Guidelines for



WELCOME
MINISTRY

St. John
Henry Newman
Parish

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The Role

'First impressions count' is a saying we all know to be true to a great extent. Often Welcomers will be the first person that a newcomer or someone who is returning church will meet and speak to. It is a vital Ministry within our Parish.

Our motto is 'Four Churches - One Faith Family' so how can we make our parish become ever more truly united as a Faith Family, welcoming new people to join us and feel as they belong? How can our gatherings reflect more the atmosphere of friendship and love, of caring and sharing, that is part of every good family? Some of the key persons in achieving these aims are our Welcome Ministers. They are parish builders. Parishioners first meet them, before they see the priest or hear the choir etc.

Everyone who comes to Mass is coming because God is calling His family to come together to celebrate, praise and thank God for the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ.

The Ministry of Welcome is a privileged way to share in giving
the welcome that our loving God gives us at every celebration of Holy Mass.

To be a minister means to serve and care for others. Welcome Ministers serve the people and the parish, under the direction of the Parish Priest.

Who can be a 'welcomer'?

As this is a Ministry within the Church 'Welcomers' are appointed by the Parish Priest after the Safer Recruitment Process (this involves Safeguarding Training Level 1) and appropriate training been given.

If you would like more information on the process then please click on this link to the Safer-Recruitment-Flowchart- NON DBS-Role.pdf for further information, but please don't worry, our Parish Safeguarding Representative will guide you through the whole process.

The welcomer is responsible to the Parish Priest who has the right to ask someone to cease in the role at any time.

The Welcomer must be a well-known person to the Parish Priest and be registered with the parish.

Qualities of the Welcome Minister

1) A friendly face and a smile, with a positive outlook so that your greeting is warm & inviting.

2) People-oriented. More than other lay ministers, you are person-to-person, showing love and respect for every person, and interested in people and families.

3) Able to enter into and correct a situation charitably and creatively. Instead of using strong negatives, such as STOP or NO, ask questions or suggest alternatives in a kindly manner. For example, you might ask "is there some way I can help?" or "is there anything you need?" Always seek to be a servant, not an enforcer.

4) Non-judgmental. When someone seems to be in the wrong (for example, wrongly dressed, or late for Mass, or disturbing others) you try to find the positive, to excuse the person (remembering the prayer of Jesus, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do.").

5) Love for the Church and pride in the parish and a desire to make the parish even stronger. No parish, no family, including the family of God is perfect. We come to Mass because we are trying. Our parish too is trying, and we are proud and happy to be part of that.

6) Sensitive and alert. The minister has a good eye, overseeing and watching what is going on. You rejoice when things go well and are alert and ready to assist when there are problems.

7) Able to take some moaning and accept complaints. There may be occasions where there are misunderstandings, where what you do is not taken the right way. You may be the object of some anger or conflict. Here, patience is called for, and some creativity. You must creatively deal with the problematic situation in a way that resolves it peacefully rather than escalates it. Remember very rarely is it personal. Please always pass on complaints and issues.

8) Peace and joy. You are doing the Lord's work. As Jesus welcomed the children, you too find joy and peace in welcoming the congregation and helping God's family celebrate this special moment of the week, the Sunday liturgy.

9) A model for others. A model for how to participate at Mass. While you may be busy about many things, as far as possible you actively join in the Mass, participating in prayer and song, in listening and celebrating. Your prominent good example will influence and teach others how to participate actively in the Mass.

10) Looking to the good of others. To be a minister involves some sacrifice. You do not get the best seat, you may be distracted during the Mass as you serve others. You are sacrificing your own private quiet and prayerfulness at Mass in order to help others be at peace and prayerful.

11) Following the teaching of Jesus, your spirit of service extends in a very special way to the poor, the child, those with special needs or disabilities, those who may seem lost or out of place. Like Jesus the Good Shepherd, you are one who gathers rather than scatters.

12) You are at the service of God's family. **Thank you!**

Welcome Ministry in the Bible

To see the importance of the Welcome Ministry, and how it is a biblical and Christian virtue, here are a few examples of welcome in the Old and New Testaments:

Three men appear. Abraham runs to greet them. He bathes their feet and offers them food and water. They promise to return, and within one year, Sarah, thought to be barren and old, will have a son (Genesis 18: 1-15).

Elisha the prophet is warmly received by the Shunamite woman. He is given food and even a special room. As a reward the woman and her husband are given a son as they had hoped and prayed for (2 Kings 4:8).

Jesus experiences both welcome and lack of welcome when he goes to the house of Simon, a Pharisee. While dining, a woman, known to be a sinner comes in, washes and anoints his feet. Simon was shocked. Jesus explains that she practiced good welcome while Simon, the host did not. He admonishes Simon and explains: "I came to your home and you provided me with no water for my feet. She has washed my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but she has not ceased kissing my feet since I entered. You did not anoint my head with oil but she has anointed my feet with perfume". Because of her welcome, her sins are forgiven.
(Luke 6: 44-47).

The apostles wanted to spare Jesus the trouble of having to meet with little children. "Jesus became indignant when he noticed it and said to them: 'Let the children come to me and do not hinder them. It is to just such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.' Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them". (Mk. 10:14-16)

Duties of Welcome Ministers

1) Ministers, when on duty should be there at least half an hour before Mass.

2) Welcome Ministers should always wear their badge when on duty, so they can be identified in case of need; but they should remove this as soon as they are off duty, to avoid any risk of confusion. They should not be given to those not authorised to undertake this ministry.

3) Ministers should be aware of what to do in case of fire, to extinguish it swiftly if possible and to help people leave the church if necessary.

Please see Fire Procedure Posters each church.

Many of our Welcomers are also or Fire Wardens at a Mass

4) They should also be alert for any suspicious bags or packages in or near the church.

5) In advance of special celebrations, for example, Confirmations, First Holy Communion Mass, Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil, ministers make sure they are aware of any additional duties to help make the celebrations run more smoothly.

6) As parishioners arrive for Mass, ministers are to be present in the church/porch to welcome and greet with a smile, and to offer Mass leaflets and newsletters.

Please ask people before giving them a newsletter if they have received one online so as to cut down on paper and costs.

6) Ministers should be interested in and eager to get to know persons and families without being overly intrusive.

If they notice persons visiting for the first time, their greeting is extra special: they might introduce themselves by name, ask their name and ask if they have any questions. You may like to offer them a 'Welcome Leaflet'

7) It can be hard not to get chatting to friends but please where possible don't get involved in long conversations with those you know well at the expense of welcoming others.

8) If a parishioner is known to have had a recent illness or death in the family, or has been absent or traveling, the minister might gently ask how things are.
If there is not time to do this before Mass, the minister could try after Mass.

9) It is always best to presume that the Parish Priest doesn't know about people's illnesses etc. so please do pass on the message. Emailing afterwards is best so that it can be followed up and not forgotten.

10) It would be great if Welcomers could be present in the porch/church after Mass to say farewell and thank people for joining us.

11) Ministers should have special concern for the elderly infirm and those with disabilities.

For the time of Communion, the minister might inquire if the person needs any assistance with walking, or if Communion should be brought to them. If any such special arrangements are needed, the servers/priest should be notified, ideally before the mass begins but if this cant be done then this is often best done by the Welcomer coming to receive Holy Communion last and asking the priest or EMHC to accompany them to the person who needs the Sacrament brought to their seat.

12) If the church is becoming crowded, some ministers should help those arriving to find seats. Ministers politely advise anyone trying to reserve more than one seat, for friends or family members expected later, that the Church regards this as incorrect

13) Ministers also welcome those who come late, not judging them but presuming that they have a good reason for coming late. Ministers therefore should remain at their 'station' or have sight of the entrance till Mass begins and then keep an eye on the entrance so they can swiftly greet someone if they are new to the Parish etc.

14) Latecomers should be gently encouraged, but not compelled, to minimise disturbance to others in the congregation by taking their seats at a time of transition.

Please try to avoid disturbing the organist by passing close by whilst he/she is playing.

15) To avoid disturbance during the readings and homily, suitable times to enter might be towards the end of the opening prayer, after the second reading, or after the homily.

16) During the Mass, ministers try to ensure that everything goes smoothly and there is dignity and order in the assembly, but always being gentle in their approach to anyone who appears to be causing any problem for others.

17) If any young children appear to have left the supervision of their parents or carers, ministers should try to re-unite them promptly.

18) Children should always be accompanied by their responsible adult when using toilet facilities. Welcomers are asked to tell children to return to collect their responsible adult to take them to the toilet.

19) Ministers organise the parishioners' procession to take Communion, pew by pew where and when appropriate. If any people are obstructing space needed for the congregation to move safely, ministers should politely ask them to clear the way.

20) After the Mass, enough ministers should be at the doors of the church and in the porch to collect leaflets, again ready with a friendly word and a smile.

The use of Identification Badges

We ask all those who undertake a Welcomer Ministry at our churches and before Masses to wear an identification badge while carrying out this role.

Welcomers are often among the first people that parishioners, visitors and newcomers meet when they arrive at church, and so it is important that they can be easily recognised as someone who is officially undertaking a ministry on behalf of the parish.

The badge gives people confidence about whom they can approach if they need assistance, have a question, are unfamiliar with the church, or simply need a friendly and welcoming point of contact.

Each badge will include the welcomer's photograph, their name and the parish they represent, and will clearly state "Official Welcomer".

This makes the purpose of the badge immediately clear and helps parishioners and visitors, particularly those who may be new to the parish or unfamiliar with Church terminology, to recognise someone who is there specifically to welcome and assist them.

The details provided on the badge may also be used to contact the Parish Office should anyone wish to verify the identity of the person wearing it or confirm that they are authorised to undertake this role on behalf of the parish.

Such a check should not be regarded as a sign of mistrust or as questioning the integrity of the individual. Churches are public places and good safeguarding and security procedures are important for everyone. We therefore fully respect anyone who wishes to satisfy themselves that a person wearing a parish identification badge is genuinely acting on behalf of the parish.

The reverse of the badge will also include contact details for the Diocesan Safeguarding Department. These details are available should the welcomer, a parishioner, visitor or anyone else need safeguarding advice or support, or wish to raise a safeguarding concern.

The badges are professionally produced and are supplied complete with an official parish lanyard. Both the badge and lanyard are issued specifically to the named individual for the purpose of carrying out their assigned ministry.

They must not be lent, given to, or used by another person, even temporarily. They should only be worn or displayed when you are undertaking your assigned Welcomer Ministry at church and must not be used at any other time or for any other purpose. Wearing the badge identifies you publicly as someone acting with the authority of, and on behalf of, the parish, and it is therefore important that it is used appropriately.

Badges and lanyards should be treated with care and kept securely when not in use. If a badge is lost or stolen, this must be reported to the Parish Office immediately so that appropriate action can be taken. If you cease to undertake the Welcomer Ministry, for whatever reason, the badge and parish lanyard must be returned promptly to the Parish Office.

These arrangements provide a simple and consistent way of identifying those who have been entrusted with the Welcomer Ministry.

They help create a church environment in which parishioners and visitors know whom they can approach, support good safeguarding practice, and help our welcomers carry out their important role of ensuring that everyone who comes through the doors of our churches receives a warm, safe and confident welcome.