

ZION



THE AME ZION CHURCH
The Freedom Church

Back to Church

THEME: "YOU BELONG HERE!" ROMANS 15:7



Back to Church Sunday Guide

Theme: “*You Belong Here!*”

Scripture Focus: Romans 15:7 – “*Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.*”

Purpose

Dearly beloved, Back to Church Sunday is an opportunity to welcome individuals and families with radical hospitality. We celebrate and pray over the flock of God, reigniting church engagement and connection after summer. Through intentional ministry, we remind everyone that they are valued, loved, and belong in the body of Christ. This guide provides recommendations for engaging the local congregation and community. It is our prayer that every church will experience tremendous growth spiritually and numerically.

Pre-Back to Church Planning & Preparation

National Back to Church Sunday is on Sunday, September 21, 2025. Let's prepare an experience that parishioners will never forget. "According to experts, 82% of people say they'd attend church if a friend simply invited them, but only 2% of churchgoers ever do. Back to Church Sunday aims to close that gap. Each year, those churches that participate often see a 25-27% increase in attendance on that Sunday alone!" (subsplash.com)

1. Marketing & Invitations (1–2 Weeks Before)

- **Social Media Campaign:**

- Share inviting, warm graphics with the theme “You Belong Here!”
- Feature testimonies from youth, parents, and educators.
- Sample post:
“Join us this Sunday as we celebrate our students, families, and educators! Come ready for love, laughter, prayer, and a powerful worship experience. #YouBelongHere #BackToSchoolSunday”

- **Personal Invitations:**

- Encourage members to invite friends, neighbors, and relatives personally.
- Give youth printed postcards or digital flyers to share.



Let's use the class leader system to reach out and visit members. Each class leader is encouraged to examine their list and identify persons who took part in worship but no longer attend. Provide that list with current addresses and send them an invitation from you to attend church on September 21, 2025.

Sample letter

[Your Church Letterhead or Logo]

[Date]

Dear [Church Name] Family,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I am writing to personally invite you to join us for Back to Church Sunday on Sunday, September 21, 2025. This is a special day set aside across the nation for believers to reconnect, renew, and rejoice together in worship and fellowship.

Over the past year, many of us have faced challenges that may have pulled us away from regular worship. Back to Church Sunday is an opportunity for us to come together again, rekindle our faith, and strengthen our bonds as a church family.

Our theme this year is "A Place to Belong" (Romans 15:7 – "Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."). We believe God is calling each of us to find joy, healing, and community in His house.

On this special Sunday, you can look forward to:

- Spirit-filled Worship Service – lifting our voices together in praise.
- A Powerful Word from the Lord – a message of encouragement and renewal.
- Fellowship & Refreshments – reconnecting with one another after service.
- Inviting Atmosphere – bring your family, friends, and neighbors!

We need you—your voice, your presence, your prayers, and your love—to make this day truly meaningful. Whether you have been with us every Sunday or it's been a while since you've attended, know that there is a seat waiting for you at the table.

Please mark your calendars, spread the word, and most importantly, come expecting God to do something extraordinary in your life and in our church.

We can't wait to welcome you back home on September 21st!

With love in Christ,

[Your Name]

[Your Title – e.g., Pastor/Minister/Church Leader]

[Church Name]



2. Radical Hospitality Training (Week Before)

- Host a **30-minute training** for all greeters, ushers, and volunteers. First impressions make a difference. I love going to Chick-fil-A, not so much for the food, which is very tasty, but because of the customer service. The employees are friendly, hospitable, and interested in my needs. They are fully engaged and take pride in being a member of the Chick-fil-A staff. The church has a product that is better than chicken. In fact, we have a product that will satisfy the hunger and thirst of everyone who receives Him. His name is Jesus!
- The Pastor and ministers are encouraged to identify persons who have the gift of hospitality (1 Peter 4:9-10).
- **Smile & Engage:** Greet everyone warmly by name if possible. Stay positive. Refrain from using language such as ***“Where have you been or You finally came back!”*** Our body language should match our words of reception, affirmation, and warmth.
- **Use Affirming Language:**
 - “We’re so glad you’re here!”
 - “You belong here and we mean it!”
 - “Your presence makes this day special.”
- **Inclusivity Reminder:** Be sensitive to new guests, single parents, and families with varying needs.

3. Space Preparation

- **Decor:**
 - Bright, cheerful colors like yellow, blue, and green.
 - Posters and banners that say, *“You Belong Here!”*
- A **photo backdrop** for families to take first-day-of-church photos. **Welcome Table:**
 - Small gift bags for students with pencils, bookmarks, and an encouraging scripture card.
 - Resource table for parents (school info, tutoring resources, church youth programs).

Worship Service Flow

- **1. Pre-Service (15-20 Minutes Before)**
- **Music:** Play upbeat gospel and contemporary Christian songs.
- **Greeters:** Positioned inside and outside to welcome everyone.
- **Photo Op:** Encourage families to take pictures at the photo backdrop.

Radical Hospitality Strategies

1. During Service

- Assign “Hospitality Champions” to sit near newcomers and help them feel comfortable.
- Encourage youth to participate actively (ushers, scripture readers, greeters).
- Welcome back, members who have been absent with love and kindness. As stated on page 3, use affirmations.

2. After Service

Fellowship Time:

- Host a light reception with refreshments and games for youth.
- Create connection spaces for parents to meet and socialize with one another.

•Engagement Cards:

- Collect visitor cards to follow up with a personalized “Thank You for Coming” note or text message.

Follow-Up Plan

•Monday After Service:

- Post photos from the event on social media with the hashtag **#YouBelongHere**.
- Send thank-you messages to families and first-time visitors.



Week After: Do the follow-up!

- Invite families to upcoming youth programs, Bible studies, or family events.
- Continue to pray publicly for schools and students during worship.

Sample Language for Volunteers

- **Welcome Phrase:**
“Good morning! We’re so glad you’re here. This is a special Sunday because we want everyone to know—you belong here. There’s a place for you and your family in this church.”
- **Farewell Phrase:**
“Thanks for worshiping with us today. We’ll keep you and your family in prayer this school year. Remember, you always belong here.”

In conclusion, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is encouraging our congregations to plan and execute a Back to Church Sunday on Sunday, September 28, 2025. Feel free to be creative and innovative with an experience that fits your context. Whatever you do, make sure that the welcome back experience is memorable. It was the great poet, Dr. Maya Angelou, who said,

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel!” (Pope, K. (2022, February 23)).

For each life that we touch through the love of Christ, we are making a lasting impact. Words and actions may fade, but how we make people feel as the Holy Spirit empowers us will speak louder than our words. Let’s do our best to make people feel welcomed, loved and that they belong.

- Bishop Brian R. Thompson, Sr.



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