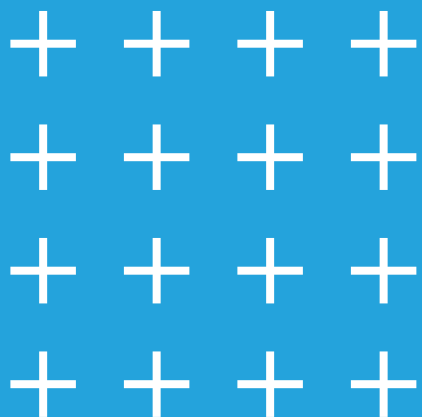
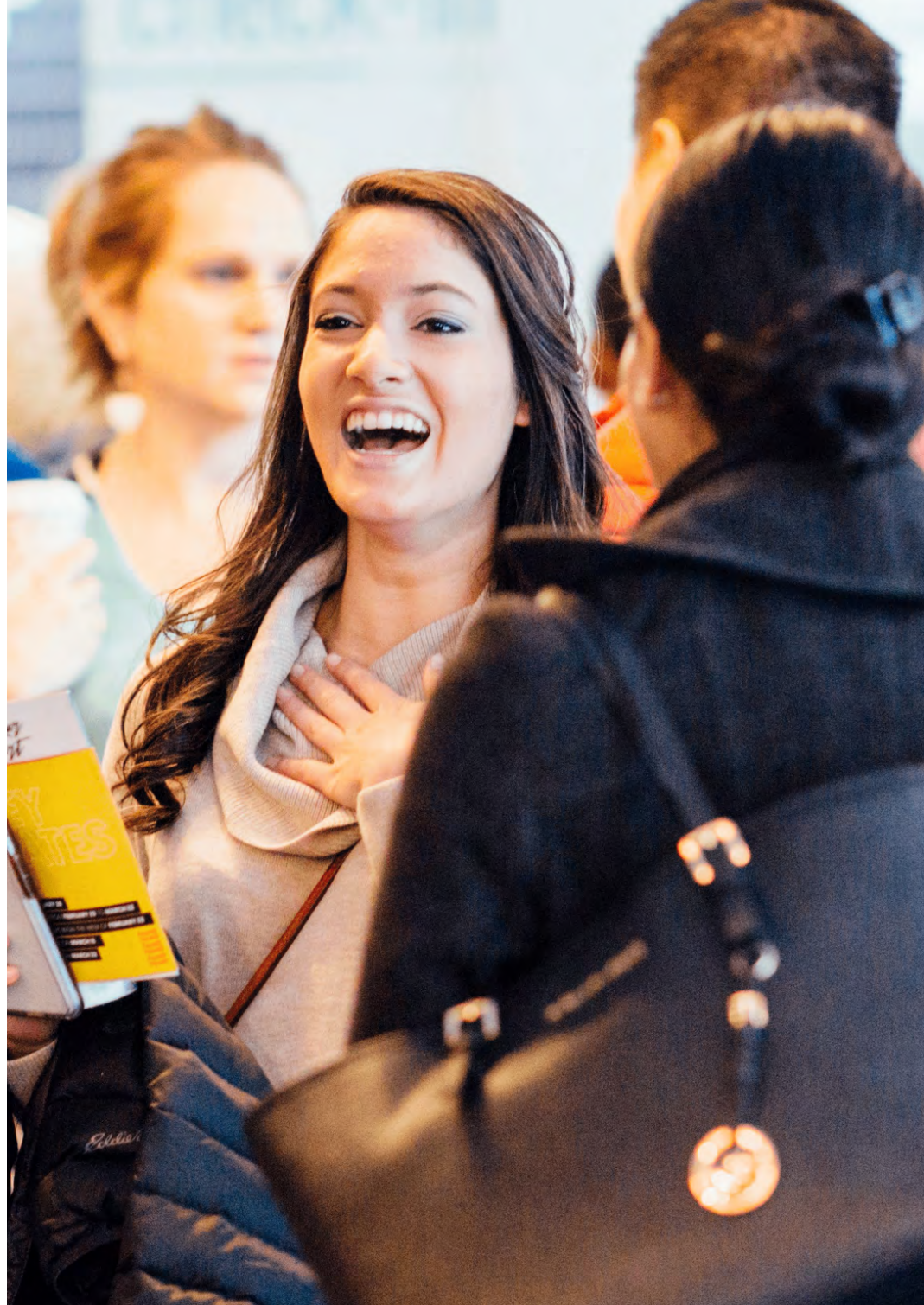




CHURCH  
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# Invite Culture and the Strategy Behind **EPIC Day**

Emily Gyimesi  
**Eventful Big Days**

EPIC Church in Philadelphia is known for its innovative and engaging approach to ministry, particularly through its invite culture. One of the church's most effective tools for maintaining momentum and growth is EPIC Day—a self-created church holiday strategically placed on the calendar to drive attendance and engagement. Below is a detailed exploration of the key components of EPIC Day, reinforced by insights from Emily Gyimesi, and actionable steps churches can take to create similar events in their communities.

## EPIC Day: An Invitation-Driven Strategy

EPIC Day is a critical component of EPIC Church's strategy to drive engagement and growth, particularly before Easter. It is strategically scheduled about six weeks before Easter, during a typically quiet period in the church calendar, to capitalize on the momentum and build connections into the summer.

### >>> Purpose and Timing of EPIC Day

EPIC Day was born out of a need to maintain church engagement during a tricky time in the calendar—the post-Easter slump leading into summer. Recognizing the challenge of sustaining momentum after Easter, EPIC Church created a strategic event about six weeks before Easter. This timing allows the church to capitalize on the natural rise in attendance during the holiday while also giving them a fresh opportunity to engage people before they disperse for summer

activities. By creating a "special holiday" that aligns with their mission, EPIC Church ensures that their community stays connected and engaged during a time when many might otherwise fall away.

### Quotes

- "EPIC Day was really created in the first place out of the struggle of when Easter falls. Easter hits right before the summer, and it's really hard for people to get into a groove. So, we decided to create our own special holiday called EPIC Day."
- "We have EPIC Day about six weeks ahead of Easter, and we find that's a really good time to help people get engaged early."



### Action Steps:

- **Identify Strategic Timing:** Look at your church calendar and identify a period that could benefit from a surge in attendance. Consider strategically placing a big day event to capture interest before a major holiday or during a typically slow season.
- **Create a Unique Identity:** Give your day a unique name and identity that aligns with your church's mission. This could resonate with your community and serve as an annual event that people look forward to.
- **Plan Around Community Rhythms:** Align your event with local community rhythms, such as avoiding major sports events or public holidays that might compete for attention. Instead, choose a time when people are more likely to participate.



# Building an Invite Culture

## Summary:

At the core of EPIC Church's success is its robust invite culture, which is nurtured throughout the year. EPIC Day is a focal point for this culture, where members are encouraged to invite their friends, family, and co-workers. EPIC Church understands that personal invitations are far more effective than any marketing campaign, so they equip their congregation with the tools and

language they need to extend these invitations confidently. By providing digital and physical invitations, pre-written messages, and even tips on inviting, the church makes it easy for members to spread the word. This approach ensures that the invitation to EPIC Day is widespread but also sincere and personal.



## Quotes:

- "Invite culture is really big for us here. A referral from someone saying, 'Hey, this place is making a difference in my life,' is way better than any ad we could run."
- "We provide them with digital invitation options, physical invitation options, and also the language to use. We make it very easy for them."



## Action Steps:

- **Equip Your Congregation:** Provide your congregation with tools to make inviting others easy. This can include pre-written messages, digital and physical invitation cards, and social media graphics.
- **Educate on Language:** Teach your congregation how to talk about your event in a natural and inviting way. Consider creating a resource page on your website that offers tips on inviting friends and what to say.
- **Create a Countdown:** Build anticipation by starting a countdown to your big day. Use social media, email campaigns, and church announcements to remind your congregation of the upcoming event and encourage them to invite others.



# The T-Shirt Tradition: Creating a Tangible Connection

## Summary

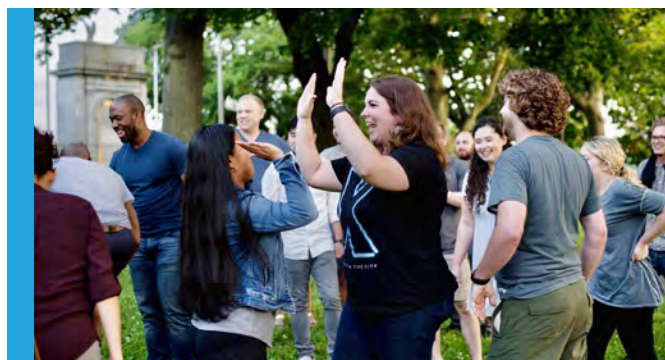
A unique element of EPIC Day is the tradition of giving away t-shirts—a simple yet powerful tool for creating a sense of belonging. These t-shirts are more than just church merchandise; they are designed to be stylish and comfortable, with a message that resonates with the church's mission, often saying "Every Person in the City." This thoughtful approach turns the t-shirts into conversation starters and symbols of community identity. By wearing the t-shirt, attendees feel connected to the church's mission and to each other, even before they fully commit to the church's beliefs. This tradition helps people feel like they belong to something meaningful, which can be a significant step in their spiritual journey.

## Quotes:

- "The t-shirt allows people to feel like they can belong before they necessarily believe in anything."
- "We purposely design it so it doesn't look like church merch. It's more of a conversation starter."

## Action Steps

- **Design for Engagement:** If you choose to create merchandise, like T-shirts, ensure it is stylish and comfortable so people will actually wear it. The design should be subtle enough to be a conversation starter rather than overtly church-branded.
- **Use as a Retention Tool:** Offer the merchandise exclusively on your big day, but also use it as a gift for first-time visitors throughout the year. This creates a sense of continuity and belonging for newcomers.
- **Leverage Social Media:** Encourage attendees to take and share selfies with their t-shirts on social media, tagging your church. This not only spreads awareness but also builds a sense of community online.



# >>> Service Experience: Balancing Practicality and Spirituality

## Summary

EPIC Day's service is carefully crafted to balance spiritual depth with practical relevance. Understanding that the big day will attract many first-time visitors, EPIC Church ensures that the message is accessible, engaging, and directly applicable to the lives of those in attendance. While they present a clear gospel message, they also address felt needs—topics immediately relevant to their audience's everyday lives. This dual approach ensures that attendees walk away with spiritual insights and practical tools to help them in their daily challenges. Additionally, the service includes engaging elements like video testimonies and a "selfie moment" to create a memorable experience that resonates with people long after they leave.

## Quotes:

- "We fight hard to manage the tension of delivering a clear gospel message while also being super helpful and practical."
- "The goal is to be the answer for them when they hit a rough patch and remember that church they visited."



## Action Steps:

- **Craft Relevant Messages:** On your big day, ensure the message is spiritually impactful and practically relevant. Consider addressing common life challenges that resonate with a broad audience.
- **Incorporate Testimonies:** Use video testimonies or live stories from congregation members who have experienced life change through your church. This helps visitors see the tangible impact of your community.
- **Plan Engaging Elements:** To create a memorable experience, including fun, interactive elements like a "selfie moment" during the service. Ensure these elements align with your church's personality and values.



# >>> Follow-Up and Retention: Keeping the Momentum Going

## Summary

The success of EPIC Day doesn't end when the service is over. EPIC Church strongly emphasizes follow-up and retention to ensure that first-time visitors don't slip through the cracks. This includes personalized follow-up communications, such as emails or text messages, and invitations to take next steps, like joining a small group or attending

a newcomer event. By using technology to track engagement and tailor communications, EPIC Church makes sure that every visitor feels noticed and valued. This intentional follow-up helps transform first-time attendees into regular participants, contributing to the church's overall growth and impact.



EPIC Church's success with EPIC Day provides a valuable framework for other churches looking to create their own big day events. By focusing on strategic timing, fostering an invite culture, creating tangible connections through merchandise, delivering relevant service experiences, and implementing strong follow-up



## Quotes:

- "Retention is really important to us. We want to take very good care of who's already here and steward well all that God's already blessed us with."
- "We're intentional about how we communicate with different pockets of people, including those who have been disconnected or moved away."



## Action Steps

- **Implement a Follow-Up System:** Develop a robust follow-up system that includes personalized emails, text messages, or phone calls. Ensure that every visitor from your big day feels noticed and valued.
- **Create Next Steps:** Make it easy for visitors to take their next step, whether joining a small group, attending a newcomer's event, or getting involved in a service project.
- **Leverage Technology:** Use tools like text-in systems to capture visitor information and track engagement. This allows you to send tailored communications based on their level of involvement.

systems, churches can increase engagement, reach new people, and grow their communities. As Emily Gyimesi emphasizes, the impact of such events goes beyond a single day; it creates lasting connections that can transform lives and build a thriving church community.