



# How to ...

## Run an Invitation Cross Sunday

### ***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.

An **Invitation Cross Sunday** will enable you to equip people in your church to invite others to experience Christian community and the love of God.

This Sunday forms a small part of a regular worship service and is an important step in helping people to become inviters ahead of a Weekend of Invitation. As such you will need to have planned your Weekend of Invitation invitational event(s) before you hold an Invitation Cross Sunday (There is a link to a guide for running a Weekend of Invitation below). It would be helpful to have some printed invitations/advertisement details available for people to take with them to aid the invitation they may extend as a result of the Invitation Cross Sunday activity. A suggested sermon outline has also been provided for you in at the end of this guide.

### **When to hold your Invitation Cross Sunday**

It is recommended that you hold this Sunday three or more weeks before a planned Weekend of Invitation. It can work especially well when timetabled for just after the Thy Kingdom Come season of prayer for evangelism and witness. However, churches are free to choose the Sunday that will work best for them.

### **What happens on an Invitation Cross Sunday?**

The aim of an Invitation Cross Sunday is to release people from the fear of inviting and help them take the first steps to doing so.

During a service:

- Deliver a sermon or talk which presents three ways to think more Biblically about inviting others (see appendix 1.).
- In a time of prayerful reflection, invite people to ask God who he might be nudging them to invite – and to put the person's initials on a post it note.
- Ask people, as an act of worship, to bring these post it notes to a large cross at the front of the church.

### **What you will need**

- A large cross positioned at the front of the church
- Pens or pencils for everyone – hand out as people arrive, or pass down the rows at the appropriate moment
- Post it notes – at the end of the rows (check they stick to the cross before the service)
- Invitations or details about the invitational service or event to which people will be invited.

## What to do

Begin with a sermon or talk which presents three ways to think more Biblically about inviting others (see appendix 1.).

Following the sermon or talk lead into the following response:

**Say:** *We are going to ask God if there is someone God is calling/prompting/nudging you to invite to 'XYZ' and then we are going to keep a silence as we listen to what God may be saying to us.*

Make sure this is not rushed and then close with 'Amen'.

**Say:** *If you sense that God has prompted you to invite someone, then that is wonderful. And if God hasn't prompted you to invite someone, then that is also wonderful. We only want to do that which God prompts us to do.*

*You will find post it notes at the end of your rows. Please pass them along so that everyone has one.*

*Now, if God has prompted you to invite someone, please put their first name, or initials on the post it note. And if God hasn't prompted you at this time, please put a question mark on it. Perhaps a name will come when you are shopping on Tuesday, or sat on the sofa on Wednesday.*

*Now please turn in two's or three's – making sure no one is left out – and talk about what happened when you asked God who you should invite.*

Allow people time to talk as this helps people 'own' what God has said to them.

**Say:** *Now, as an act of worship, please bring your post it note and place it on the cross here at the front. (Demonstrate by placing yours there).*

*In doing so you are bringing those God has prompted you to invite to the cross or continuing to ask God who to invite.*

*Please come forward now.*

Take time to marvel at the call of God as people come forward. Afterwards lead a prayer for those called to invite and for those waiting for an invitation.

**Say:** *Next week we will make time to hear some of your invitation stories and what God has done as a result of today.*

## What happens next?

The Sunday after your Invitation Cross Sunday, we recommend using the **Inviter Sunday** resource to celebrate the obedience of those who have invited and have them to share what happened and what this meant to them. The link to the Inviter Sunday guide is below.

Following that Inviter Sunday, we recommend holding a special **Invitational event** or service to which people invite those God has laid on their hearts to invite. This will clearly need some planning and preparation ahead of the Invitation Cross Sunday and there is a link to a guide for running a Weekend of Invitation below.

## Further Information

- A video [How to run an Invitation Cross Sunday](#)
- A video [How an Invitation Cross Sunday impacted our church](#)
  - Three highly powerful video's, produced by Saltmine Theatre Company, exploring the theme of invitation (Moses, Mr Stephens, Invitation Train)  
<https://weekendofinvitation.com/resources/registered-free-resources/>

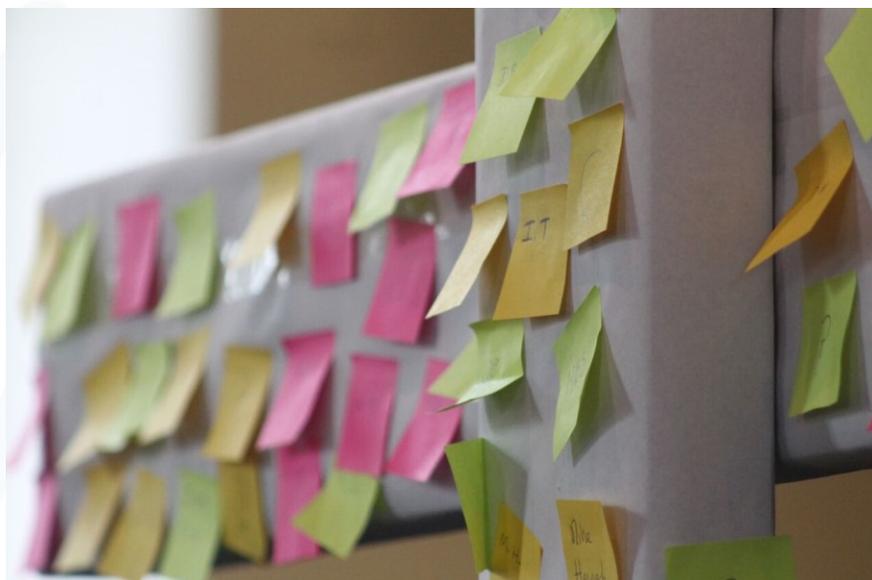
Please also see our **Journey of Invitation** resource: [www.bristol.anglican.org/intivation](http://www.bristol.anglican.org/intivation) which is available as part of **Making Disciples in Your Parish**: [www.bristol.anglican.org/MDIYP](http://www.bristol.anglican.org/MDIYP).

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

How to... Run an Inviter Sunday

How to... Run a Weekend of Invitation

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



## **Appendix I: Three ways to think more Biblically about inviting others**

If Christians are to deal with their fear of inviting they need to see God and 'success' in three very different ways.

The three new ways of thinking are:

### **1. Rethink what God expects of us**

Christians can imagine God is only pleased with 'success'. This creates a fear to invite, in case they fail. And, if they do invite, a sense of failure if they get a 'no'.

We must take account of Jesus' words, 'Well done you good and faithful servant'. Because it is faithfulness and obedience that matter. And, when we do so, we are released from the fear of failure and pressure to 'succeed'.

### **2. Rethink the spiritual needs of the inviter**

When it comes to mission, churches put their focuses to the needs of those being reached. And ignore the potential for spiritual growth – or damage – for those reaching out.

Yet when Jesus sent out the 70 he was as interested in what happened to them as he was in what happened through them. And we need to take the same approach and so develop spiritual maturity of the inviter.

### **3. Rethink God's role in mission**

It is too easy to see mission as 'all about us' – with God just giving us a bit of help. Such an approach brings pressure to 'deliver' the goods.

We need to recognise that God is already on a mission. God's at work in people's lives long before we get there – and is simply inviting us to join in. Mission is God's work, the results are up to God.

### **When we think differently**

These three ways of thinking differently represent a totally new approach to mission.

When people understand that all God asks is for faithfulness, that our spiritual growth is part of the activity of mission, and that the results are down to God and not us, something wonderful happens. Time and again, those who come to see mission in this light say 'I feel liberated'.

**A video** about this 'new mindset' can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/KUPKVsnYk14>



# Sermon outline for Invitation Cross Sunday

**Aim:** *To help people think more Biblically about invitation and take a step of faith in response to what they learn*

## The key teaching points:

- **Rethink about what God expects of us** - God measures us by our obedience and not our successes
- **Rethink about what God wants for us** - God wants us to grow spiritually as much as he wants others to know him
- **Rethink God's role in mission** - God is already on a mission and just asks us to join in with what he is doing

**Note:** The hope is you will express the content in your own words and illustrate from your own experience. The three videos have a total running time of just over 14 mins, so you may want to omit either the second or third.

**Scripture reading:** Exodus 3 1-11

## Introduction

**Option 1:** Show John Kirby 'The power of an invitation' video. Download under the heading *Endorsement Videos* from [Free Resources](#).

**Option 2:** Briefly interview someone who has become part of your church as the result of being invited.

## Message

That's the kind of impact an invitation can make. And research suggests there are about 3 million people out there who are open to an invitation – which includes those in our own community and among our friends and family.

But how do you react to the suggestion that you should be someone who invites?

Perhaps you are just like Moses whose response to God's request to invite Pharaoh to let his people go was 'Who am I?' Or, in other words 'What? Me?!!!!'

Moses knew God and wanted to serve him. But his reaction may be much like ours when it comes to being asked to invite– fear.

If only Moses had known 3 things that we also need to know if invitation is going to happen.

1. God measures us by our obedience and not our successes



### **1. God measures us by our obedience and not by our successes**

PowerPoint available under the heading Your Invitation Cross Sunday on our [Free Resources](#).

We live in a society that honours success above everything else. Our world is obsessed with achievement, and growth.

And it is not surprising that this kind of bad thinking has infiltrated the church. As a result, we wrongly value ourselves based on the numbers who come and the successes we have.

That's why we need to think more Biblically. Jesus didn't say 'Well done you good and successful servant'. But 'well done you good and faithful servant'– Matthew 25.

We put our emphasis on the outcome, but it is faithfulness and obedience that matter to the God we serve. If we can see obedience as 'success' we are released from the fear of failure and pressure to 'succeed'.

All God asked of Moses was for him to obey and invite. In the same way, when God prompts us with the name of someone to invite, that's all he's asking of us. To invite – and leave the outcome to him.

That means to get a 'no' is not to have failed. Indeed, Moses had to invite Pharaoh 10 times to let the people go. So was Moses successful each of those times? Not by today's standards. But, by God's standard of obedience, Moses was very successful.

### **2. God wants us to blossom spiritually as much as he wants others to know him**

PowerPoint available under the heading Your Invitation Cross Sunday on our [Free Resources](#).

To see what I mean, look at what happened to Moses.

2. God wants us to blossom spiritually as much as he wants others to know him



**Show the video: Moses my unstoppable hero** (5 mins 30 secs)  
Download under the heading *Your Invitation Cross Sunday* from [Free Resources](#).

Despite the excuses and doubts Moses delivered the invitation. And by trusting in God to meet his needs, Moses grew in faith and spiritual maturity.

That's also God's plan for us as we obediently trust him in making invitations to those he prompts us to invite.

To think more Biblically involves doing what Jesus did. We read in the Gospels how he sent out the 70 on a mission. When they returned he was as interested in what happened *to them* as he was in what happened *through them*.

Sometimes we get this right. When young people go on a mission trip we want to know what it meant to them. In the same way, to invite is a 'mission trip' – but much closer to home. And we need to be aware that it is also part of our own spiritual growth.

**3. God is already on a mission and just asks us to join in**  
*PowerPoint available under the heading Your Invitation Cross Sunday on our [Free Resources](#).*



3. God is already on a mission and just asks us to join in

It's easy to think mission as 'all about us' – with God just giving some help on the way. That we have been 'sent to make disciples' and now the pressure is on to deliver the goods.

But, if we are to think Biblically, we need to recognise that God is already on a mission. Indeed, Jesus was the first missionary – 'God sent his son'.

Mission is God's work, it is on his shoulders – with us invited to take his hand and join in.

This means God doesn't start to work when we turn up but is already active in people's lives – including those we may be prompted to invite.

Mission is God's work, the results are up to him. We just have to be available to play our part.

So far as Moses was concerned, God wanted Moses to tell Pharaoh to let the people go. The invitation came from God and Moses just had to deliver it.

More than that, God promised to be with Moses every step of the way *'I will go down with you and bring you back up again'*. In mission we get to go with God.

We can see how 'the mission is God's' when we can see how he can prompt us as to who to invite and the way so many are open to accepting.

**Optional** - Which is why this video has much to encourage us. **Show the video: Mr Stevens** (3 mins 30 secs) Download under the heading *Your Invitation Cross Sunday* from [Free Resources](#).

We have seen that –

1. All God asks is our faithful obedience,
2. That he wants us to grow in faith as we respond, and that
3. He is already at work.

I hope that takes the pressure off. Indeed, this might be the moment to let out a big sigh of relief. (*You may want to encourage them to do exactly that – and pause while it sinks in.*)

God's invitation came to Moses as he was going about his natural work day. What he needed was to take time to pause and look more closely. And that's what we are going to do now.

God is inviting us to become a people who listen to God's still small voice that's calling us to participate in God's mission today. Who is God calling you to invite? Like Moses and God, it's you and God the unstoppable duo.

**Optional** – All we have to do is invite. Show the video invitation Train. (5 mins 30 secs) Download under the heading *Your Invitation Cross Sunday* from [Free Resources](#).

**Introduce the Invitation Cross activity** – see [How to use the Invitation Cross](#) and the pdf download *How to run an Invitation Cross Sunday* from [Free Resources](#).