

## **Enabling families to connect with baptism**

### **First contact:**

Most people recognise the birth of their child as a significant event in their lives for which they want to offer thanks and so thus approach the Church. Occasionally it is older generations within the family who have suggested baptism as an appropriate response. However, the needs of the immediate family may differ considerably. In some cases it may be appropriate to suggest a service of Thanksgiving, which also enables for some 'sorting' between those who see baptism as the first stage of a faith journey and those who wish to visit the church once to give thanks.

### **The service:**

Whatever liturgy is chosen, it is important that the church and those within it are accessible. This may involve a level of flexibility.

- Light a candle for those who can't be there.
- Involve the family within the service, e.g. presentation of gifts during the offertory if they are feeling brave.
- Is it possible to have another reading/poem pertinent to the family? Can they choose a hymn?
- Hand out prayer cards for family and friends to write their dreams and aspirations for the child on. These can be included in the intercessions, and/or collected and blessed by the Priest.
- Involve children wherever possible – through engagement with children, those unfamiliar with the church often engage more easily.
- Explain the symbolism.
- Use a 'bag for life' or 'memory box' (see below).

## **The Bag for Life:**

This contains items for the baptized child's journey of faith with a label attached explaining their significance. The bag can either be used during the sermon, and/or be presented at the end of the service. Items might include:

- A card of welcome.
- A book of prayers for quiet moments.
- A Bible to learn about the word of God.
- The baptism candle which lights their path.
- A packet of seeds (or bulbs) to live a life of expectation.
- A postcard giving information about church activities.

## **Memory Box:**

Similar to the bag, but also provides a place to keep correspondence from the church and activities which children and carers can do together.

## **Resources:**

*Making the most of your child's baptism.* Ally Barrett:

Written for parents and Godparents, this book explores the service, the role of Godparents, prayer and spiritual growth. It also provides songs and activities for children and parents and provides a list of resources.

*Creative Ideas for Pastoral Liturgy. Baptism, Confirmation and Liturgies for the Journey.* Brind and Wilkinson, Canterbury Press.

Includes both liturgical ideas and artwork on CD Rom