

Why is A Church Near You so important?

A Church Near You has been described as the Yellow Pages of churches, and for those of us who remember the yellow pages (me included!) that's a really great way of looking at it.

These days we no longer advertise through the Yellow Pages, because instead we can create our own 'online presence' whether that's a social media page like Facebook or Instagram, or through our own website. If we don't have an online presence, we are 'invisible' to so many people.

Looking after a church website can feel like a lot of work. Which is why the National Church created A Church Near You. It's free to use, easy enough to update, and helps give people a flavour of what you are about.

We already have a website, so why do we need A Church Near You?

If you already have a website, you might not think that ACNY has much use to you. But I'm going to set out the case here to change your mind! ACNY is not about your existing congregation (although they might still use it). It's our shop front window to new people.

I understand you don't want to be updating two websites regularly, so if you have a good church website or facebook page, make there are quick and easy links that work. Do still make sure your ACNY page includes key timeless information below.

Don't miss out!

It's important to know that National Church signposts people to ACNY around every festival event, across all their social media channels, with significant reach to new audiences. If your ACNY page is not up to date and welcoming, you might be missing out on new people coming to worship.

Who is A Church Near You for?

I think of ACNY as being for people who are looking for an Anglican church, but don't know what their options are. They might want to get married in the parish, or mark another life event. Perhaps they are new to the area, visitors or tourists. Maybe they want to come and worship for the first time.

You might be surprised to know that people who don't come to church, often don't know which church *is* the parish church. They might not know the difference between Baptist, Methodist, Catholic and Anglican churches. They might not know what a 'parish' is. If you grew up going to church, it's hard to imagine! But that's how we need to think when we are writing our entry.

The others are people who need reassurance. I count myself among these!

I don't know why it is, but even if I have a leaflet about a place to visit, or an event to go to, I still want to check it out online. Have you found yourself doing this?

It feels reassuring to see confirmation on a website. It's still on! Perhaps it's just to check the opening times, or look for details about car parking. Sometimes I just want to see a photo of the place I am going to. It's hard to explain why, but I've certainly become conditioned to look online for further information before I commit to something.

Let's take a look at our key audiences!

	What might they want?	Can they find it?
Visitors	They are on holiday or visiting the area, and they want to come and worship. Perhaps something has happened, and they need pastoral support	A welcoming message Church opening times Service times Parking and toilets What worship style to expect Contact details
Tourists	They are on holiday in the area, and they want a free day out, visiting a beautiful church and learning about your history	A welcoming message Church opening times Outline of historical interest – what you will see on your visit Parking and toilets Other facilities – café, souvenirs, tours available
New to the area	They have recently moved to the area, and they are interested in finding out more	A welcoming message Church opening times Service times Community events – eg toddler groups, dementia café Parking and toilets What worship style to expect Contact details
Festival event attendees	They don't worship regularly, but they like to come to key events, like Harvest, All Souls, Remembrance, Christmas and Easter	A welcoming message Festival event details – dates, times What to expect Parking and toilets Who are you collecting for?
Life events	Marriages, funerals and births	A welcoming message A page dedicated to Life Events Photos of the church decorated for celebration or to mark the occasion Contact details
New to church	Thinking about coming to church for the first time, or returning to church after a period of time.	A welcoming message What we believe What worship style to expect What the jargon means Alpha courses Church opening times Community events – eg toddler groups, dementia café Service times Parking and toilets Contact details

ACNY Checklist

- A welcoming message on the home page, with a line about safeguarding
- A dedicated safeguarding tab/page
- Photos of the building, the churchyard and happy people
- Photos of the church dressed for weddings and other occasions
- What we believe, our style of worship
- What the jargon means
- Church opening times
- Core service times – with photo
- Festival events – with photo – and who you are collecting for
- Parking and toilets – even if there is none
- Other facilities like café, shop, foodbank or souvenirs
- A link to a main website, or social media page
- Contact details for pastoral support or further info
- Community groups
- Alpha courses or faith groups
- Life events: marriages, baptisms and funerals
- Historical interest – hints and teasers about what you will see when you visit
- How to donate – add your online giving through Marketplace