

December 2017



Opening new paths to faith

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

The Bishop of Gloucester, the Rt Revd Rachel Treweek

imagination

At the start of this New Year we celebrate the season of Epiphany. Our gospel readings point us to events and encounters of realisation as people recognise something more of who Jesus is. It is a time of inner spark and revelation. Unlikely foreigners searching for a king fall down and worship the baby Christ, the light of the world. At a wedding feast Jesus the man transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary and reveals his glory. But before this comes the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan - Heaven is opened and Jesus is revealed as Son of God.

‘Investing in our engagement with baptism families’ is one of the LIFE priorities we have discerned together, and Epiphany is a very good season to be thinking about ‘sparking an amazing adventure with Jesus Christ’, the one who came that we may have life and have it to the full.

I celebrate the fact that parents and carers continue to request christenings, and for those who have little understanding of what it is truly about, there is a wonderful opportunity for the church to offer a welcoming space for sudden or emerging realisation of who God is and what that means for them and their child.

The service of baptism includes the giving of a lit candle. Whatever lies ahead in the life of the newly-baptised child, we pray that they will go on discovering the light and life of Christ as stronger than darkness and death. But the tiny flame is also an invitation for our own seeing to be illuminated by the light of Christ that we might see differently.

This month every PCC will be receiving a letter from Bishop Robert inviting us to take a fresh look at baptism in our worshipping communities. I pray there will be many stories of epiphany moments as we look with imagination at the God-given possibilities around families and baptism. May new paths to faith be opened.

Messy Baptism preparation

By Diocesan Children and Families Officer, the Revd Jo Wetherall

Building relationship is often what lies at the heart of our preparation for families who ask to have their child christened; it's the reason that for nine out of 10 families the preparation they receive is a visit from their vicar. But what can you do if you want to extend that relationship, to initiate a community for those who otherwise see baptism as an individual, family event?

This was the question posed by a multi-parish benefice near Gloucester. They had a healthy number of families requesting Christenings and recognised an opportunity to establish links between the families and members of the church.

The group decided to adopt a Messy Church style session, including a focus on baptism symbols, activities which relate to baptism, a play space for babies and toddlers, an opportunity to visit the church and walk through the service, plus time for the vicar to talk with the families.

Parents who recognised each other from school pick up were introduced, so too the children who would be starting school together.

One family said: "We were totally overwhelmed at the introductory afternoon, such a wonderful atmosphere, activities and explanation for the children to take part in so that both our children were fully prepared for the service. The day itself totally surpassed our expectations, you have blessed us with such wonderful memories of such a special day."

Events and training

Worship Leader Training

Tuesday 9 January, 7pm

Formal training for lay people to lead services of the Word, usually where they worship on a regular basis. They may also lead all-age worship. This is the first of five sessions. For more information contact nkent@glosdioc.org.uk

Leading a Whole-Life Disciple-making Church with LICC

Saturday 20 January, 10am to 4pm, Christ-church, Abbeydale, Heron Way, GL4 5EQ

Lay and ordained people with influence in their local church will be introduced to different aspects of making connections between people's Monday to Saturday lives and our Sunday worship. £10 (includes refreshments and lunch). To book email nkent@glosdioc.org.uk

Welcoming people to new housing developments—training and networking events

Thursday 18 January, 2.45pm to 4.30pm, St Lawrence, Bourton on the Water and 7.15pm to 9pm at St George's Church, Church Road, Upper Cam, Glos GL11 5PQ

For groups from parishes which have new housing developments of up to 300 houses. We will discuss welcome and find out how to use a new Welcome Pack, produced by the

priority group, to be adapted locally. Email cdigby@glosdioc.org.uk by 12 January with the names of those who would like to come.

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