

Cromer Church policy regarding dogs in church

Introduction

Cromer Church attracts thousands of visitors and local people each year, and we want to be as welcoming and accessible as possible. We love animals and all of God's creation and we recognise that, for many, a dog is an important part of the family and their best companion.

This policy aims to provide clarity to visitors and worshippers about our expectations when bringing dogs into the Parish Church or St Martin's and to help us manage this in an appropriate way, recognising Cromer Church's primary purpose as a place of prayer and worship and the Parish Church as a building of considerable historic interest.

Guide Dogs and other Assistance Dogs are welcome in our church buildings at all times and will always be accommodated at services and events.

Guidance applicable whenever the church is open

Well-behaved dogs are welcome under the close supervision of their owners, including accompanying their owners to services. However, the church is a living, working church where many come for peace and calmness, and owners are asked to appreciate the needs of those praying and worshipping in the building.

We recognise that not everyone is comfortable with dogs; some have dog-phobia, while some are nervous or frightened of dogs and some are allergic. To help all feel safe and welcome, dogs must be kept on short leads and owners must ensure that their dogs do not go up to others, especially children. We also recognise the needs of regular worshippers who bring their dogs to services. For some, having their pet with them provides comfort, companionship and reassurance and supports their emotional needs. This may not be obvious to others and although their dogs are not registered as Assistance Dogs, the comfort and emotional support they offer are just as important.

Dogs (other than Assistance Dogs) should not be taken into the lounge area which is used primarily by children and their families.

To comply with Environmental Health Rules dogs must not be taken into food service or preparation areas, including the kitchen and servery at the Parish Church and St Martin's.

Dogs are allowed to accompany their owners in the café area but:

- owners must not take their dog into the servery area or kitchen
- owners must not feed their dog at the café tables
- all dogs must remain on the floor at all times

Owners must clear up promptly after their dog has defaecated (pooed) anywhere on our grounds. If their dog has defaecated or urinated (peed) inside the building the owner must immediately undertake appropriate cleaning and let a member of our welcome team know.

Guidance applicable when bringing a dog to a church service

When attending services, owners and their dogs might be asked to sit in specific areas, which will normally be towards the back of the church. The churchwardens or welcomers on duty will assist with finding appropriate places when necessary.

Dogs should remain on the floor or on their owner's lap and not sit on seats.

If dogs make any noise (such as barking or howling) or their behaviour is distracting or distressing other worshippers, owners must remove them from the building promptly.

Dogs must not be taken to the communion rail during services of Holy Communion. At most communion services, our churchwardens or other members of the church family will mind dogs whilst their owners receive communion.

Making the policy work

All dogs are admitted at the discretion of the Vicar and Churchwardens who reserve the right to ask owners and their dogs to leave if this policy is not followed.

We know that most dog owners take their responsibilities seriously and will do their very best to abide by the guidance in this policy. Where this does not happen, a Churchwarden, a member of staff, a member of the PCC or one of the welcome team will talk to the dog owner and remind them about the policy. If the policy is still not followed, owners and their dogs will be asked to leave.

Anyone who fails to control their dog such that it is (or appears to be) a threat to others will be asked to leave immediately.

We do not tolerate threats or abuse directed at our staff and volunteers. Anyone engaging in such behaviour will be asked to leave immediately.