

July 2017

imagination

Opening new paths to faith

Investing in our engagement with baptism families to spark an amazing adventure with Jesus Christ

The Bishop of Tewkesbury, the Rt Revd Robert Springett



One of the sights that will stay with me all my life is of a group of Ugandan children drawing water from a well at their school. As they lifted the heavy pump they sang and danced, thankful for the amazing and precious gift of water. We, so used to simply turning the tap and finding it there, take this gift so often for granted, yet it is essential. We need it to wash, to be clean, to protect ourselves from germs and infection, and we need it to keep ourselves alive – without it we die!

It should be no surprise therefore that it is this precious gift that we use in baptism, ordinary water out of the tap, over which we

remember the great story of our faith and by which we pray those baptised may be cleansed from sin, born again, renewed in faith, and continue for ever living the risen life that is found in Jesus Christ.

To be baptised is to be called to live life to the full, to begin an amazing journey with Jesus Christ, who gives us life and wants us to journey with him. It won't always be easy – that is not his promise – but it will always, even in adversity, be filled with new possibilities, with hope and potential, for this is God's gift to us, that he has made us, loves us and calls us to life.

An amazing invitation indeed, offered for all, awaiting just one thing, a response from us...

Baptism bears bringing families back to church



St Lawrence's Church in Cheltenham is using personal invitation and a special gift to welcome baptism families back to church.

A member of the congregation knits a teddy bear for every child baptised at the church. Last Pentecost, they held a Pentecost Teddy Bears' Picnic when all the children were invited to bring their teddies and families for a Messy Church-style session with craft activities. Around 50 people came to the picnic and one family have become regular worshippers.

All families are sent a personal invitation to other key family services in the church's calendar including the crib service, Christingle service and Mothering Sunday.

The Revd Liz Palin, Team Vicar in the North Cheltenham Team Ministry, said: "This is a really important ministry and we all want to welcome more families to church, so for us it was an obvious thing to continue our relationship with our baptism families. It's about helping them to nurture their child in their journey of faith."

Making a difference for baptism families



The Revd Jo Wetherall, Diocesan Children and Families Officer

“This has been really good, so different from last time,” a parent said as she told me how her parish had welcomed her. “I met a really nice ‘man vicar’ at Mums and Toddlers’, who gave me the information. Then we were invited to church to talk about the Christening which I really enjoyed. I met the lady ‘Reverend’ and some other ladies from the church who will be there on Sunday, and now you have come to see us. Last time there was nothing, I just phoned up and we went to the church on the day.”

It isn't really appropriate to punch the air and shout 'yes!' as you walk away from such a visit, but I really wanted to. This church is making baptism a mission priority - they really are taking the bigger Kingdom view, that engaging with baptism families is a step in sparking an amazing adventure with Jesus Christ. Although their professions mean this family will never be long-term members of this church, the baptism is very much an important part of their faith journey.

On the day, the ladies were there to welcome, to read and to encourage. During the service, I wrapped a blanket made by a member of the congregation, around the baby. The “Ahh” which rose from the family and friends was a significant response to a meaningful symbol of welcome and belonging.

Find out more about the Archbishops' Council Research into Baptisms and the ideas and resources available at <https://churchsupporthub.org/baptisms> or contact Jo at jwetherall@glosdioc.org.uk

Events and training

Saying Goodbye: Remembrance Service

Saturday 1 July, 6pm, Tewkesbury Abbey

A service for anyone who has either personally lost a baby at any stage of pregnancy, at birth or in early years, or who has been affected by a family member's or friend's loss. We welcome anyone who is grieving the fact that they haven't had children. Babies and children are also invited to come with their family.

Creation Celebration

Sunday 9 July, 1pm to 4.30pm, Cotswold

Farm, off A417 nr Duntisbourne Abbots, GL7 7JS

Suitable for all ages. Bring a picnic and discover the wildlife of this beautiful Cotswold estate, together with people from other local churches. The day will end with tea and cakes and a short time of outdoor

worship. Activities will include walks, nature trails, pond dipping and craft activities all based around the theme of Homes. For more information, please contact Maria Wells, mariageoffwells@gmail.com

Digital media training

Thursday 13 July, 7pm to 8.30pm, St Stephen's, Cinderford

Sharing our stories in new and different ways, including through digital media, is one of the priorities that was highlighted in the new LIFE vision for our Diocese. We would like to help train and resource more of our congregations, clergy and parish teams to feel confident in using social media both to promote our churches and to share stories of individual faith journeys. Places are free, but please let us know you are coming: by emailing kclamp@glosdioc.org.uk or 01452 835515.

Have your say: Visit Facebook /**Diocese.of.Gloucester**, email Katherine at kclamp@glosdioc.org.uk, follow us on Twitter @**glosdioc**, view videos on YouTube **Diocese of Gloucester** or visit our website Gloucester.anglican.org