

Called To Be Welcoming:

A response to the Quiet Revival

Jan 2026



There has been growing evidence of an increase in church attendance especially amongst the 18-30's age group. This has been widespread with many churches recording growing numbers. One's or twos are being noticed in lots of churches, some welcoming more; others a few less. Whatever the details this is happening and we need to be ready.

The Bible Society has produced a report with detailed statistics showing a generation becoming more spiritually hungry and looking to God and his church for answers.

The Quiet Revival

As a people called to welcome others in Jesus' name we need to be intentional and careful that we respond appropriately and prayerfully to everybody. And of course it is an integral part of our Diocesan Called Together strategy.

We need to ask ourselves would our church be ready to welcome new people if they came?

What would we have to do to make our church an easier place for people to just 'turn up' to?

Even though our churches can look very different from each other we all share the desire to help everyone come into a meaningful relationship with Jesus.

Every church in every style can find ways to welcome everyone. All our churches have something to learn.

There is no 'one-size fits all' solution or a quick fix; if you genuinely want your church to be a welcoming place for your community you will need to consciously plan for it, find ways to make it a reality and be prepared to learn from mistakes.

A church is made up of many parts and so to make this a reality it will need a team.

Clergy need to be fully supportive and involved. but they do not need to and cannot lead it all.

Involve people of a variety of ages and backgrounds as much as possible – they will have a good idea what will help engage them and their peers.

Please make sure you talk to your PSO before you make changes to make sure there are no safeguarding implications that have been missed.

Pray, discern what God is calling you to do as individuals and as church.

And please involve your Diocesan Team – we want to help, suggest solutions and to support you every step of the way.

Welcome

Some of those who arrive at the church door may be completely unfamiliar with church. They may be intimidated by a closed door and people they are not familiar with. Our role is to make them feel as comfortable and welcome as possible.

Have a group of 'Welcomers' (safely recruited) who can stand at doors to say hello and smile.

Be intentional as a group - talk about how you can create a welcoming space – what you can say, the best places to stand, outside a door as well as inside.

See each person who arrives as an individual, all different. Think – the person who looks at you probably wants someone to greet them but others might prefer to come in quietly.

Wait at the door for a while after the service has started, newcomers may not arrive on time. Visitors don't know the time of the services, may be avoiding too many interactions but may slip away if they are not sure of a welcome.

Saying hello and passing over a sheet, or a hymn book is only part of the role. Help them find somewhere to sit – maybe introduce them to a person to sit next to, possibly someone they may have something in common with – or sit with them yourself.

Whole Church

Welcoming people is everyone's responsibility, not just a few peoples. Explore ways that everyone can welcome newcomers.

Make sure there are seats left at the back so people can easily sit down – especially if they have arrived late

Be intentionally friendly – smile at anyone you don't know. Consider how to bridge cultural divides.

After the service, speak to someone new rather than those you already know. And do not neglect the familiar faces – some people can be in a church for a long time yet still feel they have no friends.

Work on offering a sense of community, deep relationships and a sense of belonging for all.

Some studies suggest that newcomers need to connect with six people within six months of joining a church for them to stay.

Faith

"People are looking for **fully caffeinated Christianity** – for "meaning, wonder, depth and challenge", as Glen Scrivener puts it. Let's be sure that is what we are offering. Staples such as confession, creed and communion all help us go deep, as does thoughtful preaching. But what about silence, stillness and

intercession; imagery, incense and imagination?"
James Lawrence Article

People are looking for authenticity. Let us be churches where difficult questions are welcomed and tough realities embraced, without offering solutions too quickly.

Our faith has difficult answers to difficult questions; allow people to find meaning, wonder and challenge.

The Finding Jesus report has some fascinating findings with the top ways adults found faith was from needing answers to hard questions, conversations with Christians and having a spiritual experience they could not easily explain. Report

"So, here's the call: preach the gospel as if eternity depends on it. Build communities that embody grace and truth. And give this generation the real thing: not a performance, but a person." Luke Hancom in Premier Article

Journeys

This generation has many questions – so much of faith is new to them. So it is important that we help them on this journey as a level they will engage with. Hope Explored and 3-2-1 courses can help people engage issues and big picture biblical narratives. Alpha courses are helpful but are not a solution to discipleship – they are part of the process.

How can we help them engage with the Bible? There has been a surge in Bible sales as people want to understand how it can impact their lives so think small groups, Bible courses, resources at the right level.

Individual mentoring, done safely, may be the answer for some. Intergenerational conversations with discipleship so that initial interest can grow into lasting faith.

And people who are searching are looking for answers in the Bible. Please have them available in a variety of styles. Could you bless seekers with a copy? One church had a donation particularly for that and another looks in charity shops.

And please have children's and youth Bibles on display – they need to know God's word is for everyone.

And if they are free to take – make it clear.

Sunday Worship Services

- Be intentional in your welcome of everyone. As much as possible from the front and in your communication make it clear that everyone is welcomed the way they are. The vast majority of this generation are unfamiliar with churches and so may worry unduly about what is expected. Put them at their ease at every opportunity.
- When you are leading a service think of how you say things – does it help those who are not familiar with your church feel comfortable? Watch 'How to frame' by Rachel Turner for some great thoughts you could adapt to your services.
<https://www.parentingforfaith.brf.org.uk/post/framing-in-a-church-service/>
- Have a simple, visual order of service available. Those unfamiliar with your services will not want to feel 'out of place'. Help them understand what is expected.
- As people start to worship with you consider offering them appropriate roles. Ask them to serve as part of teams such as AV, Welcoming, refreshments, reading in services. They

are part of your congregation and are more likely to stay that way if they are encouraged to serve alongside others. And visitors will recognise the value you place on them. Talk to us about the permission and checks needed to do this safely.

Connecting with your Community

Digitally: Does your website reflect who you are or where you would want to be? People will look at your website and facebook page.

- Check the images reflect your congregation in both age and diversity. (Ensure you have permission to use images)
- Bring it up to date – a church where nothing appears to have happened in 3 years will not be appealing.
- Where you have activities aimed at certain groups make sure they are easy to find. If people cannot easily find 'themselves' on a webpage they may give up. Ask a friend who doesn't attend a church to look for something on your site.
- Have a statement that explains how you welcome everyone.

Use Digital Spaces intentionally: Recognize digital platforms as entry points, guiding people from initial interest to deeper engagement.

Noticeboards:

- Much like the digital make sure the notice board is welcoming – use modern fonts, avoid jargon and have contact details obvious and accurate.

Church Communication

Aim to have regular contact with everyone who is part of your congregation. Be intentional about asking people to be on a mailing list so they are kept up-to date. You do not want events only to be for those who are 'in the know'. People are quick to feel excluded so counter that at every opportunity.

Be intentional in welcoming people to events. Newcomers may feel these events are not for them. So share dates well in advance (so diaries can be filled in plenty of time). Be clear if you need responses for events and share everything as widely as you can so no one feels excluded.

And be aware of GDPR but as long as they have said yes to communication – communicate (with a polite opt-out clause at the bottom); they will be expecting it. Do not be discouraged by a lack of reply just bless their inbox occasionally.

Church Structures

Often our churches are designed around the needs of the established members of the congregation. Consider how you could be more intentional in your welcome and discipling of everyone in your church

- Intentionally prioritise listening to the voices of those newer to church to ensure they are considered when decisions are made
- Be intentional about entrusting and empowering all generations, including teenagers and emerging adults, with roles and responsibilities. Based on research by the Fuller Institute

Article

Keeping younger people

There has been research on 'Helping Young People Discover and Love your Church' (Growing Young, Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, Brad Griffing, 2016, Baker Books) this is what they found:

- Churches that grow young have leaders (across the board) who demonstrate 'keychain leadership' i.e. aware of the keys they hold and are willing to entrust and empower young people with their own 'set of keys'.

These leaders are mature, real, warm, know what matters to people, trust and empower others and take the long view. This may not be appropriate initially but as people become established in a congregation make sure they are listened to, their ideas valued and seen as future leaders. They will know if you are holding tightly to power.

- Churches grow young by empathising, or feeling with, this generation of young people who wrestle with 'Who am I? Where do I fit? and What difference do I make?' Young people start questioning earlier and find answers later. Look at understanding their world and how they see your church.
- Take Jesus' message seriously; by this they mean that "understanding that faith is about more than behaviours or following rules." They suggest talking less about abstract beliefs and more talk about the person and work of Jesus. They also recommend helping young people use story language to describe God's work in the world rather than specific steps to salvation and finally talk less about heaven and more about life here and now.
- Fuel a warm community i.e. surround them with supportive, accepting and authentic community. Young people used the words 'welcoming, accepting, belonging, authentic, hospitable and caring'. 'Like family', a place

“where I can just be myself” were other phrases that were frequently heard as positives for a church to belong to. It was important for leaders and the whole church to be open about their own struggles and ‘mess’.

- Churches growing younger prioritize young people and families everywhere. When thinking about budget, strategy, worship planning, programming, community life, theology and all other aspects of church life they think about young people. It is the tangible, institutional commitment to allocate resources and attention across the life of a church.
- Be a church that is the best neighbour to its community. Younger people need to see the church living out Jesus’ command to love their neighbour. An attitude of ‘going out’, serving and accepting people no matter their background. That does not simply equate to acceptance; as Tim Keller said

‘All churches must understand love, and identify with their local community and social setting, and yet at the same time be able and willing to critique and challenge it.’

Please pray for those that God is calling to your church. Pray as a church, pray individually and find ways to help newcomers pray with you as well.

And do get in touch with your CYP team, we are here to support your mission and ministry with children, young people and young adults.

Laura Webster
Jen Coleman

laura.webster@rochester.anglican.org
jen.coleman@rochester.anglican.org