

Churches Band Together to Bring Spiritual Renewal to America

As part of a growing national movement to ignite **spiritual awakening** in America, more than 14,000 churches are expected to invite people to come back to church on National Back To Church Sunday.

Although 83 percent of American adults identify themselves as Christians, only about 20 percent attend church on any given Sunday.

Some people have tried church, had a falling out, and never came back. Other people went to church in the past, moved or had a change in life circumstances. Still others went to church in their youth but drifted away. And some have just never been to church.

Regardless of the reasons, research shows about two-thirds of people would attend church if someone simply invited them. A study by LifeWay Research and the North American Mission Board of more than 15,000 Americans found 67 percent say a personal invitation from a family member would be effective in getting them to visit a church. Sixty-three percent say an invitation from a friend or neighbor would likely move them to respond.

“Many people are waiting for an invitation to be healed from the hurt previously experienced in church,” says Pastor Ralph A. Martino of First Church of Christ Holiness in Washington, D.C. “They want to know they are welcome and encouraged to come back to church.”

In response, thousands of churches representing a cross-section of denominations are encouraging members to invite family, friends, neighbors and co-workers to attend church as

part of the 4th annual **National Back to Church Sunday** on Sept. 16.

“This is the single largest annual community outreach in the nation, sharing the simple message and mission of inviting everyone in America back to church,” says Philip Nation, a spokesman for LifeWay Research. “This year we are **praying** for churches to band together and bring **spiritual renewal** to their communities through National Back to Church Sunday.”

Since the initiative began in 2009, National Back to Church Sunday has become a nationwide movement, with church members inviting more than 3.5 million family members, friends, neighbors and co-workers to special services.

In 2011, more than 7,600 churches—double the number of the prior year—representing 34 denominations participated in the nationwide effort to reach out to their communities, inviting millions of people to attend. As a result, participating churches opened their doors to an estimated 250,000 visitors. The churches welcomed an average of 34 new visitors and experienced an average 25 percent increase in attendance.