

All Saints' Anglican Parish

Newtown and Geelong West

Welcome Audit - 2011



All Saints for All People All the Time

Introduction

In May 2011, a subcommittee comprising the Rev Jeremy Morgan, Rosalind Romney and Helen Wilson was convened by Vestry to carry out an audit of All Saints' church building and grounds, to determine how welcoming the church is to visitors. This was an opportunity to see what All Saints' does well, and to determine what needs to be improved in and around the church building and grounds in order to ensure that guests feel welcome. These are the results of our findings:

A Welcoming Church Exterior

Finding the church

All Saints' is quite well sign-posted in surrounding streets, however there is no sign at the intersection of Noble and Pakington Street, directing people to the church. The signage outside the church is legible and accurate. The notice board includes service times and contact details for the parish. However, there is presently no signage facing Talbot Street and there is currently no provision to promote special services or parish activities, such as the playgroup. It was recommended that another sign be incorporated at the Talbot Street frontage, and that signage be provide for notices that may be updated on a regular basis, eg: special services, play group, etc.

One of the drawbacks at All Saints' is the lack of on-site parking and the provision of disabled parking bays. The parish should, at a minimum, provide some disabled parking on-site.

The building and grounds show that the church is well cared for and maintained by the community. However, signage is limited in terms of directing guests to where they need to go eg: hall, morning tea, toilets. There is only signage to the toilets, which is small and hard to find. Signage that directs guests to toilets and morning tea should be made clearly and prominently.

A Welcoming Church Interior

Inside the church

The first impressions a guest has when entering the church (outside service times) is that the interior is dark, which gives the impression of being unwelcoming to guests, and also a lack of safety. It is recommended that additional lighting be provided, either lighting the sanctuary or narthex at all times, or to install a lighting sensor which switches the lights on when someone enters the church (*this has been done at All Saints', Preston in Melbourne*).

What is the building saying about itself?

The building presents itself as a traditional Anglican Church. At this time of the year, the church interior was noticeably dark and cold. The parish should address the coldness and darkness of the church in order to make it more welcoming. A simple way to help address the cold includes providing some blankets at the back of the church for people to 'rug up' in.

The interior of the church shows that it is well cared for and cleaned regularly. Most hand-outs are up to date, however it was noticed that the table at the entrance of the church was cluttered and untidy. A vision and mission statement for the parish was not clearly communicated, either by a sign or hand-out, however it was thought that the statement '*All Saints' for All People All the Time*' was a step in the right direction.

The church does not provide Welcome Kits for guests; however enquiry slips are available, and may be placed in a box for the parish to follow up on.

The building indicates that God and prayer are central to the life of the community. It is easy to find somewhere to pray (there are two prayer stations where people may pray and light a candle), although the darkness of the church was seen as a barrier to welcome. Despite the church's exterior doors being open, the inner doors are opaque, and as such it is not possible to see inside the church. This represents a significant barrier and presents risks in terms of safety. The installation of clear glass doors would address this problem.

The church has two prayer/devotional stations; however there is no devotional material provided that would be suitable for a guest. It was recommended that a short and simple prayer (perhaps one focused around lighting a candle) be provided at both prayer stations. Additional devotional material may be provided at the entrance table, eg: prayers for a particular occasion, Lord's Prayer, rosary, etc.

Although the church is cold and dark, the building has a prayerful and reflective atmosphere which is a significant positive.

The church does not look as if finances are in short supply, or that these matters are unimportant. Matters concerning money and requests for donations are not prominent in the building.

What message is communicated regarding disabilities?

There is significant provision for the hearing impaired, and hearing loop signs are prominently placed in the relevant pews.

However, the entrance of the church is a significant barrier for those with mobility issues. Already, a number of parishioners are unable to enter the church from the main entrance because of the steps, and must come into the church from the rear. This is a significant barrier and may make guests feel unwelcomed. The ramp leading to the church entrance from the Noble Street driveway is very steep and unsafe, and an elderly parishioner fell at this location earlier in the year. There is also no discernable main entrance/focal point into the church grounds – either at the Noble Street driveway or the entrance at the corner of Noble and Talbot Streets. A clearer entrance and landscaped focal point into the grounds would show that the church is open and welcoming to the community. Both the safety of the ramp leading up to the main entrance of the church and the absence of a main entrance/focal point into the church grounds should be addressed.

Conclusion

All Saints' Church has a positive and prayerful ambience, and is well cared for and maintained. Signage is generally well provided, but there are a couple of areas where this could be improved.

The darkness and coldness (during winter) inside the church building was seen as being unwelcoming, and will need to be addressed by the Vestry.

Significant barriers to welcome include the opaque doors at the entrance, which is a significant barrier and represents a safety risk. The entrance into the church grounds and church building are significant barriers to guests. These should be improved in order to enhance the safety and sense of welcome to the church.