
Planning a Church Noticeboard

Why bother about a noticeboard?

The churchyard noticeboard will probably be the first point of contact that a visitor has with your church. The average passer-by may be dimly aware that your building is a church, but the noticeboard may be the first and only way in which people can find out about the active church life within. The noticeboard is therefore very important, both in the impression which it gives and in the information it conveys. It is usually in a "prime advertising site" and, if the church is locked during the week, the noticeboard will help provide a visual way of advertising the Church and Christianity throughout the week.

The construction, design and presentation of the noticeboard will help to sum up for the public what the church stands for. People are more likely to associate a well-made noticeboard having good lettering with orderliness, strength and tranquility; whereas a board that is poorly constructed and confusing in its design is likely to be associated with inefficiency, carelessness and muddle.

If you are thinking about a new noticeboard, it is therefore worthwhile spending a little time to make sure that you end up with one that does its job.

Siting

Think carefully about siting a new noticeboard; don't just put it where the last one was. It should complement the church building rather than obscure it. If the church is some distance from the road, it may be better to have two boards; one near the road, giving outline information which can be read at a glance, the other near the church entrance showing more detailed information. The back of the board may not be very attractive, so it is best if the board is situated so that the back is as inconspicuous as possible.

Construction

A good noticeboard will cost quite a lot, so it should be built to last. Wood is usually preferable to metal, but it must be well treated against rot by varnishing or painting, e.g. with an aluminium primer, then undercoat and two top coats. In particular, any ledge that could collect water should be sealed and the posts, which should be substantial, are best set in stirrups firmly concreted into the ground. Any metal should be rustproof. A simple design will be the cheapest and it is often better to do without decorative pediments or scrollwork, unless the expense of crafting the decoration can really be justified. A moulded surround usually looks better and less utilitarian than a projecting triangular section. Glazed sections are difficult to make properly watertight and have a tendency to collect tatty, out-of-date paper notices. It is important to ensure that old notices are removed regularly; out-of-date notices give a very bad impression of the church. Ordinary glass may be vandalized so it may be wise to consider an unbreakable alternative.

Colour

The noticeboard should have a background colour that complements the materials used in the construction of the church. It should also fit in well with the immediate streetscape, whilst also being visible and attractive. The lettering should be in a gently contrasting colour. If some gold is to be introduced, bear in mind that gold leaf can be very expensive; however, it is far more durable than synthetic alternatives.

Lettering

Signwriters now employ a variety of methods in laying out text. A good signwriter will advise you on the most suitable layout for your purpose. Hand-painted lettering, if executed properly, is generally considered to be the most satisfactory and is likely to be the most durable. Computer generated plastic lettering is gaining in popularity. This has the advantage that it can be removed should the noticeboard require alteration. Any alterations are best carried out by a professional signwriter. Whatever form of lettering is used the final result will depend on the skill of the signwriter to produce a clear, readable board that is pleasing to the eye.

Simple scripts such as Roman or a Sans Serif typeface are usually best. Complicated scripts and "ye olde" lettering should be avoided. A combination of capitals and capitals with lower case letters should be considered, as this gives variety and can help to emphasise certain sections.

Layout

The words should be carefully laid out to fill the board, avoiding large margins. The overall size of the board may therefore not need to be as large as first imagined. Make sure the information is listed in descending order of importance, so that the eye catches the vital information first. It may be helpful to enlist the help of a graphic designer to assist with the layout.

Information to include

Think carefully about what information you feel is important to include on the board. For example it is normal to include some of the following:

- the name of the church
- the diocese (name and/or shield)
- main times of services
- a welcome
- other activities
- directions to other notices and information

If possible, it is best to avoid names of offices-holders on a permanent board, although it is usual to include the name of the incumbent. You may wish to consider using a title e.g. Vicar/Rector instead of a name to avoid alterations when there is a change of incumbent. Try to avoid using language involving jargon which may not be clearly understood e.g. "surrogate for marriages". If you have a complicated pattern of services it will probably be better to refer people to the details in the porch.

Next steps

1. Get the PCC, or a working party, to discuss the issues and come up with ideas.
2. Get an idea of the cost involved.
3. Ask the designer to produce a design on paper. If you seek the advice of your church architect, bear in mind that a fee is likely to be levied.
4. Approach the local planning authority with details of your proposed board, to check what consents is needed from them. Boards with a surface area of more than 1.2 square metres need planning permission under advertisement regulations.
5. Approach the DAC. This is the first stage in getting permission for the new board by Faculty.
6. Once you have the money, the design and the permissions, have the board painted and built.

Bear in mind that constructing a church noticeboard is a three-stage process, involving a designer, a painter and a builder. These three need different skills, so it is usually best to keep the stages quite separate.

Additional information and advice is available from the DAC team:

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