## Further Information & Ideas

**Book:**

**How Village Churches Thrive** (Church House Publishing, 2022). With ten chapters, this accessible read gives useful guidance and case studies.

**Leaflet:**

**Look Around You** This small booklet explains various aspects of the church building. Further copies can be ordered via the link https://www.cpo.org.uk/lookaroundyou  or are freely available through the mission team in the College of St Hugh.

**Websites:**

**Divine Inspiration Toolkit**: A Diocese of Coventry resource funded by Historic England some years ago but still very useful. s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/arcentre/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/08094544/Divine-Inspiration-Toolkit___full-1.pdf

**A Way to Welcome by** Diocese of Truro: This toolkit helps parishes to assess how the church building can be made more welcoming. trurodiocese.org.uk/resources/parish-facing-support/welcome/a-way-to-welcome

*All Age Worship Prayer Stations** Ideas for different seasons can be found at: www.allageworshipresources.org/category/prayer-stations/

*Caring for God's Acre** www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk. This project has lots of resources to help make churchyards visitor friendly and more biodiverse.

**Courses:**

The Methodist Church **First Impressions** This resource gives you everything you need to run workshop sessions on quality welcome. www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/guidance-for-churches/welcome-and-invitation/first-impressions-count/

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# Open & Welcome

Church buildings are sacraments in stone, proclaiming the Gospel message 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Opening the door and offering a warm welcome can help others to come closer to God and to discover the treasure trove of heritage buildings in our care. With some careful thought and a few tweaks of low or no cost, many churches can daily be open and welcome to neighbour, tourist and pilgrim.

First impressions count! Have a look at the church from the road. If you were visiting for the first time, what would make you want to go in? Is the church well cared for? Is it clear which door to use? Do the grounds look inviting?

Inside the church should be clean, tidy and clutter free. Have a welcome table with visitor book, information about the church and children's materials. Encourage people to potter, ponder and pray. Let people know where the nearest toilets are.

Try to keep regular opening hours. If the door is stiff to open, have a notice explaining any quirks. If the door is locked, can a key be obtained close by?

Keep your noticeboards up to date, with details of services, key contacts and events. Ideally, have the name of the parish and the dedication of the church on the noticeboard too.

Can you offer simple refreshments? Have fresh water, cordial, tea bags, coffee, wrapped biscuits and a kettle available. Maybe a dog bowl in the porch?

Have a quiet reflection space. Offer prayer resources: candles, prayer cards, prayer station* and let people know when prayers will be offered. Make a Bible available.

Interpretation of the church can be a simple A4 sheet folded in three with ten things to see. Explain what key items are such as the altar, font, pulpit and lectern and how they are used.

Develop a churchyard God's Acre*, explain why the grass is long and highlight what flora and fauna it supports. Help people to pause and delight in God's creation.

It is likely that most visitors will look at your online and social media presence before they come to visit physically. Keep all online content up to date with an explicit welcome and details of how to find the church including map, postcode and 'What 3 Words'.

Worried that opening the church door is a security risk? In fact an open church is less of a risk as people are more likely to pop in. Make sure valuables are locked away, that the tower door is locked and have a conversation with your Archdeacon and your insurers first.