

One of the first things that visitors to your A Church Near You (ACNY) page will read is the welcome message on your homepage. This is your church's opportunity to give the visitor an insight into your church, the welcome that new visitors will receive and the kind of church it is. There are three key points to consider when writing your welcome message:

Length: The welcome message shouldn't be too long. Hundreds of words on this page will not be read by most – particularly those visiting the site on a mobile. Too few words might not encourage the reader to explore the church further, which will lose you the opportunity of encouraging the visitor to join a service or event. Try to keep your welcome message to around 50 to 100 words, excluding the Safeguarding note that must be included on this page (see below).

Language: Remember the average reading age of adults in the UK is nine years of age, so keep the language simple, accessible and friendly. Some of the welcome messages we see are also humorous! Try to avoid using church jargon or refer to contacts at your church by their first name. If you're mentioning specific people from your church, keep it formal with their name and title, such as Jane Smith, the parish administrator, so people know who the person is and what they do within the parish. The visitor to your welcome page should get a flavour of your church, to encourage them to learn more about the parish.

Legal: Remember to include a Safeguarding statement on your ACNY welcome. The House of Bishops has advised that every church **must** display Safeguarding information on their homepages. We have provided some approved copy for you to use if you do not have your own safeguarding statement. It's very important that the copy used is approved by the PCC. You will find this suggested text above the welcome message when editing your page.

While our buildings may be closed, the Church is not! Make sure your welcome message reflects this. Tell visitors how they can contact you and where you are meeting online to make it easy for new visitors to join in.

Make sure you avoid repetition of content that's elsewhere on the ACNY pages as this will reduce the likelihood of the visitor reading other pages for your church. Currently, the average visitor to ACNY visits five pages and stays on the site for an average of 3 mins 22 seconds.

What constitutes a good welcome message will depend on your own context. Here are two examples – not including the safeguarding statement – to help you in writing your own message.

This is the welcome message from [St Oswald's Warnton, Carnford](#):

'We are a warm and welcoming church community located in the centre of the village of Warton. Alongside our regular worship, which is centred around the Eucharist, we connect with the community through our weekly Tuesday morning Coffee Stop and Thursday lunchtime Breaking Bread. Come and share our life; all are welcome.'

With a suitable safeguarding statement, this makes for an ideal welcome message: it's to the point, explains where the church is, what their focus is, and the fact that they are welcoming to new visitors.

This welcome from [St Peter's Church, Bury St Edmunds](#)

"Welcome to St Peter's Church. We're really glad you're here. We are a group of people passionate about sharing the love of God with those around us. Do come and join us at one of our services. You will be made very welcome." Vicar - Nick Alexander.

This message is also brief, but clearly explains who the church is and how welcoming it is, making it an inviting place for prospective guests. With a safeguarding statement, this would also make a good welcoming statement.

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