



Our Ref:

13 December 2011

To Parish Clergy and Parish Secretaries

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Once again we are in the season of Advent, a time of preparing ourselves for the God who comes.

One other thing to take time to prepare for is Back to Church Sunday, to be held next year on Sunday 19th February, the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. Seems a long way off, but the time will quickly pass.

To ensure that your Parish makes the most of this opportunity, I have attached a number of resources for your preparation. These include

- 1 **Back to Church Sunday posters.** You can display these on your notice boards and power point projections, to encourage and inform both your regular parishioners and also your Christmas Visitors to attend and take part in this day.
- 2 **A draft form of invitation cards for use in the parish.** You can customise and print these in preparation for distributing them to your parish family about the second Sunday of January, and maybe with an encouragement on the day in the sermon to pray about those whom God might be calling them to ask along on the day.
- 3 **12 STEPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY.**
A list of helpful hints for your planning for this opportunity.

So what can we do next?

- i. **Appoint a Leader.** If you haven't already done so, you should approach a faithful and reliable person to take up responsibility for overseeing the preparation for this day as soon as possible, and certainly before Christmas. The success of the day will be increased by the commitment of the team to the task, and a committed leader will make all the difference. Work through the '12 STEPS' document together with your leader, and plan what you'll do and when. Work through the BTCS website together, and choose what resources you'll use.

- ii. **Set aside a prayer team.** You'll notice that the first thing we all need to do is PRAY. Why not call aside a small group of faithful people and commission them to do just that alongside the rest of the parish community in preparation and support of all the work of planning.
- iii. **Publicise the day regularly.** The more the day is promoted and spoken about, the more it will become a part of the psyche of the Diocese and its congregations. Remember, this is a part of our Strategic Directions for Engaging and Encouraging the people of God in our ministries and life together.
- iv. **Explain what is needed to make the day a success.** We can't blame people for not doing what we haven't asked them to do, or for not doing what we haven't explained to them as being their part and role in this joint task of mission we share. Someone once described Back to Church Sunday as the shortest step in mission, and that may be so, but we'll never take it unless we are shown how to do so and encouraged to step out together.
- v. **Promote the day, and distribute the materials.** Get these out early, at latest by the third Sunday of January. That will give your parishioners time to think, pray and ask those whom they wish to invite.
- iv. **Plan the activities and Liturgies you intend to offer.** Be prepared to offer the best that we can to welcome those whom Christ is calling to belong, and make sure all involved have a clear understanding of what is expected of them in this shared ministry of welcome and encouragement.

WELCOME AUDIT

The following is an excerpt from the BTCS website.

'This audit is to give the opportunity to assess what may need to be changed, in and around the church property, in order for a guest to feel welcomed. It is extremely important that each new person to your church knows that you care about where you are and what you believe.

We suggest that you and your team walk around the facilities of the church with pen and paper in hand asking yourselves the following questions. When you have done this, make an action plan to improve where necessary. Some actions may have financial implications and so will take time to complete but it is still important to work towards the goal of improvement.'

It's a great chance to see whether or not things are as welcoming as we all think they are at 'our' church. I highly recommend the audit to you. You'll find it at the following web address.

<http://www.backtochurchsunday.com.au/welcome-audit.html>

TRAINING DAYS

I have undertaken to assist with training wherever possible, and am happy to provide leadership for the training workshop if necessary. I believe this will best happen in a local setting, and will be happy to come if necessary to work with your team as they prepare. Please let me know before the 22nd December if you would like a team from your parish to participate in a workshop. If there are large numbers interested, we will organise these on a regional basis during the third week of January. More information will follow as advice is received.

A local form of Training workshop and 'stocktake' as preparation for the day can be found at

<http://www.backtochurchsunday.com.au/church-workshop.html>

RESOURCE PACKS

The Back to Church Sunday organisation still has some resource packs available from the day held in September last year. These cost \$70 plus postage, and although the posters are dated, (which can be altered without too much trouble), the rest of the resources can be used as is. The packs include

1	A2 poster
2	A3 posters
6	A4 posters
100	invitations
100	prayer cards
100	gift postcards
	BTCS promotional DVD

There is no requirement to use this resource, but it is available for those who would like to take advantage of it. Please contact Amanda Zaicos at the Diocesan office before 22nd December if you would like to order a pack.

And finally, if you have any questions or suggestions for preparing for the day, please do not hesitate to contact me. We are still in a learning phase as far as all this is concerned. The opportunity to welcome people into a life giving relationship with God in Christ through the life of the local church is really what we are all about, or should be.

By coordinating this focus into the rhythm of our church life as we approach Lent and Easter, we pray together that many will be blessed in our endeavours, and that our loving and welcoming God will be glorified.

With the assurance of my prayers for your parish community as we share this journey together.

Stephen R Pullin

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end, representing the name Stephen R Pullin.

Archdeacon of Newcastle

19th February 2012: BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY

12 Steps for a Successful Back to Church Sunday

- 1 **Pray** regularly that God will bless and draw people to Himself through this initiative.
- 2 **Appoint** a leader in your parish to oversee a team of enthusiasts to plan the day.
- 3 **Set the vision** of Back to Church Sunday with parishioners by using segments of the promotional DVD.
- 4 **Run a parish workshop** and use the workshop to make necessary improvements.
- 5 **Mobilise** your church to be praying for those who they will inviting to BTCS.
- 6 **Lead by example** in sharing regularly who you are praying for and inviting to BTCS.
- 7 **Celebrate** when you know of invitations being extended.
- 8 **Publicise** that BTCS is near. Download resources from www.backtochurchsunday.com.au (sermons, Media releases, top tips).
- 9 **Personal Invitation** is what BTCS is all about, „a friend inviting a friend“ back to church.
- 10 **Plan** the services for the day and be sure to train your welcomers. They are your greatest resource for a warm welcome.
- 11 **Follow up** those who come with a visit or call from the person who invited them
- 12 **Re-connect** through a series of planned opportunities (such as Lenten Studies, a series of studies on basic discipleship, or an invitation to participate in a home group or some other gathering activity. It makes sense to have the next invitation ready to give to those who respond by attending on the day.

Below is a link to the UK Emmaus website, for further information on discipleship courses.

http://www.e-mmaus.org.uk/emm_index.asp