

Take a step in inviting others

The community of God is open and ready to welcome everyone. It grows in spirit, vibrancy, and numbers only when the members of the community invite their friends. Trust is the component that builds the church. When people trust you, they take your advice, try the things you recommend, and venture out of their comfort zones.

In order to invite others, you must

- have a strong relationship with your congregation and its mission in the community
- be able to share the difference God makes in your life
- have something that inspires you that you want to invite your friend(s) to attend

Take care of your relationship with the congregation first

If you do not have a strong relationship with the community, the place to start is by choosing a small group and trying it out. Look to the board at the east entrance and see if anything interests you. Talk to people whose names are on the list. Ask them about their experience with the group. Get involved.

Another alternative is to talk to people in the narthex after worship. Introduce yourself to someone you do not know. Or join someone you already know who is in conversation with someone you don't know and ask for an introduction. Begin to build relationships with others at your own pace and in your own way.

Still another way is by attending any of the special events planned in the evenings or on weekends. Events like the Agape Café, the 5-week course Christians and Other Faiths, the Men's Breakfast, or the women's Mary & Martha group (M&M) are excellent ways to meet people. Look for these activities or others like them.

Grow your own appreciation of your faith life and take a step to share your faith

Inviting people to share about faith and faith practices is a muscle that you can exercise. As you grow in strength, you will find the confidence to invite others to attend worship or other church-related events with you.

Here are some simple ways to step out in faith: In the course of daily life...

Wear a cross or a religious symbol. You may be surprised how many times this will start a conversation about your faith.

Pray before a meal, especially with family and friends, but also in public places.

Refer to your church, your faith and the Bible in casual conversation with others.

Respond “Thank God!” or “God is Good!” when someone shares an uplifting story with you.

Say “I will pray for you” when someone shares a personal concern or difficulty with you.

Send a card or note of encouragement that offers words of blessing and that conveys your faith and trust in God.

Be courteous and helpful in all public transactions; look for ways to give a verbal and positive witness to the hope that is within you.

As you walk through your day, scatter blessings. Some will take root and grow.

Share a smile and personal greeting with a stranger.

Seek ways to turn times of tension and conflict into moments of blessing.

Offer a “God word” in conversations about current public events (e.g. “this situation, war, natural disaster, famine surely makes me thankful for God and the way God’s people are working to make this world a better place”).

Ask someone you may have hurt for forgiveness.

Model Christian behavior when you coach or attend sporting events.

Speak up against injustice, evil and verbal insult.

Be clear that your perspective is informed by your faith and belief in a loving, forgiving God.

In moments when God is used thoughtlessly or maliciously, speak up and say “Excuse me, you’re talking about someone who is very important to me.”

In talking about the weather or scenery, marvel at the intricate beauty of God’s creation. Decorate your office with symbols or pictures that say something about your faith or could invite conversation about God.

Offer affirmation to colleagues for a job well done; share how thankful you are to God for their gifts.

Carry your faith over into your work by insisting on fair prices, good products and just treatment of customers and employees.

Share what motivates you to stand up for these values.

Take a colleague to lunch and share something about how God is working in your life or something in which you have recently been involved at your church.

Remember birthdays, job transitions, etc., with notes of blessing and encouragement.

Invite a colleague to come with you to worship or to participate in church-related activities.

In times of struggle and pain...

Visit neighbors, friends and colleagues when they are sick or hospitalized. Share a devotional booklet and offer a prayer.

Deliver a meal or plate of cookies to the family or person struggling with loss, tragedy or illness.

Share a CD or electronic recording of uplifting, encouraging Christian music.

Mow the lawn, shovel the driveway, buy groceries or clean the house without waiting to be asked. Then share why you were motivated to care in such a way.

Recognize the variety of issues that bring pain to people's lives (financial crisis or loss, death, illness, divorce, abuse, etc.) and seek to respond in helpful ways.

Be a listening ear.

Share how God has carried you in moments of personal struggle. Send cards more than once, with encouraging words of Scripture.

In your neighborhood...

Host a new neighbors BBQ when someone new moves into the neighborhood. Offer a prayer before eating.

Be public, in subtle ways, about your faith.

Coordinate a block party. Plan activities that foster friendships for the kids. Plan games that encourage sharing about life and values.

Gather children in the neighborhood for an afternoon Kids' Club. Share Bible stories and CDs, craft activities, refreshments and positive play.

Find creative ways to help neighbors in times of need with a bag of groceries, some help around the house or apartment, a card, flowers, or a listening ear.

Deliver a plate of cookies or a loaf of bread for no particular reason at all.

Warmly introduce yourself to newcomers and ask if they will be looking for a church to attend. Invite them to yours.

In your home and with your family...

Witness your faith with your own family by gently stating "I believe..."

Commit to regular prayer before meals and family devotions. Commit family needs, struggles and decisions to prayer.

Play Christian music when listening to background music.

Monitor the television viewing of your children; take time to explain why as a Christian you might find something acceptable or unacceptable.

Use "God language" in your conversation with children and other family members.

Model your faith by taking time for daily devotions and Bible study.

Model stewardship and hospitality by giving money or food to people in need.

Share a Bible story with your children before bedtime.

Take time to talk about what you experienced at worship. Encourage sharing of key learnings from church or Sunday school.

At times of life passage and celebration...

Remember birthdays, baptisms, first communions, confirmations, anniversaries, weddings, funerals, graduations, birth or adoption of a child, a move into a new home or apartment, job transitions, etc., as special times, with a word of blessing and affirmation through cards, letters, phone calls or in person.

Give someone a special Bible musical tape, or devotional booklet and write a personal note about your faith inside the cover.

Take time to share an affirming message with another through a note, e-mail or letter.

Plan a party or celebration, especially if it appears one wouldn't otherwise happen.

Take your friend to lunch or out for dessert. Find special ways to celebrate achievements.

At holiday and "holy day" times...

Invite friends and neighbors to church at Christmas or Easter. Some are more willing to attend then.

Look for creative ways to invite a friend, neighbor or co-worker to worship or to a special holiday event.

At Christmas time, provide faith-related gifts and storybooks to neighbor children, teachers, and friends.

Share why Christmas and Easter are times of celebration for you and your family.

Host a Thanksgiving party for your neighbors.

Find ways to help others reflect on their blessings, helping others reflect on their blessing.

Consider the offerings at church as opportunities to bring a friend

People hunger and thirst for relationship with God. Your connection to your congregation may just be the thing your friends and family need to reconnect them with God, even if they belong to another congregation or even if they have sworn off religion.

The church offers all kinds of events and programs suitable for inviting others.

Remember that everything we do at Church of the Cross is open to everyone. Build up your courage and invite a friend!

As with every mark of discipleship, the pastors are available to meet with you for prayer, consultation and guidance as you take new steps. Remember that taking these steps in inviting others is an act of spiritual growth and deepening discipleship. May God bless your growth and your inviting.