

St Anne's, Buxton - Welcomer's meeting – 13th September 2023,

1. Welcome and opening prayer – Fr Gerry (Hebrews 13:2)

2. Welcoming/stewarding – what's it like?

General discussion with regard to welcoming and getting to know regular parishioners and their names. Being greeted with a smile and being spoken to. It encourages people to return. Inviting people personally to coffee after mass. Makes you feel good! Rewarding. Good to get to know people.

3. How important is the Ministry of Welcome/Hospitality?

Thom S Rainer survey of people to find out why they did not return to a particular church and why they did return.

4. What causes us problems?

Sometimes it's difficult to identify visitors

Running out of newsletters

- increase number of newsletters to 120 (MS)
- put PDF of newsletter on homepage (RA)

Lots of people arriving at the same time

Welcomers/stewards arriving late

Tidying up - can the welcomers tidy up after mass – newsletters/hymn books etc

Toilets:

- There is an outside toilet which is located at the side of the garage (near to Fr Gerry's back door). The key is hung up in the church porch (up high behind the main door) NB Not accessible for wheelchair users
- There is a toilet through the sacristy, in the 'flower room' NB Not accessible for wheelchair users
- Parish Centre toilets – There is an accessible toilet for wheelchair users. Key code for the Centre door is: 33567

5. How can we help to improve our welcome?

a. Arrival/departure time: it was agreed that welcomers should arrive no later than 9:40am. Welcomers should also be at the back of the church when people are leaving (invite to coffee morning?). They should also stay behind after mass to help clear up.

b. Badges: It was discussed and agreed that welcomers will wear a badge displaying their name. (FrG/MS)

c. Visitors/newcomers: sometimes it is difficult to identify visitors/newcomers, we need to be tactful just in case they are regulars and we don't recognise them! Greet them, introduce yourself and listen to what they have to say; they will probably tell you if they're visiting or new to the parish. Visitors often arrive early so there is more of an opportunity to engage with them. Highlight the visitor envelopes in the pews that has useful information on. Suggestions also included a 'welcome' notice was suggested in the porch area (near the sanitiser) and visitor noticeboard at the back of church. (MS)

d. Holy Communion stewarding – effective. Sometimes visitors are unsure what to do – Fr Gerry to announce what to do (it is written on the visitor envelopes)

It was agreed to start asking people to move immediately after Fr Gerry has said 'The Body and Blood of Christ'. Need to clarify with Fr G and Clare what will happen when the choir are singing at mass.

Invite anyone who is disabled/finds it difficult to walk to sit near to the front to make it easier for Communion.

e. Other ideas? Parking details on website/signs (MS/RA)

Roadside pulpit (FrG/RA)

6. Emergency training –

- Fire: at least 1 fire practice per year is required. Welcomers/stewards will be crucial in assisting people to leave the church and will therefore receive training. This will be arranged for a Sunday after mass. (FrG/TL/MS)
- First aid: identify first aiders/people who can assist if someone is taken ill/faints/has an accident etc. There is a first aid box and accident book in the area between the church and sacristy (under where the hymn numbers are stored) (MS)

7. Offertory procession

Welcomers to organise 2 people to take up the offertory procession. Please ensure that the gifts are taken up **before** the collection (and remember to tell those doing it!)

8. Questions?

Discussed the visitor envelopes – continue to use them and place on the pews. We have already had some Gift Aid donations from visitors and contact cards for new parishioners returned.

9. Closing prayer – Fr Gerry.

*“... and remember always to welcome strangers, for by doing this,
some people have entertained angels without knowing it.”
(Hebrews 13:2)*