

Survey: Non-Churchgoers Favor a More Religious America

According to a Gallup poll released in May, a whopping 75 percent of Americans think the U.S. would be a better place to live if more people were religious—even though many of those surveyed reported they don't attend church themselves.

One suggestion being offered to help? Come back to church.

A growing national movement is inviting all of America to come to church on Sunday, Sept. 15, for National Back to Church Sunday.

As of Wednesday, more than 16,000 churches across all 50 states have signed up to invite their communities to church on Sept. 15.

The online tally upticks continuously as churches discover the free project and commit to promote the day in their congregation and their community, moving toward this year's goal of 20,000 churches across all denominations who are reaching out to the nation with special services on the same day.

The initiative—the largest nationwide effort at church outreach—draws on research indicating that although approximately 80 percent of Americans consider themselves Christians, only about 20 percent attend church. Yet about two-thirds of Americans would go to church if someone they knew asked them, according to a study by LifeWay Research and the North American Mission Board.

"It's been revealing to us that Americans greatly value the role of religion in our society and to realize how many people would be open to trying church again if a friend or family

member made it easy by inviting them,” says Eric Abel, vice president of Outreach, Inc., the nation’s leading provider of church communications resources that helped launch National Back to Church Sunday.

“Part of the idea for National Back to Church Sunday,” Abel adds, “is that by making this a day when entire church communities make a special effort to be welcoming, it is an easy time for someone to come back to church or come to church for the very first time.”

More than 95 percent of churches who participated in the event in 2012 indicated they would do so again, citing a 38 percent increase in attendance on National Back to Church Sunday and ongoing benefits of increased participation and enthusiasm.

“I really encourage pastors to do this next year,” reports Eric Evans, pastor of Walnut Grove Baptist Church in Hollister, N.C., in a survey comment. “Not only was it a great way to get visitors in, but it also forces you to examine your church to see how ready you are for them.”

There is no charge to participate in the event, and the website at [backtochurch.org](#) offers a searchable roster of participating churches along with free publicity materials, tips for using social media to promote the event and information about using the Back to Church Facebook page and YouTube channel.

In addition, banners, printed invitations and other time-saving publicity helps are available, as well as a richly resourced Back to Church kit. The kit includes a planning guide, videos, posters, e-book, sermons, children’s curriculum, samples of other printed resources and more than 60 digital resources, such as e-vites, web banners, PowerPoint presentations, logos and children’s resources. The videos, intended for use on Sunday mornings and on church websites, include the innovative, light-hearted and viral “Pastor Rap” video.