

Demanding Visitors

St. Mary's congregation is very welcoming and its members are keen to make visitors feel at home when they attend. Entering a building you are not familiar with and encountering people whom you do not know can be an anxious experience. Offering good hospitality is an important service to be given.

From time to time there can be visitors to the church who can be very insistent about what they see as their needs. Encountering them may require a more considered and perhaps more guarded approach. Jesus speaks about being as wise as serpents (Matthew 10.16). It is important to ensure the members of the church feel confident and supported in encountering all of the people who visit.

A person will be of concern if they are demanding, angry, under the influence of drink or drugs, not doing what you ask of them.

Some initial responses if you are unhappy with a person's behaviour:

- You may say no. If a person makes a request that you are unhappy with you may say you cannot help.
- You may break off the encounter. A person does not have a right to your attention and walking away is acceptable.
- You do not have to give a reason. There is no need to have to justify yourself particularly if you feel uncomfortable or threatened.

These set up boundaries so that you can disengage from a person who is acting in ways that you are concerned about. They should be at the back of your mind if you are feeling wary. Your personal interests including safety are to be respected, not least by yourself.

Some actions to be of help if the person is demanding but compliant:

- Tell them where assistance may be found or you will find out and get back to them. Take details and say you will be in touch.
- Do not give money.
- If you wish to give help, explain this might not be immediate.
- You may feel it appropriate to purchase something like food or top up a card.

When you have other colleagues present, invite them to join the conversation.

Precautions when lone working or working with people who do not feel confident:

- Tell someone where you are going and when you intend to return.
- Take a mobile phone and know who you will call in an emergency
- Lock yourself in the building. If someone calls explain that you will not be letting them in. If necessary explain that you have work to do and walk away.

If you have had an encounter which you have been unhappy about, report it to church staff at the earliest convenience.

There may be other issues that you hear of that make you feel uneasy in dealing with people. It is reasonable to share these particularly if a child or vulnerable adult is involved. Please raise your concerns with the Safeguarding Team. Issues might include inappropriate sexual activity, domestic violence, financial exploitation, coercive relationships.