

Proposal for Parish Baptism Programme At Home in God's House

Background

In 2006 the PCC and the Living & Praying group looked at ways to improve our Baptism preparation and support. The proposals have worked to a point but recently there have been a few issues with families and candidates for Baptism. A recurring problem is that of discomfort – both of church people feeling that Sunday services are disrupted and for non church visitors feeling out of place in church surroundings. This programme aims to help all people to feel 'At Home in God's House'.

Journeying Together

The following proposals aim to address some of these issues and encourage families and the whole congregation to journey together towards the Baptism service. The regular congregation will be a valuable part of this nurture and support: the congregation has a responsibility to the candidate as much as the parents and Godparents.

1. The Enquiry

When people phone or contact us enquiring about baptism a date will be arranged for the clergy to visit them in their home. A home visit is a useful pastoral connection between the church and the family.

2. The Visit

As well as taking practical details, the clergy will use the home visit to begin the discussion about the nature and purpose of Christian Baptism and the Church's teaching. It may be appropriate at this stage to also offer the service of *Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child* either as an alternative to Baptism or as well as.

3. The Introduction

At a convenient time before the Baptism Sunday the candidate and family will meet again in church with the clergy and, if there are any, other families and candidates for the same day. This will help people to become more familiar with the building and the service and with other families.

4. The Welcome

They will be encouraged to come to church again on a Sunday before the Baptism service and they will be welcomed and prayed for at that service. The Church of England provides for this in *Common Worship: Welcome of Those Preparing for the Baptism of Children*. The church congregation will be asked to pray for the candidates by name and will be encouraged to come to the Baptism services to support the new Christians.

5. The Baptism

This will be arranged for one of the set Sundays for celebrating Baptisms at St Agnes. These will be offered as special dates set aside to the celebration of Baptism. The baptismal family and Godparents will be given a reserved pew at the front of the church.

6. The Party

After Baptism the candidates will be encouraged to return with their families etc and will be specifically invited to a children's party and service.