

THE WELCOMING CHURCH

a workshop for 'welcomers'

1) Why welcome & why 'Welcomers'?

The local church exists because of the 'welcome' God has extended to each of us. By definition, therefore, the local church ought to be known as a welcoming place. This means that **all members** of our congregations have an obligation to be welcoming toward visitors and newcomers.

However, we do have a **special ministry role** for those whom we call 'Welcomers'. These people occupy an important place in the ministry of our church, and perform a particularly important task.

Apart from handing out material necessary for church (Bibles, bulletins etc) they represent to everyone who walks in the door the **'face' of St Mark's & St David's**. This is an important role given that most visitors & newcomers will form first impressions of our church within the first few minutes of walking into the building. If we want people to come back, and to become 'members', we need to welcome them well.

2) What is it that 'Welcomers' do?

With these things in mind 'Welcomers' will typically undertake the following tasks:

1. Arrive at church **at least 20-30 minutes early** to set things up. These tasks will vary according to the particular congregation but they will ordinarily include:

- preparing bulletins & Bibles ready for handing out;
- tidying up if the entrance to the building needs it;
- prayer.

2. Maintain a **presence in the foyer** area just inside the entrance.

3. **Smile and greet** everyone who walks in the door, looking out for visitors & newcomers in particular.

4. If time permits, try to **engage** visitors & newcomers in conversation.

Tips for engaging people in conversation:

→ Introduce yourself, find out their name, and make sure you remember it! It really makes a difference to someone if you call them by their name later on.

→ Be yourself and show some interest in the person you are welcoming.

→ Ask if they have been to St Mark's or St David's before.

→ Ask if they are visiting as a 'one off' (perhaps they're in the area on holiday) or if they are looking for a church to join.

→ **Give them a welcome pack and briefly explain its contents.**

→ Depending on their familiarity with church you might want to explain what will happen during church (ie. we'll sing, read the Bible, hear a talk from the Bible, pray etc).

** It may be that some people will prefer to keep a 'low profile' and don't want to engage in conversation. If that's the case they will make it obvious. Don't labour the conversation! Simply say something like 'I'm glad you're here, I hope you enjoy church', and then let them have 'space' to do their own thing.*

5. Direct or **offer guidance** about where to sit.

6. When church begins at least one 'Welcomer' should **remain in the 'foyer'** area to welcome those who arrive late. Around 15 minutes should be sufficient time.

7. After the formal part of church has finished try to **have another conversation** with each visitor or newcomer you welcomed at the beginning. You could do this by introducing them to someone else in the congregation. Invite them to morning tea or supper. At the very least make sure that you say goodbye.

3) What else do 'Welcomers' need to know?

- 'Welcomers' will be rostered on from week to week. Make sure you **check the roster** so that you know when you will be welcoming.
- 'Welcomers' will most often be rostered on in pairs. You should, therefore, **think of yourself as 'a team'**, and try to welcome together where possible. For this reason make sure you pray together before hand so that you rely on God's Spirit to help you, and not on your own efforts.
- When welcoming **give priority to visitors & new-comers**, and also to regulars whom you don't know very well. Don't allow yourself to get tied up in conversation with people you already know well. Save this for a later time!
- Familiarise yourself with the contents of the **Welcome Pack**. Have some 'give-away cards' available as well.

4) Welcoming beyond Sunday

[insert Stuart's notes here]