

BacktoChurchSunday



In the Diocese of Peterborough

TWO weeks to go until Back to Church Sunday

1. Cross Keys

Cross Keys should now be available in every church. If you need more, we have some spare copies.

2. Invitations

We know we keep going on about them, but we do need to keep going on about them!! Back to Church Sunday stands or falls as a success on individuals. If you can, spend some time talking about this and ways of inviting, personally collecting your friend, go for lunch together afterwards etc.

3. Thinking about your Worship

Getting to the front door.

Imagine that you are new, what would you need to help you through the service?

1. Clear service books

Make sure that your service books are clear and well set out for all. If possible, produce a special service sheet with hymns and the liturgy.

Whether you are using books or Power Point, keep the service well signposted helping people with standing and sitting and where to find the next thing in the service e.g. “we are now turning to the top of page 4 where we invite you to stand for this special prayer which vocalises our belief in the creed. We hope that you feel able to join in this prayer together.”

2. Introduction

Make sure that those leading worship introduce themselves by name and take a few minutes to explain what goes on in the church.

3. Children and Young People

Ensure that there are adequate provisions for children and young people. Not all children will want to out to Junior Church – some will want to stay with their parents, so please ensure there are playbags or some activity sheets for children, and that the service is engaging and appropriate for all ages.

4. Permission to opt in or out!

Give people permission to have space to reflect on their own concerns. For example, you might introduce the intercessions with: “We are now going to pray and you are welcome to join with these prayers but you may prefer to be still with your thoughts.” The invitation to communion is also important “it doesn’t matter if it’s been a long time since you received communion, but you are welcome to however long it has been. God never turns us away, but if you want to receive a blessing, that’s fine also. Either way – EVERYONE is invited to come forward to receive from God.”

5. **Cutting down the words**

Coming back to a new place is often so bemusing that keeping the theme and structure of the service simple is important. For example, you might want to consider either shortening or cutting out a reading or one or two of the optional parts of Common Worship. This will allow space and keep clarity.

6. **Tell stories**

We all love stories. If you can, encourage a person in the congregation through interview or testimony of how they have come back to faith in Christ or come back to church. This will help newcomers relate to other people.

7. **The Sermon**

This is a real opportunity to be evangelistic in a sensitive way. You might want to consider deviating from the set readings for this Sunday! The best stories for this are in Luke 15: The Lost Sheep, Lost Coin and Prodigal Son.

Talk about how it feels to have missed out or drift away or be lost – we have all had personal experience ourselves or with our families. The agony of the McCann family and the desire for them to find Madeline is a particularly appropriate contemporary story.

Focus on the fact that the loving father welcomes his son back with open arms and goes to meet him, and how much joy there is. The same is true for us when we return to God again and again, he embraces us with joy.

Because so many people think and process visually, you might want to use the famous Rembrandt painting as a visual aid. You can find the image by doing a Google Image search for 'Rembrandt: The Prodigal Son' If you have any problems, contact us and we can find it for you.

8. **Saying sorry**

Many people have left church because for a variety of reasons they fell out with someone or the church in general. It may be appropriate to offer an apology for things that have happened in the past and an opportunity for a new start.

9. **Music**

Try to choose hymns that people will be familiar with!

10. **After the service**

Make the most of the welcome after the service. Serve some quality refreshments, background music playing. Make sure people talk and get to know those who have come back to church.

11. **Make sure** you have an invitation to another service or another event.

Even if the service has been alien or difficult, it is so important that people leave feeling loved and cared for.

Coming soon, more on: *The Follow up*

For more details, invitations, advice and help, please contact: Gillian on 01604 887048 (Downloads with more resources and ideas and a checklist are available from the Diocesan Website: www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk and also ideas from www.backtochurch.co.uk

Inspire magazine for Back to Church Sunday

CPO are printing thousands of extra copies of the Inspire magazine for churches to use for Back to Church Sunday. The articles each month are aimed at people who visit churches or who come to social and other events, as can be seen on: <http://www.inspiremagazine.org.uk/>