



Making Disciples in Your Parish Commonly Asked Questions

What is 'Making Disciples in Your Parish'?

'Creating connections', launched in 2016, sets out the Vision and Priorities of the Diocese. Each parish has been invited to consider what part it will play within that vision. The Diocesan Strategic Plan 2016-20 identifies the objectives, goals and initiatives at diocesan level that support the vision and priorities.

One of these key strategic initiatives is to *'Help parishes make disciples, grow leaders and engage younger generations by spreading six key practices'*.

Significant consultation, listening and conversation has taken place to identify these six key practices, now known as 'Making Disciples in Your Parish', and to consider how best to resource parishes to invest in these key areas.

www.bristol.anglican.org/MDIYP

What are the six key practices?

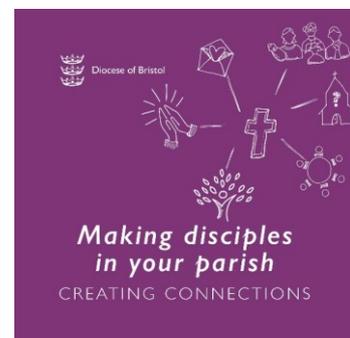
Six ways to create connections and make disciples:

- A foundation of prayer
- A culture of invitation
- Creative family-focused expressions of church
- Opportunities to explore the Christian faith
- Small groups for whole-life discipleship
- Developing the gifts of God's people

www.bristol.anglican.org/MDIYP



CREATING CONNECTIONS



What is the 'Journey of Invitation'?

The Journey of Invitation was created in 2019 in response to requests for practical resources to support the six key practices of 'Making Disciples in Your Parish'.

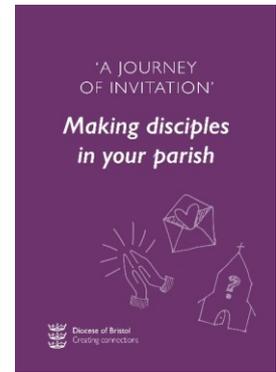
This resource provides a guide to the significant opportunities in the year for focused prayer, inviting others, and exploring faith, offering free and accessible tools to support these.

This has been produced in collaboration with parishes, ministers, experts from external organisations and the National Church. Learning and insights from the Journey of Invitation are being fed back to the National Evangelism and Discipleship Team as part of a national project involving three dioceses, to explore invitation and the church.

Many of the activities identified are not new and your parish may already be doing these things or have plans that include them, among others. In other instances, your parish might choose to make space in place of other mission and ministry activity.

Rt Revd Lee Rayfield, Bishop of Swindon said: *"This is not a tick box exercise but a way of looking afresh at your church's response to making disciples and finding ways of strengthening these particular aspects of the life of your parish."*

www.bristol.anglican.org/invitation



How can our parish participate in 'Making Disciples in Your Parish'?

The 'Making Disciples in Your Parish' booklet encourages parishes to consider each of the six key practices, thinking about what their existing ministry in this area looks like, and what it might look like for them to develop this ministry further.

Questions for discussion are listed in the overview booklet and in the PCC Discussion tool available here: <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/MDIYP/>

Is there a 'right' way to participate?

No. Recognising that each parish, its resources and its context is different, 'Making Disciples in Your Parish' does not instruct parishes in 'the way this should be done'. Rather parishes are invited to explore what this would and could look like for them and what the most appropriate way for them to integrate these key practices into their existing pattern of mission and ministry is.

We are working hard to make sure that a wide range of resources is available to support the diversity of parishes within the Diocese and to create space for local adaptation and appropriate implementation.

Do we have to do all of the elements of the 'Journey of Invitation'?



No. As with every resource, parishes are encouraged to adapt this for their context. The resource has been designed as a journey because there is strength in each element leading to the next, but it doesn't need to be done this way to be effective. Focusing on a single element for a 'season' or swapping an element for something else that will work better for your parish is absolutely fine and this should not be a barrier to your participation.

Do we have to start this journey in January or could we start at any point in the year?

The resource has been designed as a journey because there is strength in each element leading to the next. Elements such as Eastertide, Ascension/Pentecost and Harvest are somewhat unmovable and fixed in time, the resource is built around these elements – leading into them and building out from them. There is nothing stopping you from choosing to begin the Journey of Invitation in, for example September, but you would need to make some adaptations so that Harvest, which would then fall in March, did not feel out of place. This could be done by perhaps reframing the Harvest element an ‘Easter meal’ instead.

It may also be a journey which takes a parish more than one year to complete, or which builds year on year with new elements being added in following the experiences of the previous year.

Why aren't all the key Christian festivals featured in the journey?

The Journey of Invitation features a few moments in the year and invites parishes to consider how these might support mission and ministry through the year. These elements are not designed to replace a parishes' existing annual pattern of worship, but rather to pick out a few things that may not normally have been focused on, or seen as stepping stones in a journey.

Christmas, for example, is naturally understood as a key time when the community is invited in to the church to explore the reality of faith and as such it did not seem necessary to feature it within the Journey of Invitation, although clearly the Spring and Autumn elements do naturally feed from and into Christmas.

Other festivals, seasons and feast days will be marked in different ways by parishes and there is of course space for this to continue alongside your engagement with the Journey of Invitation.

Can we find out how other parishes are participating?

One strand of the ‘Creating connections’ vision is a commitment to connecting with each other. To be connected with each other means to reflect the unity and the diversity of the Holy Trinity within the Body of Christ. We are stronger when we serve together and build one another up for the sake of the Kingdom.

Through the Diocese we form a connected community that shares best practice and good ideas and is working to ensure that we share, bless, support and inspire one another for collective growth.

If you have a story to share about how you are making disciples in your parish, please email it to ben.evans@bristoldiocese.org.

If you would like to hear about mission and ministry in other parishes you can:

- Sign up for our monthly email newsletter here: <https://us2.campaign-archive.com/home/?u=d221cd85ffa568579da6cbafa&id=0b7780b48a>
- Read the latest version of our Connections printed newsletter here: <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/connections/>
- Browse the 101 ideas we have collected from parishes here: www.bristol.anglican.org/101-ideas/

What resources are available to help our parish to participate?

Different resources are available to support parishes to engage with each of the six key practices with more being developed to meet expressed needs as these are identified. There is also a wide range of relevant 'How to...' guides available to download from our website to assist parishes with different aspects of mission and ministry: www.bristol.anglican.org/how-to

Each key practice also has an A4 'Resources and ideas sheet' attached to it. These can be downloaded from the website by looking at each key practice's page:

www.bristol.anglican.org/MDIYP

To highlight a few resources:

- **A foundation of prayer:**
Thy Kingdom Come - www.thykingdomcome.global
- **A culture of invitation:**
The Journey of Invitation - www.bristol.anglican.org/invitation
- **Creative family focused expressions of church:**
Support for Messy Churches - www.bristol.anglican.org/messy-church-support/
Family expressions of church made simple – <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/cffec>
- **Opportunities to explore the Christian Faith:**
Alpha - www.tryalpha.org
- **Small groups for whole-life discipleship:**
Fruitfulness on the frontline - www.licc.org.uk/ourresources/fruitfulness/
- **Developing the gifts of Gods people:**
Your SHAPE for God's service sessions - www.bristol.anglican.org/SHAPE



What support is available to help our parish to participate?

Support is available through the Diocesan Support Services, Parish and External Relations Team. Please contact chris.priddy@bristoldiocese.org to access one to one advice, tailored resources and support. www.bristol.anglican.org/mission-support/

Does 'Back to Church Sunday' still exist?

'Back to Church Sunday' was started in 2004 by Michael Harvey of 'Unlocking the Growth Trust' (www.unlockingthegrowth.com) as an annual opportunity for Christians to invite people to come with them to church. Ten years on, the idea has grown, moving from one invitational service to five and is now known as the Season of Invitation:

- Back to Church Sunday (September)
- Harvest (October)
- Remembrance (November)
- Christmas Starts (early December)
- Christmas (December)

Research has shown that people are much more likely to come to church and keep coming if they're invited several times and the Season of Invitation provides resources to enable you to invite people to each of these calendar events in turn.

www.seasonofinvitation.co.uk



What is the Invitational Cross?

Many people in our communities are ready to say 'yes' – to an invitation to church or a church event. Others deserve to be invited even if not yet ready to accept. However, making this invitation is not always 'easy'. The invitational cross is an opportunity to equip people to invite others to experience Christian community and the love of God. There are three elements to the invitational cross which was developed by Michael Harvey:

- Invitation Cross Sunday enables regular church attenders to prayerfully consider the people God is calling them to invite;
- Inviter Sunday is an opportunity to share stories of invitation, build the confidence of those who will invite friends, family and colleagues, and celebrate their faithfulness. This is a vital component of helping people to become inviters ahead of the Weekend of Invitation;
- Weekend of Invitation is a weekend during which the church is encouraged to organise and host events and appropriate services to which people can be invited.

'How to...' guides for each of these elements can be downloaded here:

www.bristol.anglican.org/invitation/