



THE DIOCESE  
OF SHEFFIELD

# *A Season of Invitation*

*Season of Invitation* has been an engaging missional initiative in recent years. Behind the fancy title is a simple concept- we should invite people to be part of the church and its activities.

When we go to a party or get involved in an activity it's usually because we have been invited. Why should church be any different? Research shows that, much like weddings, most people come to church because they have been invited.

You and your church might have participated in 'Back to Church Sunday'. Some parishes report that when they have invited people "back to church" several new people have come along. The evidence suggests that if we plan and deliver a series of invitations over the autumn months then some people will be willing to return more than once and some will become regular church goers.

The season of the year from September to Christmas has some key events to invite people to. The Season of Invitation Initiative suggests the following: Back to Church Sunday (usually last Sunday in September), Harvest, Remembrance, Christmas Starts (early December) and Christmas itself. In my own context we are including our patronal festival (St Matthew's day) and All Souls day (inviting those who have been bereaved in the last 12 months). You might have special community events of your own or particular celebrations which might be attractive to newcomers. You might have a special service for Cross Roads mission. It is well worthwhile spending time as a church deciding which events/ services you want to push as invitational.

Once you have finalised which events you are going to push then think about resources and welcome.

## **Resources and Welcome**

As Christians we need to grow in confidence when it comes to invitation. But let's take some solace in the fact that a lot of people report that they would be willing to visit a church if they were invited and taken by someone they know. The initiative website suggests the following brief tips to make people welcome:

### **Ways to make people feel welcome**

- Name badges for the clergy and welcome team. Also ensure that those involved in leading or contributing in the service introduce themselves to the congregation.

- Clear and helpful instructions from the front – knowing when to stand and when to sit is all part of feeling as though you belong.
- Refreshments – chatting over a cup of tea or coffee is a great way to make people feel at home. Encourage your church members to introduce themselves to anyone that might be visiting for the first time.
- When planning your 5 services, think ‘ordinary with a sparkle’. We should never underestimate the significance of the ‘ordinary’ or ‘familiar’ in enabling invitees to feel as though they belong. At the same time, adding an element of surprise can help challenge people’s pre-conceived ideas about church and faith.
- All-age services are a great way to draw children, young people and adults into the church community and to share the basic truths of the Christian faith.

It is a good idea to produce a calendar of events and publicise these in good time amongst your congregation. Maybe gather a team together to consider welcome and hospitality involving as many people as possible. The more people are involved the more they will see themselves investing in its success.

Resources are important. It’s worth having invitations printed and personalised but the Initiative also produces invitation packs which you can buy see:

<http://seasonofinvitation.co.uk/take-part/traidcraft-invitation-packs/>).

I have attached some invitation examples from St Matthew, Carver Street. If you would like to adapt these then I can send you them in word format for you to edit.

Grant Naylor

Parish Priest of St Matthew Carver Street & Mission Development Advisor

father.naylor@gmail.com

On 2 November we gather to remember our loved ones who have died.

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Invite you to St Matthew's Church, Carver Street at 8pm to pray for the soul of

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*Carver Street*



An Invitation



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An Invitation



St Matthew's Church  
*Carver Street*



An Invitation



St Matthew's Church  
Carver Street



Jenny

You are invited



St Matthew's Church  
Carver Street



Jenny

You are invited



St Matthew's Church  
Carver Street



Jenny

You are invited



St Matthew's Church  
Carver Street



Jenny

You are invited

On Saturday 26 September we are having a community celebration in our parish with food and fizz afterwards

*Jim and Sandra*

Request the pleasure of your company at  
St Matthew's Church, Carver Street  
at 12noon

**[stmatthewscarverstreet.co.uk](http://stmatthewscarverstreet.co.uk)**

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*you are invited*

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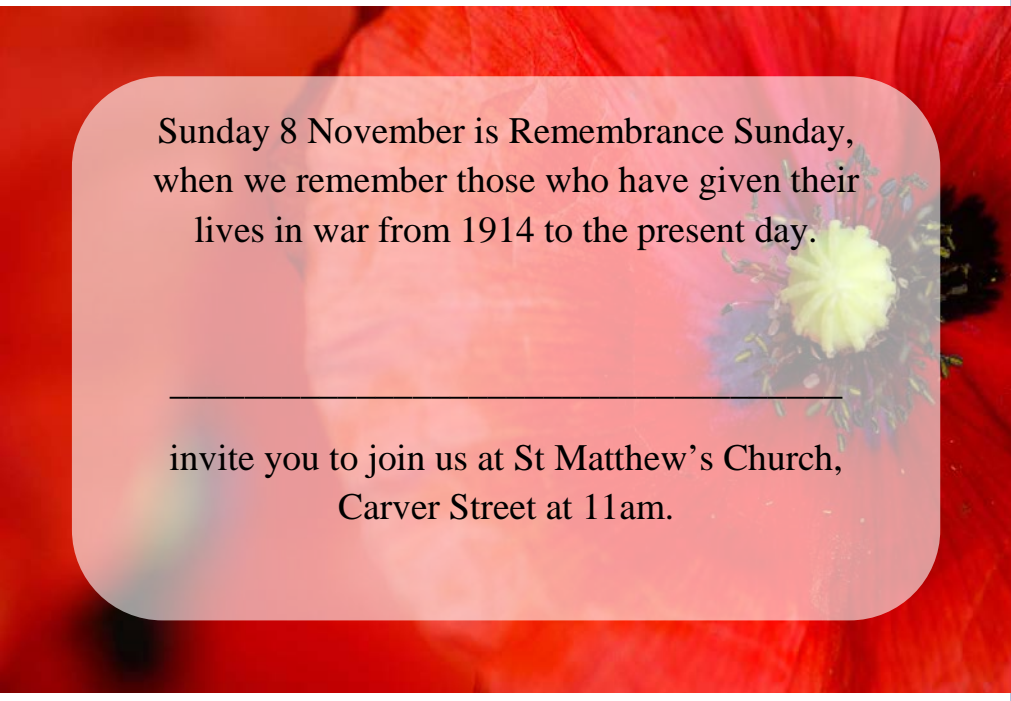
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when we remember those who have given their  
lives in war from 1914 to the present day.

invite you to join us at St Matthew's Church,  
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