

7

Christening chums

Why not assign 'christening chums'? These are people who journey with the family from the start; from baptism preparation sessions, to welcoming and sitting alongside the family in church, to praying for and keeping in touch with the family after the service.

Keep in touch

Keep families connected on their journey. Sign them up to receive invitations to family friendly events and socials, as well as sending them information about Messy Church/toddler group/dads' breakfasts, or any other appropriate gatherings.

Encourage families to sign up to receive the quarterly newsletter 'Next Steps' at www.churchofenglandchristening.org – full of practical ideas for continuing along the journey of faith.

8

9

Let's get together

Sometimes families need a reason (or excuse) to make contact with the church again. Arrange a picnic/barbeque/tea party and invite families who recently had a christening or started coming to church. Include any christening visitors in the invitation, along with a few other congregation members (with and without children). Some simple games or crafts on arrival will give people a focus and chance to mix.

Remember anniversaries

The Mothers' Union in Cumbria produce Baptism 1-5 year cards for sending to each child on the anniversary of their christening. Details via Church House, Penrith (01768 807777).

Alternatively, sign up to use the Pastoral Services Diary, a new web-based software designed to help churches with the administration of services such as Baptisms, Weddings or Funerals. www.pastoralservicesdiary.org

10



Hints & Tips

Christening



Me reach
In reach
Out reach

Christening

In Cumbria, we are privileged to have a large number of families bringing their children for baptism within a christening service. *(Research has shown that most families of whatever denomination refer to child baptism as Christening)*. Offering a genuine warm welcome, with language that they can understand, can make a huge difference in helping families find a home within your congregation. How can we ensure that what they experience, hear and see before, during and after the service encourages them to continue the journey they have begun? How do we create a spark of interest that runs deeper than simply enjoying the service and provokes them to engage with the possibility of God?

As part of the **God for All** vision to help everyone across Cumbria discover more of God and God's purpose in their lives, here are some tips that churches around the county have found to be effective:

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Be prepared

Is the congregation prepared to offer a genuine welcome to christening families? Maybe explore and discuss some practical ideas that the whole church can get involved with during a PCC or other meeting. Look at your service with fresh eyes – how easy is it to follow if you are new to church, or a small child not yet able to read?

First impressions

Make sure that the church is set up as creatively as possible for families, (e.g. changing area, toilet, carpet/rug with toys, story sacks, booster seats) as well as encouraging participation during the service. One local church has produced an activity booklet to accompany the service. Go to <https://goo.gl/rL3GKZ> to download. Go to <https://goo.gl/pzub13> for further details of ways to make a good first impression.

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Welcome

Have people on the door who smile, are willing to help with buggies, changing bags, etc. – demonstrating practical care. Remember: with small children, just getting dressed and out of the house can be a struggle.

You'll want to know

Design a simple leaflet or welcome pack for families, outlining all that's on offer throughout the week. Include photographs of the people associated with the activities. Make sure your key group leaders (such as toddler groups) are also intentional and welcoming in their approach to new families, as well as knowing who to signpost for baptism requests.

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Be strategic

Consider having one christening service date per month, during the regular morning service, with refreshments afterwards. Nationally, less than 4 in 10 christenings are conducted during a normal church service, yet these families are twice as likely to become regular churchgoers.

Prayer

Ensure that the names of children (and their families) coming for christening are in the weekly notices, or on a special PowerPoint slide before the service (if available), or on the noticeboard at the back of church. For further creative prayer ideas go to <https://goo.gl/tpKDP6>.

6