



Diocese of the
MID-ATLANTIC
Anglican Church in North America

February 5, 2015

Dear Friends,

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. (John 1:40-42a)

In this season of Epiphany, the focus is on Jesus, the Light of the world, and his call to us to take the Gospel to all people. Sometimes it's easy to think of "mission" as the exciting things that other people do in other places. But mission begins with us, and it begins where we find ourselves day by day.

We live in a culture where fewer and fewer people who don't know Jesus Christ seek out a church on their own. The cultural supports and encouragements to do so are fading away. Consequently, our reaching out to share what the Lord has done in our lives has become all the more important.

And as people who have little first-hand experience of Christian community are increasingly filled with negative media images and characterizations of church and "religious people," our personal invitation to someone we know is vital. We can be the bridge to enable someone to explore a life-changing relationship with Jesus.

Let me offer an Epiphany challenge to you.

Would you commit that in the next week you would pray for the Lord's direction and extend a meaningful personal invitation to someone you meet or someone you know (who doesn't have a church home) to join you in an experience of Christian community? That could be to join you for Sunday morning worship; that's an obvious possibility but it's by no means the only one. You could invite someone to the Alpha course, your home group,

a men's breakfast, a Bible study at work, a young mom's group, a fellowship activity of your church, your church's outreach activity to help the homeless.

You don't have to lead someone to Christ *before* inviting him or her to church! In fact, we've learned that helping someone feel a part of Christian community first is a gracious way of letting them explore Jesus Christ and move toward the faith. They feel they *belong* before they come to *believe*.

The Apostle Andrew met Jesus and the first thing he did was tell his brother, Simon. May the Lord ignite in us that passion to share the Lord Jesus with those we know.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a plus sign followed by the name "John" in a cursive script.

The Rt. Rev. John A. M. Guernsey