



## Back to Church Sunday 25 September 2011

### Back to Church Sunday Insert #1

Back to Church Sunday is now the largest single local-church invitational initiative in the world. It is based on the simplest and shortest step in evangelism - that we should invite someone we already know to something we love; invite our friend to our church. The initial focus was to invite 'back' those who used to attend, but we want to ensure that anyone who doesn't currently attend will get a warm welcome.

There are so many different ways in which we can try to fulfill Jesus' commission to be his *witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth* (Acts 1:8). People will respond differently to these various approaches. However, offering friends a personal invitation to join us at church can be one of the most effective ways to help people connect, or re-connect with God.

What will Back to Church Sunday look like at the Cathedral? A steering committee has been put in place to plan and coordinate the lead-up, consisting of the Dean and Curate, Fred Marshall and Angela Morgan. Over the next ten weeks, there will be inserts in the Messenger almost every week. Our goal is to equip Cathedral parishioners with information and resources to help them feel comfortable inviting people to church.

Perhaps here we should note that the first emphasis will be on the invitations. We'd like to think that if a lot of people get invited to worship with us, the Cathedral pews will be filled with happy people. However, if you invite someone and they don't take you up on the invitation, **the important thing is that you invited them.** Success is not about a percentage, a number, or a line on a graph. Success is about one person inviting another person.

As Jesus used the image of a sower scattering seed to the four winds, so we want to have members of our parish family spreading invitations all throughout their social networks. Together, our influence reaches all over the community and province. This kind of evangelism is simply a matter of using that influence to extend a simple invitation: 'Would you like to come to church with me?'

The last Sunday in September has been designated as Back to Church Sunday. However, this makes some people ask, 'What's so special about that Sunday? Couldn't *any* Sunday be Back to Church Sunday?' Yes. By promoting Back to Church Sunday, we are not suggesting that there are only certain times when visitors are welcome to join us. Nor are we trying to suggest that members of our parish family are not already inviting people. The point is that once a year, we focus on the power of an invitation, and on the kind of welcome we extend when

people do arrive. The overall effect is that by making a special intentional effort once a year, we create a welcoming, inviting atmosphere that will last throughout the rest of the year.

A series of eight inserts has been prepared for the Messenger. These inserts will also be available on our parish website ([www.stjohnsanglicancathedral.org](http://www.stjohnsanglicancathedral.org)) and will be compiled into a printed booklet that will be available at the end of the series. These inserts will cover the following topics:

- *The importance of prayer*
- *How different people come to join our Cathedral family*
- *Biblical perspectives on invitations and evangelism*
- *What the Cathedral has to offer (both within the parish and in the wider community)*
- *How to deal with difficult situations and people who may be less receptive to an invitation*
- *How we personally benefit from sharing our enthusiasm for the Cathedral with others*

There will also be opportunities for round-table forum discussions to find out more about the process and to discuss concerns or suggestions as a parish. More information will be provided as details are finalized.

As 25 September gets closer, we will encourage members to think and pray about who they might invite to church. Invitation cards will be provided, so that you can personally invite friends, family, neighbours, or colleagues. We will ask you to keep hold of a special prayer card and pray for the friends you have invited. When guests arrive that day, they will be given an especially warm welcome to some of the Cathedral's finest worship, and given special cards to remind them of the day, printed with details of regular Sunday services and upcoming events.

Back to Church Sunday is all about reaching people who are not here through the people who are.

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Almighty God, who by thy Son Jesus Christ didst give commandment to the Apostles that they should go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature: Grant to us whom thou hast called into thy Church, a ready will to obey thy Word; and fill us with a hearty desire to make thy way known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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Save the Date:  
Sunday, 25 September 2011

