



*As September 26 is fast approaching, here are some thoughts on how you might more effectively “pop the question.”
Note that you can put these tips into practice anytime!*

1. Know the value of the community for yourself.

It will be hard for you to know who to invite (or even why you should invite someone) if you aren't sure why you are a part of this community. How does sharing worship, fellowship, and/or service in this community make a difference in your life? Chances are there are a number of reasons why you're part of your worship community. Write them down.

2. Think about the relationships you have.

Jesus, when asked about which law was the most important of all in all the Torah, answered that it was two-fold: first, to love God with everything one possessed; and second to love one's neighbour as one's self. Who are your neighbours? Who are the people that you run into? What do you know about their lives? Be sure to include people that you don't know that well. Make a list. Yes, I said a list.

3. Discern the possibilities.

Once you know the value of your church for yourself and you've thought about the various relationships that you have, then you're ready to figure out some people that you might invite. Call to mind our purpose here: to invite people to experience something that we think will be beneficial to them. With that in mind, go through your list, and ask yourself “Would being a part of my church enrich this person's life?” Underline the name on the list even if you think that the answer is “possibly.” Circle the name if the answer is “definitely, and I could explain why.”

This step can be the hardest, so don't rush through it. It's a good idea to pray, and ask God to help you call each person to mind clearly, as well as to guide your thinking. Take time to do this (it might take several attempts over quite a bit of time).

4. This is not about having a packed church for one Sunday.

While you're mulling over your list, you should cross out any names belonging to people who are Christian, and already have a church home (whether they attend a lot or a little). It might seem easier, certainly, to invite those people, but filling the church for one day isn't what we're after here.

5. Pick someone (or some people) to invite.

Eventually (and it may take quite a bit of time), after having gone through your list (and sometimes even updating your list, if you've forgotten people), you will find some one or some persons to invite. Be sure to pray, ask God who to invite. If you're having difficulty getting there try putting it aside for a day or two (but not too long!), and talking with family/friends.

6. Remember to invite someone.

All this thinking and praying won't help if you don't actually ask anyone. How you ask is less important than making sure that you do, but I suggest keeping the question simple: "You know, I really get a lot out of my church, and I think you might too. Would you like to come to church with me on September 26?" Be prepared to explain what church might look like. If they (or he/she) express interest, follow up by making a plan for that day together (see the next point below). Also, remember that unless your acquaintances are much meaner than mine, the worst thing that will happen is that someone answers, "No thanks." If you think that it will help, practice asking in a mirror, or with others.

As to when you should ask, it seems like a good idea to do so a couple of weeks before the day itself. That means we all have lots of time to think about who to invite!

(Also, if the answer does turn out to be "No," then why not think about any other possibilities on your list? Don't let one experience sour you on sharing your faith).

*7. Remember that **you're** the host.*

Imagine if you were having a dinner party, and you invited guests, and then didn't do anything else. That's what could happen in you invite people to "Back to Church Sunday," and then leave them to their own devices. How will they get to church? Where will they sit? Will they be comfortable being greeted by strangers? Will they feel comfortable participating in our worship? Who will get them their coffee?

Hospitality is an essential part of Back to Church Sunday and I certainly hope that we will all rise to the occasion in making any guests feel welcomed into our home. Plan on hosting your guest(s) from their journey to the church (perhaps you should provide a map or maybe you want to car-pool with them) through the service and fellowship, and to their journey home. Maybe you want to arrange to have lunch with them afterwards.

Remember that even though comments like "It's so nice to see the church so full," or "I can't believe how few people showed up," may feel natural, they tend to tell our guests that the point of their invitation was to fill pews, not to welcome our friends into our community.

I hope that these suggestions are helpful to you, and that you find this to be an exciting process. May God grant you wisdom in discernment, courage in witness, and overflowing love in hospitality.

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