

What is the Life Events project all about?

The Church in Wales has been meeting people and supporting them at life's big moments for many, many years:

- The arrival of a child
- The beginning of a marriage
- The loss of someone they knew and loved

For some people, coming to church is part of their everyday life. When they want a ceremony or a service, there's no other place they would choose. But for many others coming to church at those life's big moments is actually the first, or perhaps the only time, they will have encountered the good news of God's love, and met with God's people in a local context.

These 'big moments' in people's lives are referred to as 'Life Events' and over the past few years a lot of research has gone into listening to the voices of those who interact with the church at these special times.

- What is their experience of the church?
- What do they think?
- And how do they feel?

Alongside that research, there has also been a great deal of Biblical reflection and out of that has come three core principles:

- **Attract**
- **Build**
- **Care**

It's what we might call the 'ABC' of mission through Life Events.

So firstly, **attracting** people is not just about attracting them to come to church for a service or a ceremony at one of these moments. It's about doing things that attract them to the good news of God's love revealed in Jesus Christ, and maybe just draws them onward in their lifetime journey of faith. And in a culture where people no longer know what a church building is for, or what's on offer there, working to attract them is really important.

Secondly, it's about **building** understanding with those who come to us at these big moments in their lives. The truth is that we're not living in a culture that is one or two generations post-church, but we're living in a culture that might be five or six generations post-church. Many, many people have no idea of what the Church stands for anymore, nor what happens in our buildings. Our church buildings can be very unfamiliar places, and an increasing number of people will never have been inside one. We can't take anything for granted anymore, so part of our task is to build understanding with those who come to us, understanding about who we are and what we do.

Arguably though, it's perhaps even more important that we look to build understanding *within* the church. The Church is gifted in so many things, including it would seem, an extraordinary gift for knowing what people think without ever actually asking them! All the more reason then why all the research around the Life Events project has been based on listening to the thoughts, feelings and questions of the real people who interact with us. This research has helped us better understand what people are going through at these key moments in their lives, and how we can build bridges and connect with them.

And then the third and final core principle of our Life Event's 'ABC', is that we are really seen to be **caring** about what we do. This simply means that we do things as well as we can possibly do them, so that people go away having positive memories of a positive experience. Furthermore, it's incumbent on all of us in the Church in Wales to develop consistent, good practice, so whether people attend a wedding in Cardiff or messy church in Caernarfon, their positive experience of God's presence and God's people is the same in each and every place.

- **Attract**
- **Build**
- **Care**

These are the principles through which we reach out and connect with those who come to us at their special moments in life.