time ago. You could try this out on an unsuspecting visitor to your church. Ask them what they think of it – tell them they can be as honest as they like! You might like to look at the Diocese of London's helpful advice on writing a church history <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/building-on-history-project/resource-guide/church-and-parish-history.htm>

## Don't be too long-winded

Don't attempt to overwhelm the visitor with too much information. Depending on the size of your building and its significance you may only need a side of A4 to help visitors to navigate themselves around your church. Start by identifying ten noteworthy aspects of your church that deserve attention and concentrate on those. Mix up the historical facts with information about the Christian faith. By drawing attention to the altar you can also explain what an altar is for and what Eucharist is and how it is celebrated, for example.

You can include quirky, intriguing things as well – don't be tempted to assume that just because something is old it's automatically fascinating! The picture on the right here is of a leaden casket that contained an unidentified head found in a vault in the 1870s when the church was restored. This is the kind of thing that appeals particularly to small boys!



## Don't overdo the dates

Dates can be dull so don't use them too much. Using general terms like 'Norman' or 'Medieval' or 'post Reformation' is better but make sure you quantify this. Using a simple time-line along the bottom of a page can help to put history into a context for those who aren't that great at history.

## Do use simple terms

Don't assume that visitors will understand complex ecclesiastical or architectural language. Most haven't got a clue what a 'misericord' was for or where to find a flying buttress. If you have to refer to things like this you need to explain the term you have used. Remember also that some visitors may not know what the font is used for or why the altar is such an important part of Christian celebration - these are things that you may be taking for granted but they need explanation for those who aren't as churched as we are!

If your building is particularly significant in terms of its architecture or fabric, and it is the kind of place that people do visit to see something special then you will need to provide more detailed information. Having a file as a reference document can help and those who are interested can refer to that if they need more facts and figures.

## Don't be too high-brow

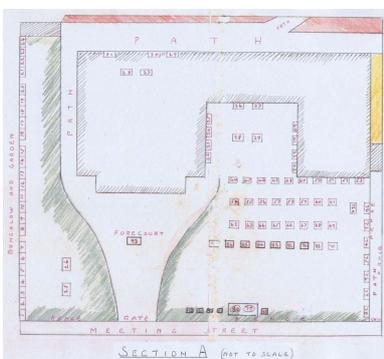
In terms of writing style try to imagine that you are telling a lively story rather than giving a lecture to your visitors. If your written material is boring they'll switch off. Try to explain the church history by making connections with the social history that was taking place in your community at the time. People of all ages and abilities enjoy and relate to pictures so use good quality images to help them to interpret your building and to highlight significant features.

Showing your visitors a collection of photographs of the church in days gone by will help to demonstrate that the building has been a witness to many important, life-changing events affecting the community.



## Do anticipate questions

By taking some time to be objective about your church you can anticipate some queries that visitors might have. If you have an unusual symbol carved in the stonework or stained glass with puzzling imagery be sure to explain it in simple terms. Use images if necessary where interesting objects or features like carvings are difficult to see. Having a pair of good binoculars available can help where important details deserve to be studied, high up in the roof or in a stained glass window for example.

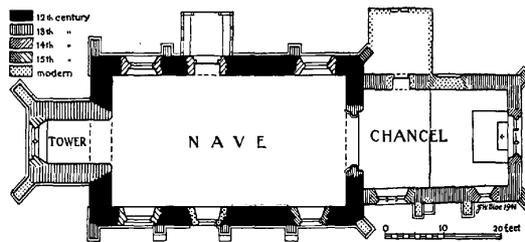


Remember also that many people visiting churches are looking for information about Births, Marriages and Deaths and may be researching their family history. Pew plans and graveyard plans, like the one on the left, can be useful for visitors too. You may not have a transcription of your parish registers but you can identify where they are kept and advertise the address, contact details and opening times of the local records office. The Diocesan Records will also be kept here and will be a useful place to start your church history research.

Some parish records have been digitally transcribed by volunteers so make sure you know if this is the case where you are and see if you can have a hard copy inside church for visitors to refer to. If your parish is small you might think about a community project to transcribe the registers yourselves – having them available on your website is a very useful way of serving those who visit you and meeting their immediate need.

## Do use a floor-plan

By using a footprint map you can help those who may not have been into a church building before to understand the lay-out and the terms we use to describe areas in our church, like the Nave or the Chancel, but keep it very simple. Don't complicate it unnecessarily with too much text. You can use a numbering system on a floor-plan and this will encourage visitors to move around in your space and navigate rather than lurking just inside the door before leaving. Some church plans, like the one pictured here, are available in Victoria County Histories and accessible on-line, depending on the county.



It's much easier for visitors to follow a plan like this, as they would a map, than it is to follow written directions especially in a building that uses strange and uncommon words to describe its key areas and features.

## Do be inclusive

Remember that the average reading age in this country is 12 years so be aware that people who visit will have different levels of understanding in terms of literacy and could be intimidated by difficult language. This doesn't mean you have to dumb down your written material – just try to anticipate average needs and abilities and regularly review your written material with that in mind.

## Do be consistent

Make sure that all material you produce uses the same font, the same colours and the same in-house style. This can also be carried through to any notice-board based material or signage you use in the building. This consistency helps you to look professional and shows that you have thought about the way you present yourselves.



## Do think about the children

Children in the main don't want to do anything that seems too much like school if they aren't at school – so activities that include a large volume of reading or writing tend not to be as appealing as more creative offers.



However, to have some material or an activity specifically for children is a very good idea and it doesn't need to be complicated. A simple I-Spy sheet with stickers or a Treasure Hunt is good. This could also be used when children come to your church for weddings or baptisms. Remember that children really respond to imaginative stories so you could use a character from history from your church to relate an event through their eyes. If your church has an unusual dedication or an interesting saint associated with it they could tell the story of their life and works, for example.

Try putting tiny Lego figures in church in unusual places – up on window sills or in pews - to encourage children to really explore and use their eyes in the building. This is especially good for children who do not read so well.

Identify and talk to people in your church who have experience of working with children, either in the classroom or in other ways. See what they say about the potential that your building might bring to the way in which you welcome and entertain younger visitors.

## In summary

- Give some thought to the kinds and types of people who will be visiting you and what they might be looking for.
- Review what you currently offer in terms of interpretation and story-telling and try to be objective about how effective it currently is. If it needs work, make a plan for this.
- Decide what your ten main points of interest will be – you may have less than ten but don't try to highlight anymore than that unless your building merits it.
- Identify people who can help you to create the interpretation – the content, the style and the way in which you present your material will have a huge impact on its effectiveness.
- Remember to take advantage of opportunities to tell the story of your faith through the building and its contents. Visitors will be interested to hear how the beliefs of the worshipping community have shaped the way in which the building has evolved over the centuries.

## Reading List/Helpful Resources

See other elements of this toolkit to help you unlock the story of your church.

<http://www.divine-inspiration.org.uk/resources/toolkit>

**'The Gate of Heaven – How Church Buildings Speak of God'** Nigel Walter

Grove Books Limited

ISBN 978-1-85174-802-0

**'How to Read a Church – Images, symbols and meanings in Churches and Cathedrals'** Richard Taylor

Rider Books

ISBN 184413053-3

**'Exploring Churches'**

Churches Conservation Trust

ISBN 1-903649-14-5

**'Churches, Cathedrals and Chapels - A teachers Guide'** Morris/Corbishley

English Heritage

ISBN 1-85074-447-5

**'Rural Visitors – A Parish Workbook for Welcoming Visitors to the Country Church'** Francis/Martineau

Acora

ISBN 0-9540766-0-5

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# Toolkit 3:

## Opening your Church with Confidence

A church locked to keep out thieves and vandals is also a church closed to its community and the people who need it most. Theft and damage to churches is not a modern phenomenon. Over the centuries churches have faced exactly the same issues that we are dealing with today. Closing is a natural and understandable reaction to a threat - but it doesn't have to be the only way to deal with this issue.

**FACT: A locked church is more vulnerable to theft and vandalism than an open one.**

This may seem like a ridiculous statement at first sight but more criminals attack locked churches because they are less likely to be disturbed. In an open church anyone may appear at any time.

The following tips will help you to understand this and plan your strategy for being open more regularly. Remember that buildings and 'stuff' can be replaced but damage to people is more difficult to handle.

### Your people

The safety of those volunteers and church workers who may find themselves in vulnerable situations in your building is equally, if not more, important than the security of your building. It is a good idea to work out a plan and a set of rules to help those who may find themselves alone in your building to deal with potentially challenging situations. You should take the following into account:

If you are planning to be in church alone remember the following:

- **ALWAYS** tell someone where you are going and how long you expect to be.
- **ALWAYS** carry a mobile phone if at all possible.
- **ALWAYS** trust your instincts and don't be afraid to run away from a situation you feel threatened by.
  
- **NEVER** go into church if you think someone might be inside committing a crime.
- **NEVER** get into an argument or a confrontational situation with anyone in church if you are alone. Walk away and, if necessary, call the police and ask them to deal with the situation.
- **NEVER** give anyone money but be practical in your help. Have information about available practical support in church to give to those who need it.
- **NEVER** disturb the scene of a crime and always report it to the police no matter how small.

### Your building

- **Think like a Criminal** Spend a few hours going around your church and look at it the way that a vandal or a thief would. This will help you to make a risk assessment. (There is a good checklist on the National Churchwatch website or you can get a copy from us here in the office) Look at what you have that could easily be taken. Assess what you have in terms of valuables and replace significant items with those made of wood. Keep a section of your church – the vestry, for example - as a secure area, with a good quality lock.

- **Tell Others** Once you have made the decision to be open decide who you need to tell. This isn't just about your congregation taking a collective responsibility for the building. It's also about those who live near to, or pass by your church, on a regular basis. Think of it as Neighbourhood Watch for Churches. Put flyers through the doors of those closest to your building. Tell them you intend to be open, giving details of the times. Also give telephone numbers of those people who should be contacted in an emergency should they notice anything suspicious. Your local community are the 'guardian angels' for your church.
- **Talk to the Police** Make friends with your local Police Community Support Officers and let them know that you intend to be open regularly. Also contact your insurers and ask for advice. If you are insured with Ecclesiastical your premiums will not go up if you decide to be open. Insurers actively encourage churches to be open as research shows that an open church is less vulnerable than a locked one
- **Think about an Alarm system** They aren't as expensive as you think they are and the technology is changing all the time. At least think about alarming your vestry and keep this as an extra secure area. Most churches are not alarmed – do some research locally and find out which churches have systems and ask how effective they find them. Alarms have a down side. How many of us hear an alarm going off and ignore it?
- **Cash** If you have a cash-box in the wall don't use it. More damage will be caused by a thief trying to prize it away from the stonework. Use a table-top box. If it gets taken, so be it. Make sure that any monies left in church are taken away regularly and say that this is your policy. An evident sign saying 'No money is left in this building at any time' will deter a petty thief who is looking for cash. If you do have a theft, make sure you tell the police and get their help.
- **Keys** Have a mental count up of how many people currently hold keys to your church. Do you really know where they all are and who holds them? Someone needs to be responsible for the management of keys as you will need to have a rota for opening and locking up. Some churches in our Diocese have an automatic timed locking system that works well.

The above basic information has been put together using the resources endorsed and written by National Churchwatch, a project funded by Ecclesiastical Insurance. Their web-site contains extensive downloadable information about Church Security, Personal Security for Church Workers, Volunteers and Clergy. If you would like to speak to an expert in this field please contact Nick Tolson through the web-site at [www.nationalchurchwatch.com](http://www.nationalchurchwatch.com)

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## Toolkit 4:

# Getting Noticed ~ Using notice-boards creatively

Visitors to churches gravitate towards notice-boards. They say much about the kind of people you are and what you have to offer. It is your opportunity to make a great first impression – this is less about what you say and more about how you say it.

You may have different kinds of notice boards, inside and outside of church, and they all have a specific role to play in how you communicate with visitors and tell your story.

## A Boundary Sign

This will be the first opportunity to make a connection with a visitor to your church so it is important that you get this right. Before you plan what it should say consider whether it is in the right place. If you're thinking about getting a new board does it have to go where the old one was? Is this really the best place for it?

There are many different kinds of boundary signs available and yours may be new or a sign that you have had for years that needs some attention. It might be a 'top of the range' model or a very simple board. No matter what it is like it needs to be in good order. No peeling paint or worn off varnish! Ask yourself what the picture below says about the church it represents.



~ Most importantly, be welcoming! Along with the regular service information try to show that your church is alive and open at other times, not just Sundays.

~ Make sure it is easy to read from a safe distance – not too high from the ground - and that the lettering is not too small.

~ Don't be tempted to put too much specific information on it, like names and telephone numbers that could date easily – take into account the fact that your vicar may change and the churchwardens may retire, so think longer-term.

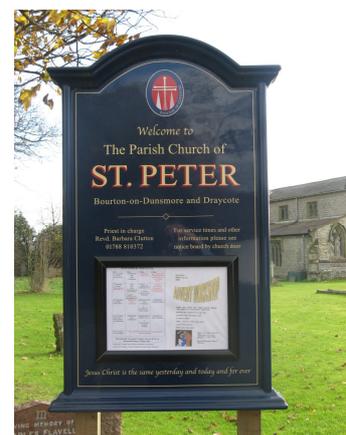
~ It should be easy to get to and access – so not behind an encroaching holly bush or fast growing hedge, or on a slope.

~ If it is a glass or Perspex, lockable type, make sure that it is weatherproof. If your church is in an area frequented by vandals take this into account when planning for a new sign.

~ If you have space to display posters or flyers make sure they always look fresh and that they are changed frequently to maintain a level of interest.

~ Faded, curling, out of date information can give the wrong impression about you. Obviously, the bigger the board the more information you can include, but if it is small keep the information to a minimum. Less is definitely more, as in the example on the right.

~ If you're open to visitors say so - even if it's only for a few hours a day. Use the board to display and explain the details and contact information for those who may want access out of hours or need more specific information about your church's story. If your board is small you may want to signpost them to your porch or inside church itself.



## Temporary Signage



A-Boards are a great way of saying –‘We’re Open!’. You can drag them out of church whenever you’re ready to welcome visitors. They should be eye-catching and visible. Just using a statement like

**‘Welcome to St. Peter’s! Come inside and explore our beautiful/peaceful/historic/unique church!’**

will be enough and if you have a notable or interesting feature to share, say so.

**‘Welcome to St. John Baptist. Our Ancient Norman Crypt is open to visitors’**

You can always give more information in the porch or inside church itself, but this initial invitation will help entice the visitor to come in and explore further.

## Internal Notice-boards

Once you have tempted the visitor into church there are more opportunities to use your notice-boards to say good things about what you have to offer. In the main try to remember the following:

~ Echo the overall look of your boundary board in your internal boards, so be consistent with colours, fonts, styles to create an in-house format. This gives a sense of uniformity and commonality. You can carry this in-house style through other written material or resources you might offer to the visitor. Laminate as much permanent information as you can, with a matt finish.

~ Think about using a stand-alone, double-sided notice-board that you can rotate – one side for visitor information and the other for Sunday worshippers. Make sure you display lots of photographs of your people enjoying social activity to emphasise that you are a living, breathing place and not a museum. Include a smiling snap of your Vicar is a good idea!

~ Nominate someone to be your Notice-board Tsar and tell everyone that this person has responsibility for maintaining and managing the space. If anyone wants to display information it has to go through this person who monitors the material and keeps it up to date. There is nothing more disappointing than seeing an advert for a church fete held three weekends ago!



## Special Space for Visitors

~ If you have room reserve space on a specific board to welcome your visitors and put this close to the door. Say where the nearest public loo is or where the visitor can get a good lunch. There might be an excellent walk that can be accessed from church so if there is, tell them about it. Make sure you don’t lump this kind of information in with the flower rota or the PCC minutes!

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## Toolkit 5:

# Writing a Better 'Statement of Significance'

A Statement of Significance is an important tool to help both your worshipping congregation and people outside of your church community to understand the significance of the church building and its fabric and fittings.

Ideally every church should have a Statement, not just in the event of a Faculty application being made. It should be a Statement that you revisit at regular intervals over the years and consider at all times to be a working document. It is a useful resource for anyone with responsibility for your churches fabric and encourages good stewardship of your heritage building.

It should be **prepared independently of any Faculty application**, reviewed annually so that any recently obtained historical material or changes, such as an extension or reordering, can be incorporated, and a copy should be given to the Church Architect to include in his Quinquennial Inspection Report.

This three-part pack is designed to help you to organize your thinking as you prepare a Statement.

- **Part One:** The Top Ten Tips are your starting point.
- **Part Two:** The check-list helps you to organise and share the tasks involved
- **Part Three:** The resources list points you to the information you will need.

Try to make the statement interesting and readable. Avoid making lists and using tables to display the information and don't be tempted to cut and paste paragraphs of academic material into the text. Be factual, concise and to the point.

The statement shouldn't be too long – two sides of A4 should be sufficient – but this will be determined by the importance of your building.

Use a clear font, like Ariel or Tahoma, and make sure the text is not less than point 11 or 12.

Write, store and send your Statement electronically, especially if it is accompanying a Faculty application. This makes the document easier to amend, share and read.

Nominate someone to take responsibility for the Statement. The PCC needs to take ownership of it and ensure that it is up to date and accessible at all times for others to share. If the person who wrote it moves away, for example, it remains the property of the PCC.

Further advice about writing Statements of Significance and Need can be found on the Churchcare website <http://www.churchcare.co.uk/>

# Part One: Ten Tips for Writing a Better Statement of Significance

**NOTE:** Tips 1 to 6 deal with simple facts and 7 to 10 help you to put flesh on the bones.

1. Begin by writing down **basic information** about your church such as its Listing Grade I, II\* or II. If it is in a Conservation Area state the name, and determine whether it is part of a scheduled ancient monument site.
2. Put together a **summary of your church's history** in a simple, factual and accurate form without unsupported comments or value judgments, e.g., don't refer to Anglo Saxon origins if no evidence can be cited. It should explain **the reasons why your church is the way it is** starting from its earliest known and recorded origins. It should include details of who made it that way in terms of craftsmen, particularly any architects if they are identifiable, and when.
3. It's important to **include a plan of the church**, date shaded to clearly show the age of different parts of the building. It doesn't need to be to scale but it should be as accurate as you can make it. Just as important is the inclusion of photographs of the areas affected by proposed changes marked up to give an indication of the likely end result.
4. Think about how you can describe **your church in the context of its surroundings**. State what contribution the church makes to the physical character and quality of its surroundings. Does it have landmark value on an eye catching site? Are there sightlines and vistas of the church that are valued eg the south side of St Mary's, Warwick is in a Canaletto painting. If yours is an urban church, what **impact** does it have on the streets around it in terms of architectural style and scale?
5. What is the significance of the **overall impression of the church**? Be descriptive and use simple terms like large or small, spacious or cramped, light or gloomy etc.
6. Is the church a **significant feature of county/national/international life** e.g. The history of Warwick St. Mary gives it a national importance because of the history of the Beauchamp Chapel monuments and, as the county town, a county significance. The presence of the grave of William Shakespeare in the Chancel at Holy Trinity, Stratford upon Avon gives it an international significance.
7. When a Faculty application is made for changes to the church, the Statement of Significance is one of the necessary accompanying papers. The basic document should be **supplemented with more detailed information** concentrating on the particular areas of fabric or furnishings which would be affected by the proposed changes. For example, an application for removal of pews requires as much detail as possible on their age, who made them, and if there are pew platforms to be removed as well, information on what is beneath them i.e. solid floor or earth.
8. Some **value judgments may need to be made** about particular furnishings or fabric e.g. Bodley was a good designer but is a particular item designed by him considered to be a good example of his work? Is the organ a good example of the work of its builder? - there are a few around which are not! Such judgments may be needed from people with more knowledge than is available in your parish. The DAC can help you to find experts who can verify specifics.
9. **Include details about your churchyard also**. Identify your oldest graves and find out if any of them are listed in their own right. If parts of your churchyard have been re-ordered record it here. Consider the age of your trees. Find out if any of them have a TPO (Tree Preservation Order) attached to them and determine whether the Churchyard is significant in its own right as a landscape feature.
10. The PCC should **consider the impact of its proposals for change**, as expressed in its Statement of Need, in the context of the Statement of Significance. There is a presumption against changes to church fabric and furnishings by the Chancellor, and others who have to be consulted in the Faculty consultation process such as the amenity societies. The PCC, especially in potentially controversial proposals, needs to demonstrate that it has a **robust case** for changes based on a proper understanding of the implications of those changes on the fabric and furnishings.

## Part Two: Check List for Compiling a Statement of Significance

Use this to assist you as you assemble the information for your Statement.

### **PART ONE**

Part One of your Statement will remain constant as a descriptive overview of your church and will only need to be amended if changes to the fabric are approved and carried out or if new information comes to light.

- Dedication
- Parish
- Benefice (if applicable)
- Diocese
- Listing:
- Conservation Area (if applicable)
- Archaeological significance of the building as a site. Is it a SSSI, for example, or a Scheduled Monument.
- Define your building in terms of its wider significance. Is it a nationally or internationally important place in terms of its heritage or what it offers to the visitor? Is it a county or regional landmark?
- Description of your location and setting
- A description of your church's historic and current **use** by the congregation and local community if applicable
- Encapsulated summary of your building's history including architects, craftsmen etc
- Significant events or personalities associated with the church or churchyard
- Source a Ground Plan
- List the dimensions of the church.

- Describe the materials used for building i.e. identify the kind of stone or roofing materials featured
- A general description of your building as it is today
- A description of your churchyard and any significant monuments within its boundary. Any buildings, flora or fauna associated with it
- Consider the following and make a summary of each if they have significance
  - Altar ~ Reredos ~ Pulpit ~ Lectern ~ Font ~ Stained Glass ~ Wall Paintings ~ Pews and pew platforms ~ Monuments (internal and external) ~ Bells and Frame ~ Organ ~ Plate (noting where they are currently kept) ~ Registers (noting details of what exists and where they are kept) ~ other woodwork or metalwork ~ Communion Rails ~ War Memorials.

## **PART TWO**

This important part of the Statement depends on the kind of work you are proposing to carry out. You will need to write a summary appropriate to each application that assesses **the impact that the particular change will make to the fabric of the building.**

For example, the impact of the replacement of a stained glass window will be different from that necessitated by re-ordering to accommodate toilet or kitchen facilities.

Part Two will be added to Part One when application for Faculty is made and will be unique to that application.

## Part Three:

### Useful Resources for Researching a Statement of Significance

- **Determine your listing**

By accessing the 'Images of England' site at

<http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/>

and searching for your church. This is a national archive driven by English Heritage. All churches are featured if they are listed. There is also a good thumbnail sketch about the architectural merit of your building included. It is too academic to lift out and include in your SOS but it's a good start and will answer some questions you may have about your building. If your listing appears to be at odds with what you already assumed do check with EH.

- **Conservation Areas and Archaeological significance**

The following has details of where conservation areas are in **Warwickshire**. It also has plans of where new areas are being established. You may not be aware that your church is in a conservation area so it is worth checking.

<http://www.stratford-dc.gov.uk/Web/corporate/pages.nsf/Links/2662CAB6C1C42B9080256CAF0058EA6F>

In **Coventry** the following takes you to the details of where the 15 sites in the Coventry area are:

<http://www.coventry.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/environment/land-and-premises/conservation-and-archaeology/conservation-areas/?jsessionid=a1XhTzzqTcK9>

In terms of finding out about **Archaeology in Coventry** contact the Planning Archaeologist, currently Chris Patrick, on 024 76831271 and he can answer enquiries. In Warwickshire go to:

<http://timetrail.warwickshire.gov.uk/default.aspx>

To search for your building or you can make an appointment by contacting **Museum Field Services** at: Warwickshire Historical Environment Record, Museum Field Services, The Butts, Warwick, CV34 4SS. Telephone: 01926 412734

Your **churchyard** may also be an SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) in terms of its botanical specimens. This can also be checked with Warwickshire CC. They have audited most churchyards in our county and we have a list of any unusual species here in the office also.

The following link takes you to **Caring for God's Acre**, a site with lots of practical help for those needing to know more about their churchyard.

<http://www.caringforgodsacre.co.uk/>

- **Sourcing A Ground Plan**

The availability of this depends on the age of your building to a degree. The County Victorian History resources, which are found on-line, have some ground plans included in the material. You can find it through British History On-Line. This is free to register as a user and you can build up your own bookshelf of resources specific to your church.

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/Default.aspx>

Church Plans on line also have a limited collection. When searching remember that our churches used to be in the historic Diocese of Worcester.

<http://www.churchplansonline.org/>

The following link takes you to a site called the Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture – don't let this worry you! – it has a list of 73 Warwickshire Churches and lots contain plans.

<http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/crsbi/frwasites.html>

Failing all of these, approach your architect. He may have a ground plan that he has used in a recent Quinquennial Inspection (QI).

- **Describing the materials used**

Take tour around your site noting the different stone used in the building and in the churchyard. Summarise the kind of burial ground you currently manage highlighting the tombs or graves that are important in terms of age or notoriety of those buried there. If you have any personalities or characters, say so. The thumbnail referred to in the section referring to listing usually makes references to material used.

- **General resources to identify detail about your church building and its history**

Books exist that summarise your church's history and architectural merit. You may have to consult several sources to build up a picture. Pevsner is a good start but your church may not be considered significant enough for comment from him!

**The internet** will always be your first port of call if you are trying to find out anything about your church and village. Use the images option as well as this will help to broaden your search.

**The local records office** now holds all archived Diocesan Records and they can be found at Cape Road in Warwick.

<http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/Web/corporate/pages.nsf/Links/43D720C51D1CC89D80256A10003CC441>

Your 'Local History Society' will, no doubt, have a membership that includes people who aren't churchgoers who, nonetheless, have an interest in your church building and its history. They may already have collated invaluable information that could help with the research elements of writing the SOS.

**Your library** will have a Local Studies section and this may help.

**Your architect** may be able to provide you with archived material about your church, especially where improvements or changes have been made in the past.

**Divine Inspiration** has some resources in the office that they are happy to share at any time. We can also undertake more in-depth research on your behalf if you have reached a dead end! Do call us to see if we can help.

Here is our limited library as it stands at present:

*The Buildings of England – Warwickshire Pevsner/Wedgewood*  
*Old Warwickshire Churches – Hobart Bird*  
*The Church Bells of Warwickshire - Tilley/Walters*  
*Church Plate of Warwickshire – Jeavons*  
*Churches of Warwickshire (Vol.1) Old Warwick Deanery – 1847!*  
*Parish Churches of Warwickshire – Salter*

- **Photographic resources can be found at the following:**

<http://www.windowsonwarwickshire.org.uk/default.asp> for historic Warwickshire

<http://www.picturesofcoventry.co.uk/index.php> for historic Coventry

<http://www.stevebulman.f9.co.uk/churches/warks.html> Current Warwickshire

Be sure to get permission before reproducing images.

The information contained in this document has been produced in collaboration with the Secretary to the Diocesan Advisory Committee, Dr Claire Strachan. She is available on 024 7652 1327

*If you would like help or support with any of the issues highlighted here please contact Divine Inspiration on 024 7652 1346 or by e-mail on [helen.mcgowan@divine-inspiration.org.uk](mailto:helen.mcgowan@divine-inspiration.org.uk).*

*The full Toolkit can be downloaded from the Ambassador page of the website Go to [www.divine-inspiration.org.uk](http://www.divine-inspiration.org.uk) for more information and advice to help you improve your church's welcome to visitors.*

*Divine Inspiration gratefully acknowledges financial support from the following:*



**The N C Bellefontaine Charitable Trust**

**Last Updated July 2009**



# Toolkit 6:

## Unlock the story of your church – on-line!

There are many ways to tell your church's story but you have to get your facts right. The following pages have some links to web-pages that may help you to share your stories more effectively. There are photographic resources, history pages and sites specific to churchyards all accessible from the internet in your home.

### **British History on-Line**

This is your first port of call as a church detective. The history of your church, from its earliest origins, is likely to be featured here. Put your village or town name in the search box. Warwickshire is featured in the on-line Victoria County History.

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/>

### **Images of England**

Another EH supported site which has a free photo library. Just register as a user for no charge. All listed buildings throughout the country are on this and most featured churches have an historic summary attached. <http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/>

### **Windows on Warwickshire – and Coventry**

A Warwickshire specific library available at the county records office as well as on-line from your home. The Coventry Central Library hold a Coventry photo library that can be accessed from your PC.

<http://www.windowsonwarwickshire.org.uk/default.asp> - Warwickshire

<http://www.picturesofcoventry.co.uk/index.php> - Coventry

### **Church Plans on line**

Some but not all. An archive of church architectural plans which may help with accessing a footprint of your church. Footprints are sometimes a feature of the Victoria County History files also – see above. <http://www.churchplansonline.org/>

### **Local Warwickshire records – via WCC**

This link helps you to locate Diocesan and church archives

<http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/Web/corporate/pages.nsf/Links/380FA0BC9ED2E20080256BC6003DFDF1>

### **Prayer Resources**

Many people who visit your place will be curious about the way we worship and may know nothing about Christianity or how it has grown. This story can be told using resources you may put together yourself or you might like to look at the Lifewords series. An excellent booklet called 'Look Around You' explains the basics that can be found in any church and the prayer postcards, designed for heritage buildings, help those looking for direction.

[http://www.sgmlifewords.com/uk/orders/index.php?main\\_page=index&cPath=4](http://www.sgmlifewords.com/uk/orders/index.php?main_page=index&cPath=4)

### **War Memorials**

These are full of human interest stories that can be researched and shared with those who visit your places. A simple list can unlock all kinds of community history stories. How the World Wars impacted on any community is a good project especially for younger churches. It can also link in with the Curriculum at Key stages 2 and 3. The following website is a database managed by volunteers and may not have your memorial. You can add the details of the memorial yourself to the database if it isn't there and this will be a start. [www.ukniwm.org.uk](http://www.ukniwm.org.uk)

## Churchyard Specific

If you have a churchyard it will afford you plenty of opportunity to find and tell stories. Births, marriages and deaths will always be fascinating and the lives of ordinary people are just as interesting as notables! It is a place where the sacred and secular meet.

- **The Good Gravestone Recording Pack** by Helen Swift has been prepared to help you understand graveyards and their monuments. The pack contains everything you need to record your graveyards, the stones and the people they commemorate and links to the growing interest in genealogy. The pack contains information about the various symbolism found on gravestones and what they mean and it will help you to record the condition of the monuments and draw plans of the churchyard.

The Good Gravestone Recording Pack is not downloadable but available at a cost of £5-00. Send to Helen Swift, 9 Upper Valley Road, Sheffield S8 9HA. It is well worth it!

- **'Caring for God's Acre'** The wildlife, ecology and seasonal changes in your churchyard will be fascinating to visitors and communities. Many churches are using their outside spaces to tell stories and share knowledge. There is huge potential for working with your wider community or with local schools to explore and learn about the natural world.

'Caring for God's Acre' is an independent charity providing resources and support to help church groups to understand their space better. An example of what they produce is included in the pack but do explore their website. There are some excellent tips on how to share your churchyard with children and young people on the resources page.

<http://www.caringforgodsacre.co.uk/>

The 'Parish Pump' newsletter is published by the Conservation Foundation and includes, among other things, details of the Yew Registration Project. Many churches across our Diocese now use their spaces as centres for recycling and there are stories to be told about creation and stewardship that could link in with this activity.

[http://www.conservationfoundation.co.uk/?page\\_id=3](http://www.conservationfoundation.co.uk/?page_id=3)

**NOTE:** If you have problems with accessing any of the above sites call 024 7652 1346 for help. A small library of resources in the office may be of use and we can undertake basic research on your behalf with notice.

*If you would like help or support with any of the issues highlighted here please contact Divine Inspiration on 024 7652 1346 or by e-mail on [helen.mcgowan@divine-inspiration.org.uk](mailto:helen.mcgowan@divine-inspiration.org.uk).*

*The full Toolkit can be downloaded from the Ambassador page of the website*

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## Toolkit 7 :

# Church and School ~ Working Together

Inviting school children into our church buildings to share our story is a positive move. Younger people, who may not have hands-on experience of heritage buildings before will often be overwhelmed by the 'wow factor' that your church can offer and a school visit can be a rewarding exercise for everyone involved – children, teachers, helpers, parents and church volunteers all benefit in the short and longer term.



Our church buildings offer huge potential to schools in terms of resources and space. Churches are generally safe places to work and explore, and churchyards in particular are open spaces but well defined and secure.

While RE might be an obvious topic there are other subjects our churches can offer for learning. History, Geography, English, Citizenship, Art and Design, Maths and Science are just a few of the options. More detail of that later in this action guide.

Teachers like the idea of 'Learning outside the Classroom' and offering their pupils a different teaching environment. In the present economy, making trips to places of interest on the doorstep can seem like a better option. The most expensive costs associated with school trips tend to be travel and entrance fees, both of which can be taken out of the equation if the school making the visit is only a walking distance away and the church doesn't make a charge for entry!



'Divine Inspiration' has real experience of developing partnerships between church and school and the content of this action guide draws from what we learnt in 2010 through our inclusion as a Landmark project for the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment's 'Engaging Places' initiative. The benefits to all – the school, the church, the children and, subsequently, their families - were immeasurable. Many children we worked with subsequently took their families to visit the churches we introduced them to with confidence, knowing that they would be welcomed warmly and that their visit would be unconditional.

Good preparation made to welcome school groups into your building will reap rewards and this action guide aims to take you through the practical issues you need to consider and introduce you to some creative ideas for sharing your space.

## Working out your 'offer'

Ask yourselves some simple questions:

- Do we have a nominated person in our congregation – who may or may not have experience in dealing with young children but who is CRB cleared – who is willing to act as a facilitator between church and school?
- What stories have we got to share with young people? See Ideas for Learning later in this document.
- Is it our building or our churchyard that may be most useful and valuable to a teacher as a learning resource?
- What facilities can we offer that the visitors will need? Toilet facilities, parking, disabled access? If school is next door are these things crucial?
- How many children can we safely accommodate at a time?
- Is our Health and Safety Policy and the Diocesan Safeguarding Policy easy to share electronically? Do we know and understand these documents and what they mean?

## Making the Offer

Once you have these things down on paper you can make an approach to your local school. They may already make regular visits to your building and the children may already be familiar with the church, the vicar and the way you do things but if this 'relationship' doesn't exist invite the teachers into the building so they can see for themselves the potential that you have for sharing your space and resources.



Teachers in Key Stages 1 and 2 – that's Infant and Junior in old money! – will plan their classroom activity well in advance, so don't expect a visit to take place immediately.

Have ideas ready for a teacher to look at to get the ball rolling. If you spend some time looking at your building with fresh eyes you'll see all kinds of possibilities. Teachers will see opportunities also so this is where your partnership working really begins. Teachers will be looking for 'cross curricular' value in what ever they decide to deliver, so building data collection, for example, into activities will add value to whatever they decide to focus on.

# Ideas for Learning

Your church affords opportunities to explore many topics. Try not to be too prescriptive – the school may make one visit or even several visits over the school year, and your role will be in accommodating whatever the school and teacher decide is appropriate for them.

- **Geography and Mapping** - Your churches place in the landscape, its local history and the built environment around it.
- **Science and Data Collection** - Your churchyard has a diversity of wildlife to explore and collate. The churchyard species could be mapped and the details turned into a resource for visitors to use.
- **Maths** - The memorials inside and outside the building will give a teacher plenty of opportunities to explore maths topics using dates and ages.
- **History** - Encourage the children to be church detectives, following clues, noticing the symbols and observing the use of materials and styles of architecture. Preparation of timelines can be an activity to illustrate this.
- **Citizenship** – Simple activities for very young children based on caring for old and precious things e.g cleaning brasses or dusting. Older children may debate why the church building is such an important place to the community, why it is still functioning as a place of worship and what it means to those who worship.
- **IT** – Developing a map or trail for visitors to use. Collecting data and turning this, through the use of computer software, into a useful tool for navigation or a record of the history of the church.
- **Creative Writing** – Allowing the children to explore the sensory elements of your building, what it feels like, smells like, how the light works in the church in the stained glass, the feel of the materials. Churches can be catalysts for emotional responses.
- **Story Telling** – exploring the stories in the stones and memorials. What kinds of people worshipped here? The important and the ordinary, the rich and the poor. How did the war affect the community? Are there any interesting events that are recorded in church?
- **Art and Design** – the use of patterns and shapes in the building and in the furnishings. How is design linked to function. If you were designing a church now what might you do differently!



## Preparing for the visit

Make sure that the building is tidy, safe and that you are clear about agreed protocol for dealing with emergencies on site. The school will almost certainly provide all the required assistance in terms of staff and supervision of the children.

Welcome the children and introduce, in simple terms, the story of the church and some of its history. Make sure that the person who does this is engaging and isn't tempted to use too many dates, especially if the children are very young. Don't presume that a child will be interested in the things you are interested in! Many will not have visited a church before and will have no clue, unless they have had preparation in the classroom, about your building and what it's for. Make sure that you know how much the children have been told about their visit to your church beforehand. You could also offer to visit the children in their classroom beforehand to answer any questions they or their teacher might have about their visit to your church.

Be encouraging and allow the children freedom to explore. This may mean removing some things that could be accidentally damaged. If you plan to take photographs that include children make sure you have permission from the class-teacher. School data collection would normally cover this but ask to be certain.

## Links to Resources

Divine Inspiration is very happy to help you with any planning for developing a relationship between your church and a local school. We can help you to develop resources and activities and can share our experiences to date. The following are some links and details of books that will assist you as you explore this area of work.

Diocese of Coventry Safeguarding Link <http://www.coventry.anglican.org/admin/safeguarding/>

Writing a risk assessment for your site – top tips from the Health and Safety Executive  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/fivesteps.htm>

**'Exploring Churches'** – a resource for schools and churches to plan activity for visits. Available from the Churches Conservation Trust ISBN 1-903649-14-5

**'Be a Church Detective' – a childrens guide to old churches.** Clive Fewins. Canterbury Press ISBN 1-85311-628-9

*If you would like help or support with any of the issues highlighted here please contact Divine Inspiration by e-mail to [helen.mcgowan@divine-inspiration.org.uk](mailto:helen.mcgowan@divine-inspiration.org.uk) or tel. 024 7652 1346*

*The full Toolkit can be downloaded from the Ambassador page of the website.  
Go to [www.divine-inspiration.org.uk](http://www.divine-inspiration.org.uk) for more advice to help you improve your church's welcome.*





## TOOLKIT 8: Sources of funding for Church projects

There is likely to be a time when you need to get your hands on serious money to help with the costs of repairing, improving or maintaining your church building. You may also be looking for funds for community work or social outreach.

The general rule of thumb is to spend time researching those funders who have a specific priority of giving before sending out any applications. For example, the Church Urban Fund will not give money to repair your roof, and conversely English Heritage will not be interested in funding work with the homeless. Being strategic about your approach from the outset will help you to target those funders who will be most sympathetic to your project.

We are able to help you with your individual project's funding needs in various ways. We can assist you in writing a project plan and complement this with a funding strategy. Do get in touch with us if you need guidance and support or just need us to check any documentation. We are here to help!

We have access to the Trustfunding database here at the office and are always happy to perform funding searches on your behalf. This database contains information about thousands of funders and grant-making bodies in the United Kingdom and allows you to make detailed searches for funders who are likely to support your project. The information is centrally updated so very current and accurate.

This list of funders is not exhaustive but is designed to signpost you to those who we know to have a history of funding church projects and initiatives. This list will be revisited and updated at regular intervals to ensure that the information given and links provided are as accurate as we can make them.

### **1. FUNDING FOR REPAIRS**

#### **English Heritage**

Grants are available for the repair and conservation of significant historic buildings, monuments and designed landscapes. These are mainly offered for urgent, high-level repairs or other work required within two years to prevent loss or damage to important architectural, archaeological or landscape features.

They can also grant aid project development work which can involve the preparation of specialist reports and studies, as a basis for repair or future management. Applications are signed off by the Archdeacon and are sifted by EH regionally. Funding is normally given as a contribution so finding match funding is an important part of the process as well as preparation of sound maintenance plans.

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/funding/grants/grants-available/rgpow/>

### **Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme**

Enables listed places of worship to claim back the VAT (at 20% from 4 January 2011) on all repair and maintenance costs to the building. The rules change according to the political climate and visiting the site will give you an up to date picture of what they are currently allowing churches to claim against.

<http://www.lpwscheme.org.uk/msg2.htm>

### **Garfield Weston Foundation**

This is a grant-giving charity for UK registered charities. It will also consider applications from a limited number of exempt organisations - churches, educational establishments, hospitals and housing corporations. Churches have success with this funder for repairs and also to help with making changes to their church to accommodate wider use.

<http://www.garfieldweston.org/>

### **The Glaziers Company**

Makes grants to churches and other public buildings exclusively for the restoration and conservation of historic and important stained glass.

<http://www.worshipfulglaziers.com/grants-17.htm>

### **AllChurches Trust**

This trust derives its income from the Ecclesiastical Insurance Company. It awards grants to Churches, Church establishments, religious charities and charities preserving UK heritage.

<http://www.allchurches.co.uk/>

### **National Churches Trust**

Offers grants towards structural repair projects and re-ordering schemes for churches

<http://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/howgrant.html>

### **Warwickshire & Coventry Historic Churches Trust**

Grants for repairs to churches in Warwickshire and Coventry

[http://www.warwickshirechurches.org.uk/How\\_can\\_we\\_help.html](http://www.warwickshirechurches.org.uk/How_can_we_help.html)

## **2. FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY OUTREACH/SOCIAL ENTERPRISE**

### **Church & Community Fund (CCF)**

The Church and Community Fund (CCF) encourages the church to engage with their local communities by funding effective and innovative community outreach projects. It awards grants to community projects run by local Anglican Churches in England or other organisations working in close partnership with the Church of England on the ground.

<http://www.ccfund.org.uk/smartweb/about-us/the-ccf>

### **Church Urban Fund**

This fund targets the poorest 10% of communities in England, working in rural as well as urban areas. By listening to and working with those who know and understand their communities best, the fund ensures that grants go where they are most needed. Under the small Mustard Seed grants programme, money reaches projects within one month of the request, supporting projects at an early

stage and funding 'core costs' like salaries. It also builds bridges between churches in wealthier settings and those in more deprived areas through prayer and sharing resources and experiences. Applications are made through the Diocesan Link Officer -contact details are on their website.

<http://www.cuf.org.uk/about>

### **Heart of England Community Foundation**

Offer a range of different funds to support a wide range of things – project costs, events, materials, equipment, trips and outings – but all proposed activity must show wider community benefit.

<http://www.heartofenglandcf.co.uk/index.php/grant/applying-for-grants/>

### **Heritage Lottery Fund**

HLF offer schemes to community groups that aim to share their heritage more widely. They like to see real volunteer involvement and innovative ways of telling stories and conserving diverse heritage for a wide audience to experience and enjoy. Churches have success with HLF in many ways – help with display material or research, oral history projects, story telling both in the church and in the churchyard.

<http://www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/programmes>

### **Landfill Communities Fund**

A landfill tax was introduced in 1996 to reduce the amount of land-filled waste and to promote a shift to more environmentally sustainable methods of waste management. LCF is a tax credit scheme to enable operators of landfill sites to contribute money to projects that meet environmental objectives. To see which funds you might be eligible for you need to go to the ENTRUST website and search the Warwickshire/West Midlands areas. A list of Distributive Environmental Bodies (DEBs) will show you who currently operates in our area and you use your post code or grid reference to test your eligibility.

You can find your church postcode and grid reference by going to <http://gridreferencefinder.com>

<http://www.entrust.org.uk/home/lcf>

### **Awards for All**

This is a Lottery grants scheme funding small, local community-based projects in the UK. The form is simple and the turn around time very quick and currently awards up to £10,000.

<http://www.awardsforall.org.uk/england/>

### **Trusthouse Charitable Foundation**

Gives grants for running costs or one-off capital costs to charities and not-for-profit organisations, concentrating on projects that address rural issues and urban deprivation.

<http://www.trusthousecharitablefoundation.org.uk/what.html>

### **Warwickshire Leader**

Funds projects in some areas of Warwickshire that broadly promote community 'togetherness' in line with three themes:

- Community Growing Projects
- Community Arts and Events Projects
- Projects linking villages and rural land based industries (farming, forestry etc.)

<http://www.warwickshireleader.net/>

### 3. SEARCHABLE ONLINE DATABASES

#### Funding for Historic Buildings

Searchable database of funds available for repair or renovation of historic buildings

<http://www.ffhb.org.uk/index.php>

#### Funding for Community Buildings

<http://www.nea.org.uk/assets/Publications/COMMUNITY-BUILDINGS-FUNDING-9-September-2010.PDF>

#### Heritage Link

A comprehensive guide to sources of funding for heritage projects, including central and local government, trusts and other grant making bodies with a heritage remit.

<http://www.heritagelink.org.uk/fundingdirectory/main/fundinghome.php>

#### Shrinking the Footprint

List of grant making bodies which specifically support carbon reduction projects

[http://www.shrinkingthefootprint.org.uk/misc\\_lib/27.pdf](http://www.shrinkingthefootprint.org.uk/misc_lib/27.pdf)

#### Warwickshire Rural Community Council

By aiding locally led and run projects, WRCC aims to develop sustainable and self reliant rural communities. They offer advice, information and grant support to help start projects in the rural community.

<http://www.ruralwarwickshire.org.uk/grants-funding>

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*If you would like help or support with any of the issues highlighted here please contact Divine Inspiration by e-mail to [helen.mcgowan@divine-inspiration.org.uk](mailto:helen.mcgowan@divine-inspiration.org.uk) tel. 024 7652 1346  
[amanda.ross@divine-inspiration.org.uk](mailto:amanda.ross@divine-inspiration.org.uk) tel. 024 7652 1306*

*The full Toolkit can be downloaded from the Resources page of the website  
Go to [www.divine-inspiration.org.uk](http://www.divine-inspiration.org.uk) for more information and advice to help you improve your church's welcome.*

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## Toolkit 9: Understanding and Sharing your Churchyard



The majority of church buildings have some green space attached to them. Sometimes, and most particularly in urban areas, the churchyard may be the only green 'breathing' space in a bustling locality. There are so many ways in which the churchyard can serve its community.

Many centuries ago, before gravestones were erected to mark burial plots, the churchyard was a very different place to the one we recognise now. It was most definitely a place where the sacred and secular met. The North side of the churchyard was sometimes un-consecrated and this allowed for sports and markets and informal activity – a place where the community socialised and congregated.

These days many visitors to our churches don't venture as far as the church door so an encounter with the churchyard may be the only contact they have with the church itself. Many visitors will be tending graves or leaving flowers – for them the churchyard is a particularly personal place to be and they feel connected to the churchyard as burial ground. The space has a particular personal resonance for them as a safe haven and a resting place.

Other visitors will be looking for different things. They may be researching their family history so burials of ancestors may have brought them to your church. They may be interested in wildlife or they may simply be looking for a place to sit and enjoy the surroundings, the stillness and peace that most churchyards can offer.

For the church community the act of sharing the space is a simple way of connecting with strangers or visitors. It is an opportunity to be hospitable, to share information, to be inviting, to engage with the community through projects and to be creative in inviting others to learn more about the church, its history and role in the community over the centuries.

### **Recording the Stones**

Graveyards and burial grounds are useful places for those researching their family history and it isn't always easy to interpret the wording or inscriptions on gravestones and memorials. Neither is it always possible to inspect historic registers at churches – visitors may have to be signposted to the local Records Office at Cape Road – so many congregations are surveying their churchyard in order to provide visitors with really useful information. Once the results have been mapped and collated the document can be left on the visitor table or put on your church's website as a downloadable resource.



This exercise will also help you to highlight stories of those who have lived and worked in your community and will put flesh on the bones of any story-telling you undertake when you share the story of how your church and parish have evolved and grown over the centuries.

Carrying out a research project like this can involve the whole community and encourage those who have never visited your church before to come along and take part. Talk to your Local History Society and ask them if they would be willing to help with this.

'British Genealogy' has a [useful website](#) taking you through the process of planning for and organising a survey of your churchyard.

Do take care when investigating the stones themselves by following the guidelines on the [Churchcare](#) site.

If in doubt ask your DAC Secretary for advice and, as a rule, take care not to disturb habitat as this could be destructive to wildlife.

'The Good Gravestone Recording Pack' from the Churches Conservation Trust is also recommended but not available to download. You can order it for £5 from [here](#).

Even if your church is closed to visitors during the week you could display a graveyard plan on the noticeboard or in the porch.

### ***Encouraging Biodiversity in the Churchyard***



Not all parishes have a true picture of the biodiversity hidden away in their churchyards. There are native species of plants and wildlife that thrive specifically in these places and many will have been growing or living undisturbed for many years.

'Caring for God's Acre' – a Diocese of Hereford initiative - has been helping parishes to understand and share their churchyards. The wildlife, ecology and seasonal changes in your churchyard will appeal to visitors and communities throughout the year and you'll find tips on how to manage yours and share it with others on the resources page of their [website](#).

Surveying the ground and recording what can be seen at different times of the year will help you to understand the extent of the biodiversity you have in your care as well as highlighting areas where you might improve.

Since 2004 Warwickshire County Council have been raising awareness of the importance, rarity and fragility of the biodiversity within churchyards and are aiming to overcome a perception of untidiness and disrespect. You can see how this is progressing [here](#).

### ***Establishing a wild-life garden***

Many congregations have come to realise the value of reserving an area of their churchyard as a wildlife garden. Some are still resistant to this as it can look neglected and ill-cared for. A successful wildlife area needs careful management and a mowing regime has to be established. Committing to a space for wild-life in your churchyard will encourage all kinds of species to make a home.

Many parishes still aspire to and enjoy the sight of a beautifully manicured churchyard– and relatives still need easy access to leave flowers or to tend the plot – but most churchyards can find a dedicated place for encouraging varied species to thrive throughout the year.

Even if your church building is closed to visitors outside of worship times you might consider using the porch as a place to display information about the species that can be found in the churchyard to help with identification. Using a time-line will also help to explain the seasonal nature of the plants and flowers to be found there.



### ***The Birds and the Bees***

Over the last 70 years many kinds of bees have become scarce. To help slow this decline you could grow particular species of plants in the churchyard that flower successively throughout the season, like berberis, bluebell, rosemary, lavender and buddleia. A useful book to invest in to help with this would be 'Wildlife in Church and Churchyard' by Nigel Cooper ISBN 0-7151-7587-4 £9.95.

To encourage a wider range of birds to the churchyard you might think about introducing bird boxes and planting particular shrubs that provide shelter and food.

### ***Lichens***

Good churchyards may have up to 100 different lichens living on the trees and the stonework found in the churchyard. When studied through a powerful magnifying glass they are fascinating and very beautiful.

[The British Lichen Society](#) have lots of tools for recording and identifying lichens as do the [Natural History Museum](#)

### ***Community Projects***



Your local Wildlife Trust will have a Community Project Officers and they can support you as you develop ideas to share your churchyard with others. They may come along and help you with a Churchyard Discovery Day or plan a diversity survey that your entire community can participate in. In Warwickshire you can go the local [Wildlife Trust](#) website.

Churches we have worked with over the years report a real benefit in holding a 'Churchyard Discovery Day' where people of all ages have come together to make and install bird or bat boxes and carry out surveys. 'Caring for God's Acre' again have excellent resources to help you to plan activities for children and young people. Contact local branches of the RSPB or the [Conservation Volunteer network](#) to identify locals with real knowledge who may be able to help you to organise a community project.

## ***Good Examples in our Diocese***

You might like to visit the following churchyards to see how they are managing their wildlife.

St Mary, Oldberrow is an excellent example and a Site of Special Scientific Significance.

St Mary, Alderminster has offered Churchyard Discovery Days for their community and have bird and bat boxes in their churchyard as do The Nativity of the BVM at Studley.

St Leonard, Birdingbury has carried out a graveyard survey, as have St John Baptist, Berkswell and an excellent graveyard map can be seen in the porch at St John Baptist, Brinklow.

Holy Trinity, Norton Lindsey has done extensive work researching their community history and have good resources in church to help visitors to explore the local area.

## ***Useful Links and Resources***

[The Conservation Foundation](#) website includes, among other things, details of the Yew Registration Project. The Foundation aims to encourage us all to be more aware of national initiatives and resources.

[Shrinking the Footprint](#) The Church of England's very own website focussing on environmental issues encouraging us to look at ways in which we all – as individuals and as church communities – can measure our carbon footprint and, more importantly, take action.

[Cherishing your Churchyard](#) is an initiative that takes place every June through the Caring for God's Acre project

*If you would like help or support with any of the issues highlighted here please contact Divine Inspiration by e-mail to [helen.mcgowan@divine-inspiration.org.uk](mailto:helen.mcgowan@divine-inspiration.org.uk) or tel. 024 7652 1346 or [amanda.ross@divine-inspiration.org.uk](mailto:amanda.ross@divine-inspiration.org.uk), tel. 024 7652 1306*

*The full Toolkit can be downloaded from the Resources page of the website  
Go to [www.divine-inspiration.org.uk](http://www.divine-inspiration.org.uk) for more information and advice to help you improve your church's welcome to visitors.*

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