



Hospitality Initiative

Guidelines for hosts and guests

In general

A few key principles:

- **Have fun!** In all the busy-ness, preparation and occasional uncertainty, remember that as long as hosts and guests enjoy each others' company during the hospitality period, it will be a great success.
- **Plan carefully.....** Preparing with care will make a difference: get information about your host/guest's culture and home life, arrival arrangements into the UK, likely practical requirements (diet/disabilities etc). Try to communicate with your host/guest regularly about your plans and notify them of last minute changes where possible.
- **.....but be flexible!** You will almost certainly be surprised by some of the things you encounter during the hospitality period. Travel plans and other arrangements will change at the last minute. Ideas you have for the time together will not work out or will have to change. You will need to be ready to adapt to new, unexpected experiences!
- **Allow freedom and space.** Hosts should allow guests freedom: provide house keys, maps and information about local services. Make time in your 'programme' for guests to come and go and do what they choose. Guests need not hesitate to ask for time to sleep, walk or be alone. They should also be aware that their host (family) may need time and space to get on with its own routine.
- **Be polite but don't take offence.** It is unlikely that cultural customs of host and guest will be the same. Advance research may help - but you don't need to act differently to please your host/guest! Instead,

be ready to encounter habits/mannerisms that confuse you, or at first seem rude. Talk and laugh about this if you feel able to – and remember that nobody is trying to upset anybody else.

- **Be honest and open.** Share as much as you can about yourself and your way of life/expectations in advance and during the early part of the visit. Don't be afraid to say if you are offended by something, find it strange or feel that you are not being treated as you had hoped. Hosts should explain carefully how their household works and look out for things that might confuse the guest.
- **Be gentle with one another.** Remember that your host/guest may not be feeling confident about your time together. Allow plenty of space and time for 'acclimatisation' and conversation. Be tolerant, non-judgmental and listen carefully.

Other important points

Many dioceses will be hosting guests from several parts of the world.

If your group includes a bishop and spouse from (eg) North America, as well as (eg) a single bishop from Korea, that particular group dynamic will throw up additional challenges and opportunities. Guests must be hospitable to one another and where possible hosts should let them know in advance who their companions will be. Putting guests who are going to the same diocese in touch with one another may be appreciated.

Remember that bishops' spouses may feel less confident in a new culture. The bishop is likely to have travelled and met those from other cultures. Bear in mind any spouses you are hosting.

We will be sending out a separate briefing paper with details about various health and insurance matters. (Delegates who receive bursary assistance from our office will have travel insurance arranged for them. Those who are self-funding will have arranged their own insurance.)

A few areas to consider:

Money.

Dioceses should ensure that hosts know what the financial arrangements are for any activities they arrange for their guests - accommodation, all meals, the journeys from guests' point of arrival in the UK to the host diocese and from there to Canterbury. Phone calls, privately arranged travel/outings, spending money etc. will be funded by the guest. Hosts/guests are not expected to provide other conference delegates with money for the time in Canterbury and should not feel

obliged to say 'yes' to other requests for money. Delegates receiving a bursary will receive a small allowance for their time in Canterbury.)

Language.

Do host and guests share a common language? If not, the host should try to arrange for translation where required. Even where a language is shared, accents may be difficult to understand: be patient and listen carefully.

Food.

It is unlikely that the eating habits of host and guests will be exactly the same. Guests should be prepared to try new things and embrace the host's way of organising meals. Hosts should find out whether the guest has particular dietary needs and be ready to explain their own habits clearly to the guest. If you take guests to a restaurant you may need to order for them as the menu could appear incomprehensible!

House 'operations'

British homes are different from those in some other parts of the world. Be ready to show your guest how things work in the bathroom, how to use kitchen appliances, what times of day you and your family get up, eat, use the bathroom, go to sleep etc. Guests can feel free to ask any question (however obvious it may seem) and should be willing to fit in with unusual practices/routines.

Climate.

The host's home may seem very warm or very cold to the guest. The weather may be much wetter/colder/warmer than the guest expected. Think about providing additional clothing/blankets. Don't be afraid to tell your host if you are uncomfortable.

Church life and Christian customs.

Just because we are all Anglicans doesn't mean we practise our religion in the same way! (Your host/guest may or may not expect to pray before a meal, for example.) Many guests will look forward to bringing greetings from their part of the world and introducing themselves in the host church. Church services may also bring surprises, and the way members of the clergy/the bishop is viewed/treated will differ from culture to culture.

Pets.

The presence of household pets may surprise or even shock your guests. Be ready to talk about/deal with this.

Gifts.

The exchange of gifts will be common between host and guest during the hospitality period. Remember that luggage should not be weighed down unnecessarily.

Clothing and appropriate body language

Customs vary from culture to culture. Be sensitive.

If in doubt:

Ask questions and give honest answers. Try not be judgmental or prescriptive about how things go.

And, most of all, enjoy your time together!

Who to contact:

Many of the Anglican Mission agencies will be happy to provide you with advice. Visit <http://www.pwm-web.org.uk/partners.shtml> for more details.

For information about Christians Aware, visit www.christiansaware.co.uk

Or contact us!

Stephen Lyon (0207 313 3929 or 07989 389530), stephen.lyon@c-of-e.org.uk or Anna Potts (0207 313 3921), anna.potts@lambethconference.org