

Open Church - Everyday



Growing from Open Church Sunday to Open Church Everyday

Building on the success of the annual Open Church Sunday held in June, St Albans Diocese is now encouraging parishes to open their churches as often as possible throughout the year instead of just a single day.

This year the diocese is not organising an Open Church Sunday and is promoting Open Church Everyday so that churches are available for people to visit and to sit and pray.

Open Church Everyday

The Diocese of St Albans is encouraging PCCs to consider opening churches as often as possible in daylight hours.

If we unlock our churches, people will visit them and some will experience God's presence there. People want to go to their local church to visit and pray, especially in times of personal and national tragedy.

Read on for advice on how to open your church building and how to communicate that it is home to a living church. There are also examples of how to use features of the church building to teach people about Christianity, such as photo of a family at their baby's Christening, with a brief explanation of baptism.

The Bishop of St Albans wrote: "Such initiatives are unlikely in themselves to 'make new disciples' but they will sow the seeds and build links so that those who are interested can find out more. Our aim should be to turn visitors into pilgrims and pilgrims into disciples."

If you have questions about Open Church Everyday and using the church building as tool for mission, contact the Revd Bill Britt, the vicar of St Mary the Virgin, Stotfold and All Saints, Radwell, email: Revd.bill.britt@gmail.com

Adopting an Open Church Policy

Some parishioners may worry about the risk of theft and vandalism if the church is left unlocked. Experience shows that leaving a church unlocked in daylight hours can increase security because burglars won't know when they may be interrupted.

Here is the advice of the main church insurer. "At Ecclesiastical, we want to encourage churches to unlock their visitor potential! We are often asked whether churches should be kept locked at all times. Our answer is no, provided the right precautions have been taken. Indeed, we recommend, where appropriate that churches are kept open because of the positive effect that has on security."

Make sure people can see the church is open



St Mary the Virgin in Stotfold has been open every day from 9.30am to 3.30pm since 2000, but some people in the town didn't know the church was unlocked until a new vicar put a sandwich board outside the church saying "Church Open."

First impressions count

Near the entrance to your church, it's important to have lots of photographs of people. Feature colourful events such as a Pet Service, holiday club, church picnic, weddings and baptisms.



An outstanding example of showing the living church is All Saints, Queen's Park in Bedford.

If you really want to put people off church, have a notice board near your front door crammed full of rotas and a poster explaining how much it costs to keep the church open each week. Keep the rotas in a discreet place.



Using features of the building to tell the Christian story

Some people if they came to your church and saw a pamphlet on salvation would not pick it up. In contrast, if your church has a stained-glassed window depicting the resurrection, they might be willing to read a short description explaining it.

Case study: [Trinity Church in Long Melford](#).

The display by John Clopton's Tomb contains these words:

"John Clopton was the founder of this church in 1484. Look in the mirror and see the painting over the tomb. It shows Jesus holding a cross and saying 'Everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.' John Clopton believed that Christ's mercy was not to be taken for granted, but that it is readily available to all who trust in Him."



Case Study: **St Mary the Virgin, Saffron Walden**

Near the altar, there is an A4 photograph of the parish priest presiding at Holy Communion and stack of small cards with the same photo for people to take away. On the back of the cards are the words:

“The altar is the focus of the Church’s worship. Where we come to re-enact Jesus’ Laster Supper shared with his friends before his death. In sharing the bread and wine we encounter Jesus is a special way and are rooted in the love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life ... I am the true vine.’ John 6:35and 15:1. To learn more about the Christin faith, go to www.churchofenglandorg/ourfaith Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Saffron Walden

The Church as a sacred space

People need stillness in their lives and churches can provide that place. People come to church to get in touch with God.

Many people want to light candles or put a prayer on prayer tree or use a prayer box.

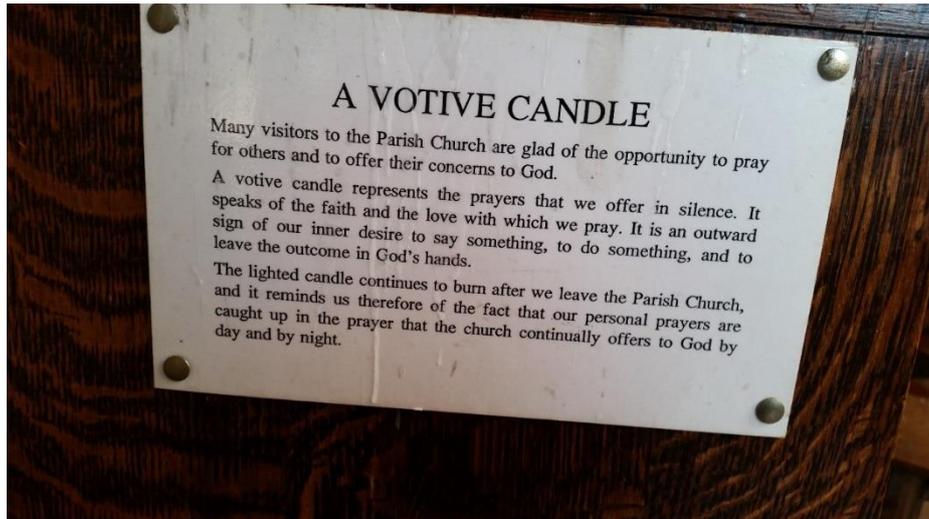
If you already have a votive candle stand, you may want to add a note explaining why Christians light candles.

The photo of the notice below reads:

“Many visitors to the Parish Church are glad of the opportunity to pray for others and offer their concerns to God.

A votive candle represents the prayer that we offer in silence. It speaks of the faith and of the love with which we pray. It is an outward sign of our inner desire to say something, to do something and to leave the outcome in God’s hands.

The lighted candle continues to burn after we live the Parish Church, and it reminds us therefore of the fact that our personal prayers are caught up in the prayer that the church continually offers to God by day and by night.”



A VOTIVE CANDLE

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Here's another example of using an icon and votive candles at [Launde Abbey](#).

Beside it is a sign with these words:



"Lighting a Candle"

You are welcome to light a candle here and place it before the icon of Christ as a sign of your prayer.

Lighting a candle is a prayer that shines on long after you have gone, kindling hope in the hearts of others.

Lighting a candle is a parable: like Christ it gives itself up to bring light to others.

Lighting a candle is a sign of warmth, of light, of love. Our world needs them all.

■ *Adapted from a sign at Brecon Cathedral*