

Guideline for Creating a Space

The recovery phase may well be a timely opportunity to use your church or churchyard, depending on what is possible, or both, as places for people to process their journey through the pandemic.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to think of frontline workers, exhausted parents, troubled teens and children knowing that the church was THE place to go in the weeks and months of recovery to find quiet, peace, new hope, and maybe new faith too?

Recovery is a process and will take time, so encouraging people to return to ponder and pray over a number of occasions will be a good thing.

It will take some work, imagination prayer and commitment to use some of the ideas here and to keep them sorted and stocked up, or maybe use one each week for a while. However, they may well be transformative.

Obviously, everything will need to be done in a COVID safe way according to the guidelines at the time. Make sure it is clear on any publicity that this will be the case.

These are only starter ideas and may well prompt things that are much more appropriate to your community, so use them as you will. Just a few pointers:

1. If you use some reflections stations, each will need a poster (ideally laminated) clearly visible explaining what to do at each one.
2. If you provide the props, set them out in such a way that people only need touch one of each thing. With pens, ask them to pick one up at the start and use throughout the experience, and then put in a box at the end for sanitising for the next day. The safest way to do the prayer stations would be to provide a pack for people to pick up at the door or in the porch (that has been suitably quarantined after making) with everything they need to touch or hold in it for the activities you put out.
3. Advertise the opportunity to come to church for this 'Restoration time' far and wide through every channel you have – especially if it's about having the church open with people overseeing things at specific times (see our [Guide for Leading Through Recovery](#) for ideas).
4. Overleaf is some suggested wording for a leaflet or poster of welcome. Obviously, it will need adapting to your situation.

Please do send us your ideas so that we can update this guide with others ways of using our spaces to provide people with a place to process their experience of the pandemic.



WITH THE LIKELIHOOD OF A MENTAL HEALTH 'TSUNAMI' AFTER LOCKDOWN, THERE WILL BE CONSIDERABLE SCOPE AND NEED FOR CHURCHES – OFTEN WITH BUILDINGS ON HIGH STREETS AND AT THE CENTRE OF VILLAGES – TO PROVIDE SPACE FOR REFLECTION AND RECOVERY AS PARISHES REDISCOVER THEIR PART TO PLAY IN HELPING PEOPLE PROCESS THEIR EXPERIENCE OF THE PANDEMIC.



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LEAD
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Suggested Text for Welcome

Welcome to our church/churchyard. We have set up everything in here to be COVID safe according to current regulations. Please play your part by engaging with all that we have prepared according to the instructions – to keep everyone safe.

Our prayer for you is that this building and churchyard provide safe space for you to wind down and be still. You might just want to sit in the silence. Allow the space and quiet to calm you. Or go up to the front and kneel down to pray.

If appropriate, we hope you can find a way that works for you to tell God about everything that is on your mind: what you're thinking; how you're feeling; and all the issues of the last year.

If you would like, there are places around the church that you can go to that might help you as you think about the last year. Do take your time, and don't worry. You can relax, because God loves you and longs to meet with you here. You will need one of the packs from the door to give you what you need for the different parts of the church.

Or, if you would like to take one of the My Pandemic Experience sheets from the back of the church and sit and think about the things in it, that might also help you to reflect on your experience and find peace.

Recovery is a process not a moment, so do come back and use this space as many times as you would like.

For further help, or someone to talk to, contact XYZ. You may be getting medical help or psychological help already, and we thank God for that. However, we can offer spiritual support, a listening ear, and someone to pray with you, which many have found deeply helpful in their journey of life. Jesus invites you to know his love, his comfort and his presence with you day and night, when you give your life back to him.

IDEAS FOR STATIONS

INSIDE

OUTSIDE

REMEMBER

Remembrance area. In the pack, put separate sheets to go in a book of remembrance – with space for words and pictures – for children as well as young people and adults. They will need to be collected in a basket. On the instruction sheet, explain that you will remember these people in the service and pray for all who are bereaved. Space for people to lay flowers or light candles if you can do that safely.

Remembrance board in the porch. Post-its and pens in the pack to add names or photos. A place to bring flowers. Or tags and pens in the pack to write names on and tie on branches of a tree. On the instruction sheet, explain that you will remember these people in the service and pray for all who are bereaved.

Thanksgiving wall – long strips of wallpaper (wrong side out) stuck to a wall as a graffiti wall, some low enough for children and others high enough for adults. Invite them to write or draw their thanksgivings on post-its from their pack and then add them to the graffiti wall. On the instruction sheet, explain that you will give thanks for these things in the service.

Laminated board with suitable pen in the pack inviting people to give thanks for all the good things of the last year. Or a chalk in the pack for people to write or draw their thanksgivings on a slate or wall or on the ground.

REFLECT

Bowl of water, and a stone in each pack. People can pick one, hold it as they say sorry to God, then put it in the water as a sign of receiving God's forgiveness.

A stone in the pack. People can pick one, hold it as they say sorry to God, then add it to a pile of stones as a sign of receiving God's forgiveness (perhaps placed around a cross).

Postcard and pen in the pack. People can write a note to themselves of what they want to do differently this next year, in the light of what they have learned during the pandemic and take it home to stick up and remind them.

By a tree or bush, invite people to take a leaf, and think about what they want to do differently this next year in the light of what they have learned during the pandemic. Then take the leaf home to remind them.

RECUPERATE

Line of string. A peg, pen and postcard in a pack. Invite people to write about, or draw, three things they are going to do to restore their sense of well-being and peg them up. You could create a display of suggestions for people to ponder.

Line of string, luggage tag and pen in the pack. Invite people to write about, or draw, three things they are going to do to restore their sense of well-being and tie them up.

Display laminated sheets of card with Bible verses on of hope and encouragement (see here for examples.) Invite people to take a photo of one that means something to them and read it often.

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Prayer board. Post its and pen in the pack. Invite people to add the initials or first names of people they want to pray for. Add that they will be prayed for on Sunday.

Prayer board, maybe a whiteboard, in a porch or on a wall. Pen in the pack. Invite people to add an initial or a name of someone they want to pray for. Add that they will be prayed for on Sunday.