



ANGLICAN CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

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BACK to CHURCH SUNDAY

15 Sept 2019

Did you know that 82% of the unchurched would be interested in coming to church if invited by a friend and yet in the last year only 2% of church members have invited someone?

National Back to Church Sunday is all about helping you bridge that gap in your church by providing one Sunday a year where all your members are equipped and encouraged to invite friends, family and co-workers to church. The great thing is that it works! Over 40,000 churches have participated and on average churches grow by 27% on BTCS and 97% of churches say that BTCS encouraged their members to be inviters and will participate again. BTCS can help your church become more outwardly focused.

Now in its 11th year, **National Back to Church Sunday** started as a call to action and invitation – action for the church, invitation for the world. A single-day event focused on extending the invitation of love, peace and hope to our friends and neighbours. A single day to reclaim the true nature of Church – exactly as Christ commanded. Incredibly, since then, more than 4-million Christ-followers have participated through over 40,000 churches... and the movement continues to grow. *(Extract from <https://www.backtochurch.com/>)*

The Theme for 2019: “Let’s do this together – disciples making disciples”.

This international initiative encourages churches to host a **Back to Church Sunday (BTCS)** event on 15 September 2019. But you may choose another date that suits your church. These events are preceded by training which you can find on our website, or write to us and we will send it to you.

BTCS is most effective when it is linked with an up-coming nurture course that returners can be invited to or other initiatives that can help build relationships and community. The aim is to reach people who are not attending church, through the people who are. The success of this initiative is seen not in percentages or numbers but when one person invites another.

Furthermore, it is not intended to be a one-day-wonder. On the contrary, it is intended to develop a warmer and more welcoming atmosphere that lasts all year round. The best encouragement emerging from this success is that so many Anglicans are acting together as one big family located in many parts of the world!

GtC is encouraging bishops, clergy and church leaders to consider adopting “Back to Church Sunday” as a diocesan and parish initiative. It is an initiative that is profound in its simplicity. GtC will coordinate the provision of suitable materials like posters, invitations etc. via our website. Please go to: www.growingthechurch.org.za

You may also write to us at office@growingthechurch.org.za. We would love to hear from you dear reader. Please share your creative ideas with us which could add value to our context.

The benefit of having a ‘Back to Church Sunday’ is that as a church prepares for BTCS we can brush up on our hospitality - how we welcome people who are new, or those who have not been around for a while. This promotes evangelism through a simple invitation.

We also have to think through how we encourage those who respond to the invitation to keep coming back and help them to become connected to the church family. Church groups can easily and unintentionally become 'closed' groups. Participation in the life of the parish - perhaps through Rooted in Jesus, Companions in Christ or Alpha may contribute, among many other programmes.

Each BTCS event is measured through evaluation forms completed by participating churches with transparency about the results. They 'listen' to feedback and learn from it. The strength of Back to Church Sunday began, and continues to be the network of participating Anglican churches and dioceses that learn and work together. Resources and learnings are shared and the cumulative success becomes a spur. Participating churches decide what will work best for them, but in general the **BTCS process is the following:**

1. **To sign up.** To join the National Back to Church Sunday movement, visit:
<https://www.backtochurch.com/add-your-church/>
Add your church information to the map of participating churches – Seekers will see your church on FindAChurchNow.com. Once you've entered your church, **you will be redirected to FREE resources** like BTCS Planning Guide, Children Youth Sunday Lessons and a Kids Activity Booklet, Web Graphics and Social Media Posts to help you start planning a powerful event. For invitation videos of church leaders visit <https://www.backtochurch.com/>

Alternatively, visit the Growing the Church Website www.growingthechurch.org.za where you can download and print, posters, prayer cards, and invitations. **The 12 steps guide** on how to become an invitational church is also available on this website. To view this helpful video, please click on: <http://www.mjhassociates.org.uk/?m=201009>
2. **Churches begin to pray and plan** their BTCS services and events – preparation, execution and follow-up that is designed for a for longer term relationship.
3. **Details of BTCS** events are written or printed onto invitations.
4. Church members hand out **invitations** to friends / family / neighbours / colleagues etc.
5. Church members will get **prayer cards** on which they write the names of family and friends they wish to invited and pray for them regularly. These folk are then invited to the BTCS event.
6. People coming back to church are offered an especially warm welcome when they arrive on the day and are shown great hospitality. (Part of the training is about maintaining such warmth over the long-term).
7. People who have come to church are given a **gift post card** designed by you, to take home as a reminder of the day – this can be printed with details of future events and services.

Back to Church Sunday works best with Bishops, GtC Coordinators, clergy and leaders who proactively communicate information to the churches in their diocese. Each participating parish should raise up a suitable BTCS Team to co-ordinate the initiative.

Yours in Christ's service



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