



How to ...

Run a Weekend of Invitation

Offer a welcome, with a simple request: 'Be our guest'.

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'. First we must acknowledge the fear that holds us back.

Almost 3 million people are open to being invited to church. During a **Weekend of Invitation** events and appropriate services are hosted by a church, to which people can be invited. This is most effectively timed in the year following Thy Kingdom Come, an Invitation Cross Sunday and an Inviter Sunday.

The suggested weekend for your Weekend of Invitation is Friday 21 – Sunday 23 June 2019 as this ties in with the **National Weekend of Invitation** where churches across the country will be inviting people to "be our guest".



Planning

Your invitational event or service could be big or small, for young or old, for a special group or for everyone. You might choose to invite people to something that's a regular part of your church activities, to a special one-off guest event or guest service. You might go for just one event for guests or a multitude with every section of the church doing something on the Friday and Saturday, followed by a guest service on the Sunday.

With the invitation being to 'be our guest', the assumption is that the guest doesn't pay. So in planning your events consider either the church sponsoring the cost of the event in full or those doing the inviting covering the 'ticket' cost for themselves and their guest.

It is important to have a realistic understanding of what 'success' for your guest events might look like. Most people outside our churches have little understanding of the Christian story. This means 'success' might be as simple as them leaving feeling good about what happened and open to 'something else sometime'. And don't miss the 'success' of those who express a 'healthy maybe' about taking things further.

Guest Events

There is an endless array of events a church could run to which invitations could be made. Here are some suggestions and resources that may also spark ideas of your own.

Karaoke evening, Music recital, Choir performance, Chippy tea, Family Disco, Local history talk, Art exhibition, Community arts afternoon, Talent show, Wine tasting, Beer festival, Community BBQ, Street Party, Skittles evening or Family outing or trip.

Family Fun Afternoon: *With a bouncy castle, BBQ, games, stalls and activities. This could be done in the church, outside in church grounds, or in a local park (with permission).*

Sports quiz: *In pub-style with multi-media. Everything you need for this is available here from [Christians in Sport](#).*

A tea dance: *A perfect afternoon for an older generation – with a talk on ‘God’s Great Dance’ or ‘Following His Footsteps’.*

Film evening: *Show a film like Dead Men Walking, The Shack, The Mission, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, The Blind Side or topical film that generates discussion (See our guide: [How to...Run a church film club](#)).*

Parents and little ones: Hold a Messy Church afternoon (See our guide: [How to...Start a Messy Church](#)).

Helping your kids grow up right evening: *For parents with wise advice on discipline, self-esteem and growing up with God as a one-off. Or the first session of Parent Talk the Teenage Years or Parent Talk the Primary Years (See our guide: [How to... Run a parenting course](#)).*

Men’s or Women’s breakfast: *With speaker with a life story or relevant subject (See our guide: [How to... Run a Men’s breakfast](#))*

Concert, theatre production or comedy evening: *Possible artists could be: Abby Scott (Eaton), Daughters of Davis, Ellen Lockwood, Jacob Lloyd, Ian MacDonald, Jonathan Veira, Lara Martin, Paul Kerensa, Philippa Hanna, Steve Parsons, Mark Ritchie, Chelsea Alice Scott, Nicki Rogers, John Froud, Dave Scott Morgan, Keith Ayling, Todd, Alexander, Tom Elliott, Rob Thomas, Steve Price, Steve Legg, John Archer, Andy Kind, Tony Vino, Jo Enright, Tom Elliott, The Monks.*

Some performers may be more artistic than evangelistic. Mutually agree expectations in advance regarding how explicit you wish them to make the Christian message.

Has science seen off God? Presentation: *A presentation from a scientist who is a Christian with questions.*

Supper party: Hosts invite two or three others from the church to their home for supper and all invite guests. Use one of the [TableTalk](#) sessions to promote conversation.

Guest Services

You may feel that it’s appropriate to invite people to what you normally do on a Sunday. In this scenario it is still best to consider how to make the experience as accessible and engaging as possible for those who have been invited.

Consider choosing an interesting subject for the talk so that those invited would have an extra reason to accept the invitation. This could be something like:

Who made God?, Five surprising things about Jesus, Why does God allow suffering?, All stressed up and nowhere to go? Finding peace, Why do bad things happen to good people? Do all religions lead to God? The key to a happy life.

Perhaps you could serve a simple breakfast before the service begins, or special refreshments like a cream tea or BBQ after the service. If dates allow you could link the service to a special celebration in the life of your parish or community.

Creating Welcome

As you plan event(s) or service(s), consider how someone who has never been to a church service, or church event before, might feel, both before attending and on arrival. It’s perhaps similar to how you may feel if you were to go into a betting shop, nightclub or other situation that was unfamiliar to you and outside your comfort zone.

In some settings you may want to include words on your invitation such as; ‘We don’t dress up for Sundays. Just come as you are’, ‘There is no need to book or to bring anything with you’, or ‘special activities for children will be available’.

In considering the hospitality and welcome in your church, you may find it timely to take part in the diocesan Safe and Welcome Awards Scheme which will guide you through reviewing and improving the key components of creating a good welcome in your church.

www.bristol.anglican.org/safe-and-welcome

There is also a diocesan How to guide available: ‘How to... Provide a great welcome’.

www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/how-provide-great-welcome

Publicity

A range of publicity on the theme ‘Be Our Guest’ is available to use at:

www.weekendofinvitation.com/publicity

You can download the National Weekend of Invitation logo to use on your own invitations from the www.weekendofinvitation.com.

CPO can also provide Weekend of Invitation and other invitations and posters to which your details can be added www.cpo.org.uk/catalogue.aspx?cat=3731

It is helpful for inviters to have an invitation, flyer or ticket to give to those they are inviting. This acts as a visual representation of the invitation, provides key information about the event and a reminder of the event details as the date approaches. Consider whether it may be appropriate to make this available digitally for those who may extend their invitations via online messaging services.

Further Information

Please also see our **Journey of Invitation** resource: www.bristol.anglican.org/intivation which is available as part of **Making Disciples in Your Parish**: www.bristol.anglican.org/MDIYP.

Other guides in this “Be our guest” series include:

How to... Run an Invitation Cross Sunday

How to... Run an Inviter Sunday

[How to... Build a culture of Invitation](#)