

BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY: 27 September 2009



On the last Sunday in September, thousands of people will be inviting someone special back to church with them. We hope that your church already has Back to Church Sunday in its diary, and has begun to think about ways to invite and welcome people back to church.

On Back to Church Sunday 2008, people in more than 450 Baptist churches invited and welcomed back over 6,000 friends - you can read some of their stories over the page. We hope and pray that Baptist churches will add Back to Church Sunday to their plans for 2009 and begin preparing to invite and welcome people back. Again this year, the Mission Department is taking orders for the packs and providing help for your preparation, and resources for your service.

"Back to Church Sunday is inviting somebody you know to meet somebody you love."

"Andrew would be the patron saint of Back to Church Sunday because he was always inviting people to meet Jesus."

Michael Harvey
*Back to Church
Sunday Team*

This year's theme is 'Come as you are' and fits well with the warm welcome offered by so many Baptist churches. People lose touch with churches for all sorts of reasons but millions would come back with an invitation. Back to Church Sunday is designed to encourage people to invite their friends and neighbours back to church on one specific day. It's based on research showing that between 20 and 30 per cent of the population would be open to such an invitation.



For the maximum effect, we need to prepare carefully and prayerfully as we progress towards 27 September. Pray through each point as you follow these practical steps:

- Order invitation cards and the other resources by the deadline of 29 May. If you have a data-projector, introduce the day to the congregation well in advance using the video clips from **Jonathan Edwards** (BUGB General Secretary) and **Mark Woods** (Editor, *Baptist Times*) which are downloadable from <http://www.baptist.org.uk/b2cs> There is also a promotional video on You Tube which can be accessed from the Back to Church Sunday website www.backtochurch.co.uk
- Show the invitation cards and posters early to stimulate individual, group and congregation discussion about who to invite and good ways of doing it.
- Find out which other churches in the area are giving invitations to Back to Church Sunday and join with them in local advertising and press releases, raising the local profile of the day.
- Plan a service that reflects your usual services but that is particularly welcoming and easy for visitors to follow and understand, even if they have not attended a service for many years. Remember that provision for children too.
- Check out the welcoming team, the refreshment arrangements, the notice boards and the direction signs for 27 September allowing for extra arrivals – don't forget the extra loo rolls!
- Without pressurising your guests, make information about your regular services and events available.
- Above all, ensure that all the congregation is involved in praying for all the guests up to (and after) the day, and making them really welcome on the day.

"I encourage you to be a church that welcomes other people - not because it's just a very good idea, but because Jesus has welcomed us"

Jonathan Edwards
*General Secretary,
Baptist Union of
Great Britain*

Materials for Churches

In response to feedback about the resources available in 2008, the materials have been revised this year with three different packs available - providing all you need to advertise, invite and welcome people.

The pack contents are as follows:

Pack 1 - The Essential Pack £20

- 1 A1 poster
- 2 A3 posters
- 4 A4 posters
- 100 invitation/prayer cards
- 100 gift postcards
- Back to Church Sunday 2009 DVD

Pack 2 - The Welcome Pack £25

- 5 Fairtrade organic cotton t-shirts

Pack 3 - The Hospitality Pack £10

- 100g jar Café Direct Instant Coffee
- 80 Indian Ocean Fairtrade Teabags
- 100 Traidcraft White Sugar Sticks
- 5 packets 150g Fairtrade Fairbreak cookies

A p&p charge of £4.95 will be added to each order.

The Mission department is taking orders from Baptist churches, and order forms are available from: <http://www.baptist.org.uk/b2cs> or email the department at b2cs@baptist.org.uk

Orders and payment need to be received by **Friday 29 May**, and the packs will be despatched in June.

Six Ways to Use Back to Church Sunday

- 1 Plan ahead to see how Back to Church Sunday will fit in effectively with your ongoing church programme. A follow-up invitation to a harvest service might be possible, or to a baptismal service or social event that is inclusive in nature. Plan to have up-to-date information about your regular groups easily available, and your notice boards looking good.
- 2 Well ahead of the day, use the focus of Back to Church Sunday to do an audit of the user-friendliness of your building and how visitors are received into a service. Perhaps you can get a friendly non-churchgoer to go through an exercise with you, looking at the outside notice board, the inside signs to the coffee points, the loos and so on. Although the visitors will be accompanied on Back to Church Sunday, also check out the general greeting arrangements and the befriending and follow-up system for other Sundays.
- 3 Consider ways in which you could raise the profile of your church over the few months before Back to Church Sunday, making it better known in your area. This could be through fun events, like a quiz evening, disco or barn dance, hosting a community event like an art show, or going out into the community, say litter picking, car washing, or community gardening. Let the press or local radio know what is happening, telling them how the church wants to contribute to making a good local community.
- 4 Make Back to Church Sunday a focus for prayer from the first Sunday in September, when the day can be introduced as an occasion for the involvement of the whole church. Encourage everyone to write down some names of appropriate family and friends and then ask the Holy Spirit to highlight two (or more) who should be invited along. Have invitation cards available with the attached prayer card for these names to be written in. Make space for Back to Church Sunday prayer in each service up to the day.
- 5 If you participated in Back to Church Sunday last year, then you may have one or more stories to share about returnees for the encouragement of others during September. These could be used in Sunday services, home groups and your church magazine. If not, why not share the examples included on this Mission File, or use some of the examples included on the Back to Church Sunday DVD?
- 6 Take the opportunity to run a short fun training session getting people to practise inviting friends and family back to church. The basic elements would include:
 - a Our church is running a special service for people who haven't been into a church for a while
 - b There will be a number of visitors there
 - c I would love to meet up with you or collect you and take you along
 - d Think about it for a couple of days and I'll check back with you.

*Stuart Wood,
minister at Barnwell Baptist Church
in Cambridgeshire tells us:*

"Only last Friday we had the first wedding in the church since 1972. This was a couple that had come to the church as a result of a link with me at Cambridge United and they started attending on Back to Church Sunday last year."

For years, **Haggate Baptist Church** was dying, says its family and community outreach co-ordinator, Andy Grihault. But its involvement with Back to Church Sunday provided a new lease of life, he says. 'It was quite a shock to some of our congregation. The whole church had to go through a massive transformation to enable us to be able to communicate in a God-centred and relevant way within our local community.' The church in Briercliffe, Burnley, which currently lacks a minister, greets up to 80 people to its Sunday services. For a year before Back to Church, Haggate held family fun events, quiz nights and even car washes – 'anything to give God and the church a little more credibility than we had', says Andy.

'Posters, news articles, radio, word of mouth and also the change in worship style played an amazing part in preparing for the event.'

On the day itself more than a hundred people filed into its building. 'That in itself was a miracle,' recalls Andy, 'because the church had been through some very tough times.'

'The church has done amazingly well in building relationships in the community,' says Andy. 'Back to Church Sunday gave our little church a new lease of life and a new concern for our community and world.' *Baptist Times* 1 May 2008

"It's so simple; because at the end of the day it is a friend inviting a friend. If there was a training evening for Back to Church Sunday it would last 30 seconds and it would go something like this, 'Would you like to come to church with me?'

And that would be the training event!"

Michael Harvey
Back to Church
Sunday Team



Ruardean Hill Baptist Church,

Gloucestershire, saw the largest recorded increase in numbers on the day. The small church has an elderly membership of just eight - which increased to 40 on Back to Church Sunday. Treasurer, Barbara Wright, says the congregation was amazed. 'We'd expected a handful, and we were all taken aback.'

'For a couple of months beforehand, we'd prayed about who to invite and about the day itself, and we left it in God's hands. It was lovely to see everyone. One man came who hadn't been since his wife had died three years ago.'

The church celebrated harvest on the same day, and invited families that had formerly attended, as well as those involved in the local Brownie group. The service was family-focused, shorter than usual and followed by fellowship and refreshments.

'We took part because it was something new. It's easy to get stuck in a rut, where it's safe and comfortable. But we're not asked to be safe and comfortable. We're asked to do that which might seem impossible.'

Baptist Times 23 October 2008

'The fact that we were taking part in a national incentive was also motivating - we knew we weren't alone, and would be encouraged to do it again next year.'
Student Pastor Anne Roberts, Trinity Baptist Church, Trelewis, South Wales

'Personal invitations proved to be most effective and members were excited to see so many take up the invitation.'
Alan Beavis, Minister of Totteridge Road Baptist Church, Enfield which saw an influx of 70 guests, doubling its usual congregation.

This leaflet is one of a series which has been produced by the Mission Department.

For more information about Back to Church Sunday please contact your local association or college (see contact details below) or contact the department by email mission@baptist.org.uk or call 01235 517713.

North Western
 Phil Jump
 01942 221 595
philjump@aol.com

Independent Methodist Connexion
 David Okell
 01942 223526
homemissions@imcgb.org.uk

Yorkshire
 Jane Day
 0113 278 4954
jane.day@yba.org.uk

Northern Baptist College
 Glen Marshall
 0161 249 2520
glen.marshall@bigfoot.com

Northern
 John Singleton
 01642 655551
johnsingleton@thenba.org.uk

East Midland
 David Rogers
 01476 516244
drogers@embaptists.co.uk

Heart of England
 Adrian Argile
 0121 472 4986
adrian.argile@blueyonder.co.uk

Central
 Helen Wordsworth
 01788 817292
rev.h@rhwordsworth.plus.com

South Wales
 Andy Hughes
 029 2049 1366
andy@southwalesbaptistassociation.org.uk

Eastern
 Richard Lewis
 01842 754953
richard.lewis@easternbaptist.org.uk

South Wales Baptist College
 Principal - John Weaver
 029 2025 6066
admin@swbc.org.uk

London
 David Shosanya
 0208 543 6447
david.shosanya@londonbaptist.org.uk

Bristol Baptist College
 Principal - Stephen Finamore
 0117 946 7050
admin@bristol-baptist.ac.uk

Spurgeon's Baptist College
 Roger Standing
 020 8653 0850 ex228
r.standing@spurgeons.ac.uk

West of England
 Alisdair Longwill
 01453 883308
awlongwill@googlemail.com

South Eastern
 Stuart Davison
 01444 253163
stuart@seba-baptist.org.uk

South West
 Contact
 01392 433533
chris@swbaptists.org.uk

Regent's Park Baptist College
 Nick Wood
 01865 288129
nicholas.wood@regents.ox.ac.uk

Southern Counties
 Grenville Overton
 024 7650 6499
g.overton@scba.org.uk

For more information about Back to Church Sunday, including downloadable video commendations, please see www.baptist.org.uk/b2cs