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The
Lampighter

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Back to Church Sunday (September 25)

Back to Church Sunday is now the largest single local-church invitational initiative in the world. It is based on the simplest and shortest step in evangelism - that we should invite someone we already know to something we love -- invite a friend to our church. The initial focus was to invite 'back' those who used to attend, but we want to ensure that anyone who doesn't currently attend will get a warm welcome.

There are so many different ways in which we can try to fulfill Jesus' commission to be his *witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth* (Acts 1:8). People will respond differently to these various approaches. However, offering friends a personal invitation to join us at church can be one of the most effective ways to help people connect, or re-connect, with God.

Perhaps here we should note that the first emphasis will be on the act of inviting itself. We'd like to think that if a lot of people get invited to worship with us, our pews will be filled with happy people. However, if you invite someone and they don't take you up on the invitation, the important thing is that you invited them. Success, in this case, is not about a percentage increase, or a bigger number, or an upward line on a graph. Success is about one person inviting another person.

As Jesus used the image of a sower scattering seed to the four winds, so we want to have members of our parish family spreading invitations all throughout their social networks. Together, our influence reaches all over the Thunder Bay community. This kind of evangelism is simply a matter of using that influence to extend a simple invitation: 'Would you like to come to church with me on September 25?'

The last Sunday in September has been designated as Back to Church Sunday. However, this makes some people ask, 'What's so special about *that* Sunday? Couldn't *any* Sunday be Back to Church Sunday?' Yes. By promoting Back to Church Sunday, we are not suggesting that there are only certain times when visitors are welcome to join us. Nor are we trying to suggest that members of our parish family are not already inviting people. The point is that on **this** Sunday, we focus on the power of an invitation, and on the kind of welcome we extend when people do arrive. The overall effect is that by making a special, intentional effort, we create a welcoming, inviting atmosphere that will last throughout the rest of the year.