

Who will you invite
Back To Church



Look Who Came
Back To Church



Bishop Tony says:

"We are often told by those outside the Church that people are leaving our churches in droves – they don't know about the success of 'Back to Church Sunday'."

This year we hope as many parishes as possible will join in on Sunday 27th September 2009. Over the past few years it has proved to be a very successful initiative, with some churches reporting significant new people coming through a simple invitation from a friend or neighbour.



Why not make 2009 the year your church gives this a go?

Many people have got out of the habit of churchgoing and would go back with the right invitation. How many people are waiting for just that?

I would really like to encourage parishes to make the most of this simple and effective opportunity. The diocese has all the back up and resources you need."

Jenny Lowery – here to help you

"I'm passionate about Back to Church Sunday" says Jenny, Mission and Evangelism Co-ordinator for the diocese. "I'm proud that Wakefield has been at the forefront of developing the concept nationally, and in our 5th year of participating, we're not only making good use of the national resources, we are developing home-grown resources too.

Last year I was invited to speak in several churches about how to make it work. Please do get in touch with me if I can help your church engage with this exciting project. And look out on each page for a Top Tip to make the most of your Back to Church Sunday.

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Top Tip No. 1

Pray. Mobilise the church to pray for the people they would like to invite. Use the prayer card invitations to write down the name of a person they will pray for and invite.

Top Tip No. 10

Afterwards – What's Next? People are sure to want to come again so let them know what's coming up at church in the next few weeks. Have an Introduction to Christianity Course running, or a Nurture Course. There are plenty to choose from – many available through your Resources Centres in Wakefield and Mirfield – and this is a good time of year for people to enrol onto something new.

At St Helen's Sandal, Rev'd Rupert Martin advises perseverance and a keen reminder that it's not just for one day – you're in it for the long haul!

The church in Sandal has been involved in Back to Church Sunday for the past few years but this year Rupert said he wanted to encourage their other church, St. Paul's in Walton, to join in and recognise B2CS as a culmination of their year-long prayer initiative.

The congregation have been walking the streets and praying for every house and every family as well as inviting requests for prayers.

'We expect God will have gone ahead of us,' said Rupert.

'And we see Back to Church Sunday as a way of bringing in the fruit of that prayer.'

But Rupert explained that Back to Church Sunday should not be seen in isolation. 'It is a good deadline as it is a galvanising force, but it is still a part of what we do as a whole.'

'We have a process of welcoming people into the church; we have a gathering each year, at which we show a 25-minute video about what the church is, what it offers, and how it connects with the local community of which it is a part. We are also aware that worship has to transform and be transforming and Back to Church Sunday should not be seen as a one-off event.'

St. Helen's runs an Alpha Course every year in October so anyone coming as a result of an invitation to Back to Church Sunday can find out more by joining the Course straight away if they wish.

Said Rupert: 'We have run Alpha for 14 years and it is a part of my work that gives me the most pleasure.'

'Seeing people explore, question and grow in faith... and simply guiding and being alongside them on their journey!'



Evangelism is one of those words which frightens many people, but this booklet tells a different story and gives us a simple message – we can make a difference to someone else's life and to the life of our church by one simple thing – an invitation. Ask a friend or a neighbour Back to Church and support and welcome them when they cross the doorstep. By doing this you are helping that person to reconnect their story with God's story. It's so simple, yet so effective and it is something that every person can share.....and that's evangelism!

Tony Macpherson, Canon Missioner.

Top Tip No. 9

Give a Gift. Give people something to go home with - perhaps a leaflet that says something about the church, what's available, what time the services are etc.

Top Tip No. 2

Early September: Publicise. Download a parish magazine article and other images at www.backtochurch.co.uk. Get your posters on display. Contact your local paper

'It's wonderful

– it means everything to me to have all my family together in church' says Caroline Harrison.

When Caroline was younger, church was just somewhere you had to go on a Sunday and that was it. But when her children were born she wanted something different for them and a house move gave her the opportunity to 'shop around' for the kind of church she wanted to belong to.

She found it at Trinity Church in Ossett.

"I knew as soon as I walked in; it just seemed right. And then the more I came, the happier I became," she said.

So when they had Back to Church Sunday, Caroline invited her husband, Richard, her children, Adelaide and Lavinia, her Mum and her mother and father in law.

"I have learned more about my faith in the two years I have been at Ossett than I have in all of my previous life. It has been absolutely life-changing – I really mean that – it has truly made a difference to the way I live."

Recently Caroline found herself talking to other people about her faith. "I don't know what came over me, but I shared what I believed and started talking. I spoke for ages, and that started a lively conversation with others about their faiths and beliefs'.

"I just want everyone in the entire world to have the same feeling as I have," she said.

Lilian, Caroline's mum, said she has also found a warm and welcoming community at Trinity, Ossett. "I love to see my grandchildren enjoy going and I really enjoy the services and feel more peaceful.

"I used to go to church years ago. I was forced to...but now I go because I want to.



Caroline and Richard and their two girls, Lavinia and Adelaide, and grandma Lilian went Back To Church at Holy Trinity, Ossett.

Top Tip No. 3

Invite people to come along on the day. Ask people to fill in the blanks on the invitation postcards and deliver one to a friend

TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT

...is Vicar, Rev'd Robin Townsend's tip to help put Back to Church Sunday at the forefront of people's minds.

So it was coffee and croissants at St James's Slaithwaite, this year when the congregation helped transform their church into Café church!

Said Robin: "We thought it was a good idea to do something different and to use our comfortable lounge with its close and non-intimidating atmosphere.

"Back to Church Sunday depends on people bringing their friends, relatives and neighbours.

"It needs our people to be holding others by the hand and saying "come with me".

"And I'm sure quite a number of outsiders who came were drawn closer to our church family', he said.

And the idea certainly worked – in fact it went down so well that St.

James's is planning another Coffee and Croissants morning in the summer and another later in the year.



Top Tip No. 8

Give Space. Make sure there is space during the service for people to say their own prayers. People come with different needs - some to say thank you, some for support and some with great burdens. Give people space to pray for themselves.

'I was waiting for that'

was what Jenny Charlton said when she was asked if she would like to come Back to Church.

Jenny belonged to the Methodist church for most of her life, but caring for her sick husband and bringing up three children made it very difficult for her to go to church, so she didn't – for about 20 years. But she never lost her faith.

Becoming a widow ten years ago meant Jenny had to learn how to live all over again. She moved to Dewsbury where she met Paul Crabb, the Vicar of Holy Trinity, Batley Carr at a community barbecue.

And in the best tradition of Back to Church Sunday, Paul asked her if she would like to come to Church – Jenny realised it was what she'd been waiting for.

Soon she was a regular worshipper and threw herself into the life of the church, helping out with the luncheon club and the Fellowship and Support Group.

'I'm still learning about the Anglican church, and I have a very simple faith' said Jenny.

Jenny Charlton went Back to Church at Dewsbury Minster



IT WAS LIKE HAVING A BLANKET THROWN ROUND HER

... that's how Ann Clayton described going back to church.

She'd been a regular churchgoer at a neighbouring church until her deteriorating eyesight meant she could no longer drive. So when Doreen, a member of the choir at St Edward's, Brotherton, asked if Ann would be 'her person' to invite Back to Church in September 2008, Ann knew it was an answer to prayer.

'I'll never forget the warmth of that welcome. All my anxieties, all my fears even about getting up the stairs to take Communion. They all disappeared. I don't know what I would do if I couldn't go to church' she said.

Ann Clayton went Back to Church at St Edward's, Brotherton.



It was Colin the churchwarden who invited Janet Malpas Back to Church.

She'd been a regular for most of her life until a spate of ill health and in her own words "she lost the urge to go".

She went back to the same church where she'd been a regular ...and was very happy to see the congregation had grown so much they thought she was 'new'.

"The welcome was lovely. I am so glad Colin asked me to go back,' she said.

Janet Malpas went Back to Church at St Edward's Brotherton



Top Tip No. 7

Consider Disability. Is your entrance with a ramp already open? Is it clear which way to go if you need level access? Will people know where to site if they need to use a loop system? Have you thought about someone with a visual impairment? Will part of the service alienate someone because they can't get to a place due to disability?

Top Tip No. 4

Welcome people in with a friendly smile. In the feedback the 'welcome' factor was very important in making people feel at home and motivating them to come again.

'I only went because I didn't want to be home alone'

said Duncan Jackson, whose wife, Helen had just joined the church at St. John, Kirkheaton.'

It had taken Duncan almost 40 years to come Back to Church. When he and Helen moved to Kirkheaton, within sight and sound of St. John's church, Helen wanted to go, but Duncan, having lost interest in anything to do with church, reluctantly tagged along.

He found the people at St. John's very friendly and welcoming, but this made him suspicious. 'I couldn't wait for the service to end' he said. That was until Easter Sunday 2008. It was the usual ritual - Helen was keen, Duncan dragged along behind her! 'That's how I found myself in church'.

Here, in Duncan's own words, is what happened next. 'At first I thought I was having a panic attack! How wrong I was. I found the Sermon very moving, and inexplicably told Helen that I was going to take Communion for the very first time. I cannot adequately describe the feelings I had as I humbly knelt there, but I was suddenly overwhelmed both emotionally and physically and I had never experienced anything as powerful before in my life. I knew then that I belonged to the Church, but most importantly I belonged to God.'

Helen and Duncan joined the Emmaus Course, which they found to be a 'wonderful, rewarding and enjoyable' journey in their faith. Helen was baptised in October 2008, and both Helen and Duncan were confirmed the following week in Wakefield Cathedral.

'I am still continuing to grow in my faith' said Duncan 'and I know that my journey will never end.'

Duncan Jackson went Back to Church at St. John, Kirkheaton.



I'd never lost my faith but I hadn't been to church for so long, I didn't know how to get back

... said Muriel Tricket.

Muriel was invited Back to Church by her friend Myra who first invited her to a church social.

It's been a long journey back for Muriel and one fraught with illness which left her unable to walk well and her husband's sudden death knocked all the stuffing out of her.

"I've always believed in God and always prayed to him. I suppose I'd wanted to go to church, but I hadn't been for so long that I didn't know how to get back'.

Muriel says she wouldn't know now what to do without her church; she has found a real 'family', people have prayed with her and she knows there has been answered prayer.

'I still have a lot of questions' she says.

Muriel Tricket went Back to Church at St George's Barnsley

It was Anne, one of the other mums at school who turned to me in the playground one morning: "It's Back To Church on Sunday, why don't you come with me, bring the kids." I haven't stopped going since.

Sarah went Back to Church at Christ Church, South Ossett



It was Anne, she was on the till when I was doing my shopping and said: "Back To Church Sunday's coming up; why don't you come along and have a go."

I'd never heard of it, but I'd always meant to go back to church. If someone doesn't ask you, then you don't bother.

Philip went Back to Church at All Saints and St Cuthbert's, Ackworth



Top Tip No. 5

Explain yourself: Make sure you are user friendly take the opportunity to introduce yourself and others as you go through the service. Take a few minutes to run through what's available at the church for those who might not know

Top Tip No. 6

Be inclusive. Make sure you are liturgically inclusive. Is your service appropriate for children? Young adults? Older people? Try to make everyone feel that they are part of the service.