



Step #1

Establish a Hope25 Working Group

Welcome to the Hope25 newsletter! Our plan is to produce newsletter each month between now and the commencement of Hope 25 at Easter next year, packed full of easy to follow steps, interesting ideas, resources and prayer materials. We know that the success of this venture will be in our ability to collaborate with each other, so if you've got a good idea, then please share it with us.

Hope25 – “How-to” Guides

Over the course of the next 10 months, we are going to step each parish through a plan to help you respond to the opportunity to proclaim the hope we have in Jesus during the season of Easter in 2025. We will have editions focussed on establishing a working group, on prayer, on working out who you are trying to reach, on making community connections, on offering hospitality, on telling your own story, on running an outreach course and so on. We hope that by following these steps you will be well prepared for Hope 25.

Of course, you can prepare any time, but the sooner we make a start, the more chance we will have for success. Why not put Hope25 as a standing item on your Parish Council Agenda so that you can all track your progress? Why not take the first step below this month, and get your planning underway?

Starting well – Establish a Hope25 working group

The writer of Ecclesiastes observes the following:

- 9 *Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their labor:*
- 10 *If either of them falls down,
one can help the other up.*
- But pity anyone who falls
and has no one to help them up.*
- 11 *Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.
But how can one keep warm alone?*
- 12 *Though one may be overpowered,
two can defend themselves.*
- A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Here is an invitation to work together! And what better project to work together on, than preparing to share the hope we have in Jesus with our community, with our neighbours, friends and family?

Who should be in a Hope25 working group?

Step 1 of our preparation is to form a local team to begin planning what you will do. Now if you are in a very small Parish, that might just be a series of conversations over morning tea with everyone involved. It might be a discussion of the whole Parish Council each month. But if you are in a larger Parish, having a dedicated group of people on your planning team is a must.

It is probably good if the Rector or Vicar of the Parish leads this team, and invites people to join him or her. Be on the lookout for people who might have gifts of administration and organisation, gifts of hospitality, gifts of evangelism and talking to others about faith.

Make sure you look out for someone who has creative ideas, and others who have gifts of prayer. That way you will have the balance of gifts to help make planning a success.

An ideal group would be somewhere between 6 and 12, depending on the types of activities you would like to be involved in. Make a time to meet each month, (newsletters will be out at the beginning of the month) and make a commitment to work together.

What do we do in our first meeting?

1. Dream

At your first meeting make sure you spend some time just dreaming together about what might be. What could happen if we invite people to come and hear about Jesus and their lives get changed? What would happen if we ran an outreach course, and people known to us in the community who never come to church, came along to hear about Jesus? What would happen to our church if even one or two, but maybe 5 or 10 people started coming regularly to learn about the Christian faith?

Make sure you also share your fears and apprehensions and those of your congregation as well. It is no good going into this with our eyes shut. Spend sometime thinking about how you might address those fears.

2. Brainstorm ideas

Spend some time brainstorming the types of activities your parish is good at, that might be turned towards proclaiming Jesus. You might have a eucharist that is “invite a friend day” with a special sermon and a morning tea. You might host a wine and cheese evening with a guest speaker. You might put some literature on your stall at the local market. You might run a hymn singing session in your nursing home with a special address. You might run an evangelistic course like Alpha or the Pilgrim Course. You might have a Parish Open Day and Festival, and invite your community.

The ideas are limitless. You might like to look at the [Hope25 website](#) with your group for some inspiration. Write all these ideas down now matter how bold they are, so you can return to them later.

3. Pray

And don't forget to pray. Pray for your local community to come to know Jesus. Better still each of you think of the names of three people you will begin praying for now to find hope in Jesus next year. Pray that God would guide you as you plan. There will be more next month about praying for Hope 25.

Once your group is up and running, drop us a line at Hope25, and let us know, so we can pray for you too. Please send us any questions you would like us to address.

Hope25 Contact Details:

Website: <https://www.hope25.com.au/>

Email: info@hope25.com.au

Hope25 Parish Working Group Meeting Notes:

Dreams of what God might do:

Brainstorm ideas for possible activities:



Step #2

Pray for Renewal of Hope in Christ

Welcome to the second Hope25 monthly newsletter. We are pleased to say we now have over 750 subscribers from Anglican churches all over Australia (please keep asking others [to sign up!](#)). Last month in the first newsletter we encouraged the formation of a "**Hope25 working group**" in each parish or community. We suggested that the first things a working group could do are:

1. Dream about what God might do in your parish or community
2. Brainstorm hope-sharing activity ideas
3. Pray

Has your parish formed a Hope25 working group? [Click here for a printable version](#) of last month's newsletter.

This month we will consider the importance of prayer for renewal in Christ which precedes sharing the hope we have in Jesus. It could be that your Hope25 working group has one person whose responsibility is to encourage the parish to be praying. Or you could even have a separate intercessory team form just to pray for your parish over the next 12 months.

Praying for ourselves and our parishes

In the wonderful prayer of the apostle Paul in Ephesians 1, his bold request is that '*the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you.*' (Ephesians 1:18a)

This is a prayer for spiritual renewal in Christ. Praying that we might more deeply know the hope of Christ. If we want to be sharers of the hope we have in Jesus, we must ourselves be renewed in our knowledge of "*the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people*" (Ephesians 1:18b).

It is vital that our Hope25 working groups around the country lead the way in praying for spiritual renewal. Pray that we would know more deeply and joyfully the hope we have in Jesus. Sisters and brothers in Christ who are growing in hope will more ready to share that hope with others.

Praying for discernment and openness for the Hope25 season

The apostle Paul commends the Ephesian church for their faith and urges them to know God better and keep growing.

As you discuss and brainstorm Hope25 outreach activities for your specific context, it will be important to pray for God's guidance:

- Pray for wise ideas for activities that will connect
- Pray for discernment to know what is achievable in your parish with the gifts and resources unique to your situation
- Pray for God to send visitors to your parish services and activities
- Pray to be richly welcoming and engaging with visitors
- Pray for insight to consider where we might fall short of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives or our parish culture

The apostle Paul wanted his readers to not only know the riches of Christ but also the power of God at work in his church. This is God's "*incomparably great power for us who believe...*" (Ephesians 1:19).

- Pray for openness that the power that raised and exalted Jesus from the dead would be at work in his church today
- Pray for openness to try new outreach ideas or activities
- Pray that God's power in Christ would change our own hearts, as well as the hearts of those we are trying to reach
- Pray for courage to trust God's power to work when we take risks to share the hope that Jesus gives

What else would you add to these lists of prayer points? Please discuss together in your Hope25 working group.

Writing a Prayer to Be Used in Your Church or Faith Community

A good idea is to write a prayer specifically for your church or ministry and pray it regularly. You could use it in every service, and encourage people in your church to pray it daily in their own prayers.

You could use Ephesians 1 or another Bible passage as the basis to write a prayer for renewal and sharing the hope of Jesus Christ.

Or you may like to use the Hope25 collect:

God of Hope

**you call on us to be your witnesses in this uncertain world;
by your Spirit awaken in us
a true vision of your kingdom,
a greater certainty of our salvation, and
a deeper dedication to your service;
that through our words and actions the same Spirit may
bring many who are lost to be found,**

and for them to celebrate the hope
that we can only have in Jesus Christ,
in whose name we pray. Amen

<https://www.hope25.com.au/2024/03/20/a-collect-for-hope25/>

Praying with others in the Hope25 movement around the Anglican Church of Australia

Elsewhere in this email we have information about the national Hope25 prayer meeting which will be on the first Thursday of the month at 7:30pm (AEST) on Zoom. This will be a great chance to unite with other Australian Anglicans from other Hope25 working groups.

We would love to hear of Hope25 diocesan prayer meetings or clusters of Anglican parishes having special prayer meetings to pray for renewal and sharing the hope we have in Jesus. Please share your story with us to encourage others.

For those who use the Prayermate app, we also have [a channel for Hope25](#). The [Hope25 Facebook page](#) will also be used for sharing prayer points about parish outreach activities.

Imagine if we prayed regularly not only for ourselves and our own parishes but also for the outreach activities of other Anglicans around the nation. By next year, we hope to have multiple networks and gatherings for prayer, both online and in person.

May the next 12 months be a historically unique season where Anglicans in Australia pray for each other more fervently than ever before.

Hope25 Contact Details:

Website: <https://www.hope25.com.au/>

Email: info@hope25.com.au

Hope25 Parish Working Group Meeting Notes:

Read Ephesians 1:18-23. What parts of the Apostle Paul's prayer could apply to our parish?

What might be other good things to pray for ourselves and our parishes as we seek to become more faithful in sharing the hope of Jesus?

Draft a short prayer for renewal in Christ and sharing the hope of Christ that could be used in your parish services or in personal prayer.

Step #3

Discern who you are trying to reach.

Welcome to the third Hope25 monthly newsletter. We thank the parish clergy who have contributed to this article on discerning who we might try to reach. We pray that it is helpful and energises creative ideas in our local working groups and parish councils.

As our parish begins the early stages of thinking about reaching out to our community during Hope25 one of the questions we've begun to ask is, "**Who are we going to reach?**" Wouldn't it be a shame to put in a whole lot of effort only to have nobody turn up to any of the events we run. It won't be enough to simply run some events and hope for the best, we need to spend some time thinking about who we're trying to reach and tailoring what we do during Hope25 accordingly.

So, "*Who are we going to reach?*" For us some of the answers have come from our pre-existing efforts and our place as a church within our community. As it happens, our church will be celebrating 100 years since its foundation stone was laid during the Hope25 period. So that has led us to start thinking about how we can reach out to those in our community with a historical connection to the church but who don't realise that they could be part of the regular worshipping life of the parish. We will likely reach out to our local historical society, past families who've been baptised or married in our church as well as the broader local community and invite them to celebrate the church and hear not just about the building but about who the true foundation stone of our church is. You might not be celebrating a 100 years, but perhaps those with past connections are a group of people you could reach during Hope25?

Another thought we've had has been around our church's well-established ministry of a Playgroup for young families. We've begun to think about what we can do to take a more deliberate step with some of these families in helping them hear the gospel during Hope25. We've had some success with an Alpha course this year, so perhaps we will run another one again, or even a different shorter course just during Hope25. We're also trying to think about how we can connect with some of the families whose kids have grown out of Playgroup and how we can connect with them during Hope25. Maybe you have pre-existing ministries that you could focus more keenly on evangelism during Hope25?

We've also realised that every single member of our church has a friend, family member, work colleague or neighbour who is not part of the church. We're trying to think about how

we can run 'outsider' friendly church services during the Hope25 campaign so that every member of our church will have confidence to invite a friend to church during Hope25.

Before Hope25 we will need to do some training with our church about how to start 'God conversations' and how to invite people to church as this can be a very daunting thing to do in 21 st century secular Australia. Maybe there is some way you could unlock the networks of your current parishioners during Hope25 and share the gospel with them?

In fact as we've begun to think about who we might try and reach during Hope25 it's become obvious that there are so many who need reaching with the gospel! Our challenge now is to start praying and thinking strategically about how our small church can reach out most effectively to our community during Hope25 so that we focus our effort, energy and prayers.

Who are you going to reach during Hope25?

Hope25 Contact Details:

Website: <https://www.hope25.com.au/>

Email: info@hope25.com.au

Hope25 Parish Working Group Meeting Notes:

What is challenging or encouraging in this article?

Who do we have existing or potential connections with from the wider community?

Who in our wider community might God be leading us to share the hope of Jesus with?

Step #4

Build relationships with the people you are trying to reach

Welcome to the fourth Hope25 monthly newsletter. This email is written in the hope that you will find others in your Anglican community to discuss together prayerfully.

I have never forgotten the time when I was suddenly invited to a Christian play. I was on holiday, away from home, and I did not know the people who invited me or who was putting the play on. The play, however, was worth seeing.

The play was about a couple doing a course at their church on how to share Jesus with others. I know it sounds like an impossible 'plot' for an interesting play – but it was well done and even had some very funny scenes. In the play the couple, having done the course, decided that they should share Jesus with their neighbour, however, they had never spoken to their neighbour before! The neighbour accepted their invitation to come in for 'coffee', but was very confused by their attempts to tell him about Jesus. He was a nice guy, but the couple had no relationship with him, and so sharing Jesus with him fell flat. As the play unfolded though, it became clear that one of the couple's parents, who lived with them, had been talking to the neighbour for many years. This 'grandfather' had a great relationship with the neighbour. So, when it was appropriate, the grandfather was able to share Jesus with the neighbour.

The play helpfully encouraged Christians to attend courses on sharing Jesus but made the point that **such a course would only be valuable when we have good relationships with the people we are sharing with.**

So, as we prepare for Hope25, one area where each of us needs to be working is developing relationships where we can speak of the hope we have in Jesus. To my mind, this involves us doing four things:

1. Consciously consider our relationships with people outside the church. These relationships could be with members of your family, work colleagues, hobby colleagues or long-term friends.
2. Choose some of those outside church you have a relationship with and start praying that God's Holy Spirit would guide your relationship with that person. I find that when

I pray in this way, it is amazing how often God then opens up opportunities that I never would have expected.

3. Then, deliberately set up additional occasions to spend time with the people you are praying for. Usually, these are people you enjoy being with, and they enjoy being with you, but in the business of life we don't see them as often as we would have liked. So, set up more times to be with them.

4. Ensure that you are 'hospitable' to those you are praying for when spending time with them. Three times in the New Testament, we are encouraged as followers of Jesus to practice '**hospitality**' (Romans 12.13, Hebrews 13.2, 1 Peter 4.9). This involves others knowing that you are going out of your way to do things for their benefit when spending time with them.

None of the points above involves directly talking to people about Jesus. All of them, however, involve us deepening our relationships with others so that we are '*prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have*' (1 Peter 3.15). For as you spend time with people, as you do life with them, occasions will come where they will want to know about your faith.

So, the best preparation for Hope25 involves prayer and parties! Invite your friends around more in the next six months, praying that after Easter, they might ask you to explain your hope in Jesus.

Hope25 Contact Details:

Website: <https://www.hope25.com.au/>

Email: info@hope25.com.au

Hope25 Parish Working Group Meeting Notes:

Make a list of people to pray for regularly:

What hospitality options could you offer to the people you are praying for?

How else could you invest in their life and felt needs?

Step #5

Refocus the Welcoming Lens of Your Church

Welcome to this month's Hope25 newsletter. We now have a [step-by-step overview page](#) of the monthly letters that you can use for discussion and planning in your parish Hope25 working group or parish council meetings.

When we have been part of a church community for a long time, we feel as if we belong. There is a place for us, and we know what to expect, how things happen, how to behave, and where things are. This is good, and it is as it should be. Every now and then, however, it is a good idea for us to step back and try and see through the lens of a newcomer. Just how welcoming are we for someone who is not familiar with church, liturgy, our buildings or our culture?

One thing is certain: God will continue to bring people into his church. More and more, these people will have no church background and likely do not share our Christian faith. How can we, as stewards of God's house, help to facilitate the movement from feeling like an alien to becoming part of God's family?

For someone who has no church experience, I think our primary responsibility is to help to lower their anxiety. It takes a great deal of courage to turn up to church for the first time, so it is good that we do whatever we can to help everyone feel as comfortable as possible. This process needs to begin even before they arrive.

Most visitors will check you out first on your parish website. This is a good place to start. Website front page pictures of smiling people, sharing life and faith is going to be far more attractive than those of an empty church building. Other website questions to consider:

- Is it user-friendly? Is it up to date?
- Are service times easily found?
- Does it reflect the new life and hope in Christ we are offering?
- Is our location clear and linked to provide directions?
- Can they 'check out' a sermon or recorded service so that they know what to expect?

How can we lower anxiety for people when they arrive? Clear and up-to-date signage is important. Parking access, obvious entry points and someone waiting outside the door to meet them. The information we provide and what we hand them at the door is worth considering. Too many books and forms can heighten anxiety. Grumpy greeters who take no personal interest in newcomers is probably not the image we need to be going for. Having a

designated person to make a genuine connection whilst respecting personal space requires discernment and sensitivity. Guiding them into the worship space, and seating them with another member who can be there for them to assist them with what and how things take place during the service are helpful aims.

Encouraging newcomers to stay for fellowship is important. Finding out a little bit about them without interrogation can bring out some points of commonality with current members, to whom they can be introduced. Hospitality for the unchurched generations may mean rethinking some of our norms. Good coffee, with alternative milk for allergies, needs to be given. This is just what they are used to in our modern 'café' culture. Knowing how and when to ask about follow up can be a bit tricky, but is worth the effort. Sometimes, a member's phone number or email (with an invitation to contact if they would like to meet up during the week for coffee) is preferable to a guest being asked to provide their personal details on a first visit.

Welcoming newcomers into Christ's family can be a fine balancing act. Sometimes we will get it right, other times not. The important thing is that we keep trying and keep improving. If we can keep three key things in mind, we can't go far wrong. **Firstly**, church members come to worship with an expectation that they are there as hosts and not guests. **Secondly**, we approach newcomers with the intention to provide for them, not get something from them. **Thirdly**, we keep trying to look at every aspect of our church with fresh eyes and from the perspective of those God is calling to join us.

How has your church refocused your welcoming lens? What have you tried that works? Please share with us.

Hope25 Contact Details:

Website: <https://www.hope25.com.au/>

Email: info@hope25.com.au

Hope25 Parish Working Group Meeting Notes:

When was the last time you visited a new church for the first time? How does it feel?

What welcoming practices do you find most helpful?

How can we accommodate diverse needs in welcoming? e.g., extroverts and introverts.

For further discussion, watch the [5-minute video on welcoming on the Hope25 Youtube](#).

Step #6

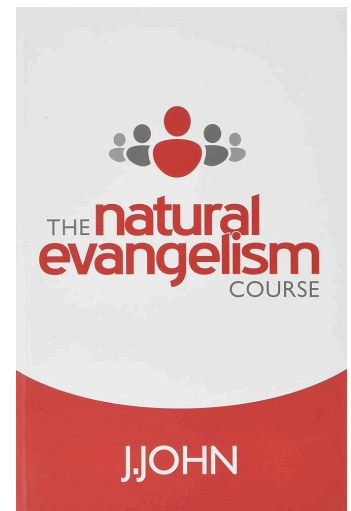
Invest in Training for Evangelism

Training our people and ourselves to be comfortable in sharing our faith is an important step in preparing for Hope25 and a life of witness to Jesus. This month we will showcase some training resources that you could use to help you get equipped for the greatest privilege we have – sharing our Hope in Jesus. These are just a taste of what is on offer and you can find more training resources here.

1. Natural Evangelism

Canon J. John is an Evangelist in the Church of England. Apart from being one of the funniest clerics you will ever hear, he is also very effective in evangelism and training others in evangelism. His book, *The Natural Evangelism Course*, is one that we here at Hope25 recommend.

The first reason we like it is that it is just as the title suggests, very “natural”. Evangelism becomes just an ordinary part of our Christian lives. The second thing we like is that it is very comfortably Anglican. This is a course written by a person from our strand of world Christianity. The third thing we like is that it is an accessible course for anyone to run. A busy Vicar, or an interested lay person, in a small group or as a whole church, this course is within reach.



SESSION 1: The 'Why' of Evangelism

SESSION 2: What is the Good News of Christianity?

SESSION 3: What is Friendship Evangelism?

SESSION 4: This is My Story

SESSION 5: Demonstrating the Good News

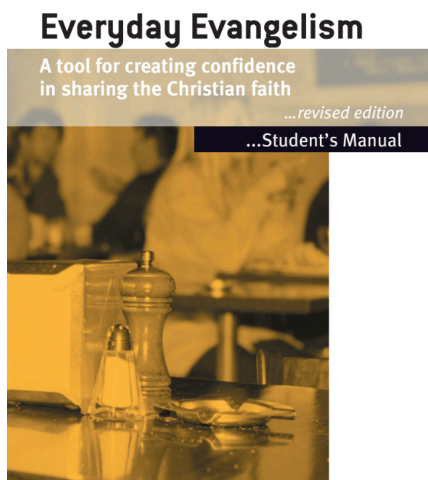
SESSION 6: How Can We Be Empowered for Evangelism?

You can purchase this book [here](#) and/or watch J. John speak about it [here](#).

2. Everyday Evangelism

Closer to home, is a course written by Dr Stephen Abbott. Steve has been an evangelist in Australia for many years and loves to help others grow in their confidence in sharing their faith with others. Steve wrote a course because of “a growing conviction that most Christians

needed an introduction to their privilege and responsibility to share Jesus Christ within their daily spheres of influence.” The resulting course is called “Everyday Evangelism”.



It is a four-session course that covers the following:

- You are wired for witness
- Sharing your story
- Getting the facts straight
- Handling tough questions

Steve has generously made the first session of the training manual available for [download free](#) from the Hope25 website. Full manuals are available for purchase. You can run the course yourself using the manual and student books. We also have videos of Steve training people in this course that you can use in your local context, [also available from the website.](#)

3. The Ripple Effect

City to City Australia has developed a new training resource called The Ripple Effect. The aim of the resource is to shift the evangelistic culture in the church for effective and sustained impact; going beyond just training people in the ‘how to’. It can either be delivered by having someone lead a workshop in your church, or by using the on-line modules, and they can providing coaching and support for your church leaders.

Ripple Effect hopes you will see:

- Every person praying regularly for their friends and family
- Everyone living a life ‘on mission’ and ready to serve God
- Every person feeling confident to share their faith
- A welcoming and evangelistic culture that’s outward facing
- A greater gospel presence in your local community
- An excitement about what God might do in your context
- Not just another course but transforming an entire church culture positively

Embracing Training Opportunities

As mentioned above there are more training resources available on the website. What matters is being intentional about embracing at least one of these in preparation for Hope25. We need to equip ourselves and each other in being ready for the season of proclaiming hope.

What training will your parish do to prepare?

Hope25 Contact Details:

Website: <https://www.hope25.com.au/>

Email: info@hope25.com.au

Hope25 Parish Working Group Meeting Notes:

Individually, share a story about someone who first chatted to you about Jesus. How did God bless you through that person?

How might a training course in evangelism help us to be a blessing to others searching for hope?

Which of the evangelism training resources look most interesting for your context? (you may wish to do further research online)

What might be the next action you can take?



Step #7

Practice Compelling Invitations

Along with this article, you may like to consider the previous [Hope25 planning steps](#), especially the step "[Build relationships with the people you are trying to reach.](#)"

The invitation of Phillip to Nathaniel

As Phillip invited Nathaniel to "come and see" Jesus in John 1:46, many have found their journey into the Christian faith begins with an invitation to church. Archbishop Temple famously wrote that inviting people to see Jesus is "*the greatest service one person can do for another.*"

So, you have a friend or loved one you would love to help in their spiritual journey? And you would like to invite them to a church service or activity but feel nervous or hesitant for some reason? You are not alone.

Practice inviting to anything

Practice inviting your friends to anything. Invite them to a meal, invite them to coffee, invite them to a concert. Reflect on how invitations are an act of love to share life together. An invitation is a gift that helps someone feel loved, even if they are not yet ready to accept. Inviting to a church activity is no different! Invitations require a depth of friendship and a willingness to include others in what is important to us.

Start your invitation with prayer

Well, not the actual invitation, that would be weird. But in considering who and when and how to invite someone to church, ask the Lord for help. Pray for your friend. Ask him to give you good words and help the person to respond positively. This will align you to God's will and remind you who is really doing the work here.

Be open about your church involvement and give general invitations

General invitations are a great way to start. Let people know you're a Christian and share which church you attend, offering an open invitation for them to join anytime. You might like to ask them if they have ever been to church before, and what it was like. Then the invitation becomes part of a conversation, and you may discover their picture of church is very different from yours. Talk with your friends about the roles you have in the church and how they enrich your life. If you use social media, consider sharing appropriate photos of church activities to give your friends a glimpse into this meaningful part of your life.

Invite people to Christian activities that have a special value to you

Our friends are interested in what we are passionate about. This includes sharing what you love about the church service or activity you are inviting to.

For example:

- *This service is always one of the highlights of my year.*
- *Last year when I was suffering I got so much comfort and strength from this group.*
- *I love the music in this service.*
- *This Christian course is one of the most helpful things I've done recently.*
- *I'm on the planning committee for this event, and I'd love you to see it.*

When discussing, be ready to answer with key information

What details can you share that would be helpful to your friend? What is it like and what will happen there? What is the start time, and when does it end? Is there food? Will they have to give money? Is there a social aspect, and if so, is it optional? Is it safe to be an observer, or will I be expected to participate in some way (e.g., communion)? How many people will be there? Can you share an online link to previous messages from the preacher so they can get a sense of the church?

Relationships before results

Pray for the person more than you pray for your invitation. The important thing is to be a Christ-like friend, rather than the performance of an invitation. Trust that God will prompt a receptiveness to invitations at the right time. Many people are 'hungry but hesitant' and will appreciate ongoing opportunities.

It may help to find opportunities for your friend to meet other people from your church in other contexts. Compelling invitations are a team activity. Even when the response is indifferent or a clear rejection, your friend will sense your care in offering them a chance to engage with spiritual opportunities. Additionally, such moments can provide valuable insight into the reasons behind their hesitation.

Whilst not all of us are gifted evangelists, every believer can invite people to come and see.

This Advent and Christmas season, could you start practising invitations to church services and special activities?

Invitation Best Practices - A Training Video

We are pleased to share this 5-minute training video on *Compelling Invitations* with Jeri Jones Sparks (Anglican Minister and Evangelism Consultant)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xzYKbG1-eN0>

Hope25 Contact Details:

Website: <https://www.hope25.com.au/>

Email: info@hope25.com.au

Hope25 Parish Working Group Meeting Notes:

Has anyone invited you to something recently? As the recipient, what makes an invitation pleasant and what might make it uncomfortable?

Watch the 5 minute training video - what could we put into practice immediately?



Review your church website or some of the parish advertising for special events. Are they understandable by someone not familiar with your parish? Could you ask outsiders for feedback?

What are some of the best outcomes that might result from an invitation to church? Spend some time praying.



Step #8

Plan Your Hope25 Event

As we approach Easter, many parishes will have considered what they will do for Hope25. But we are all on a planning journey, with some more fully planned than others. If you haven't yet planned something for Hope25, it's not too late.

The [steps from the last newsletter](#) can help guide your planning. But what kind of event will best suit your context and the people you are trying to reach?

At the Hope25 National Workshop in February 2024, participants brainstormed a variety of events that parishes could hold during Hope25. Many of these have been transformed into [how-to guides available on the Hope25 website](#). These guides will guide you step-by-step through planning suggested events, such as an evangelistic service, a wine and cheese night, a festival, an op shop ball, an op shop fashion show, and an evangelistic course. Your parish can select one of these guides and implement it. That's fantastic.

You might also consider one of them as a springboard for ideas. The Op Shop Ball could transform into an Op Shop Bush Dance – brilliant! The wine and cheese night might turn into a Beer and BBQ event, or a mocktail-making evening – be creative.

Reflect on what will work in your context and who God calls your parish to be and connect with.

Authenticity is crucial here. Don't try to be something you're not as a parish; be who God is calling you to be. Consider the gifts and skills of the people in your parish. If you have some talented musicians, you might think about organising a musical event. If your parish struggles with rhythm, that might not be the best path for you. If you have fantastic cooks in your parish, consider hosting a foodie night and sharing the hope of Jesus through food.

So, what do you need to do to organise your event?

First, consider who should be on your event team? You have a parish Hope25 Working Group, will that also be your event team? For some parishes, they may be the same team, for others, a Working Group may also oversee Lenten studies, training, prayer, and reviewing welcoming in the parish, so a different, but overlapping event team might be a good idea. Are there people that should be on that event team who have particular gifts and skills that would be helpful to the organising, planning, and execution of the event?

Secondly, what needs to be planned for your event? What needs to be purchased (food, drinks, etc.)? Do you have a budget? What logistics need to take place, and in what order, to complete the event? Who is going to do what? Is this an event where you need to organise speakers and ask people to help with various areas at the time of the event? Is there content that needs to be organised?

Third, how will you communicate about your event? Communication is key to organising anything. The organising team will need to communicate well within the team. They will also need to communicate within your parish and help people to be involved and excited about what is happening. Finally, they will need to ensure communication that will bring people to the event. Relational invitations are often the best pathway, but depending on what event you choose, you may want to communicate through social media, your website, a local newspaper or other relevant avenues.

It may also be helpful to consider some "what if" scenarios, not to stop you from planning the event, but to ensure that you aren't surprised. An example is the date of the Federal Election, it may well fall between Easter and Pentecost. This shouldn't prevent you from holding your event, but be aware that the dates may clash. Who will be your first aid person if an issue requires first aid? What if more people show up than you expect? What will you do if a key volunteer or speaker gets sick? There is no need to panic about these ideas, but giving them a little thought (and prayer!) can help ensure a smooth pathway if something unexpected does happen.

As you plan, a key item to consider is what happens after the event. Is there a pathway for those who came to the event to be able to come into church? How will congregation members whose friends or family came along go about continuing to have spiritual conversations after the event? If someone decides to get involved in church or become a Christian, what pathways do you have for them to continue on their journey?

Your event doesn't need to be big. It doesn't need to be complicated. **But it does need to be authentic.** Have fun planning your event and have fun at the event. Continue to pray that God will use your work to share the hope that we can only have in Jesus.

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Hope25 Parish Working Group Meeting Notes:

Brainstorm what events might match the unique gifts and character of our parish community. What type of events would we be excited to invite friends to?

Are there resources we can make available during the event that points to hope in Jesus? e.g.: can we make available the Hope25 gospels of Luke for free at the event?

How can we create meaningful follow-up opportunities for those who attend the event? Is there a [faith formation course](#) we could plan and organise for later in the year?

What potential challenges might arise during our event, and how can we proactively address them?