

Be confident in what you have to offer

Churches are great places for people to pause and reflect, perhaps light a candle or place a stone, or maybe put something on a prayer tree or on a notice board. Research shows that what we offer as churches is both valued and valuable, and that people really don't mind us talking about God. After all, where else can they go for that conversation?

Prayer especially is one of the ways in to that conversation; one of the ways we can be confident in talking to people. It might be at a funeral visit where, as the visit draws to a close, we might offer to light a candle, say a short prayer with the family, or perhaps leave a card with a simple prayer on it that the family can use afterwards. The worst that can happen if we offer to do that is they'll say "no thank you". But often that is a really valued gesture in the busy-ness and the emotional intensity of all that's happening to the family at that time.

There are other simple things that we can do to remind people that as a church we are always there, and inviting them to join with us in prayer.

How about presenting wedding couples with a simple box containing a candle and a little prayer inside which says 'loving God, bless us as we plan our marriage'? Or perhaps a fridge magnet inviting godparents to pray 'loving God bless my godchild today'.

It can be relatively easy to get those who we have a conversation with to pray. But then there comes the day of the service itself when the family and friends gather on that occasion. And it turns out that prayer can be one of the ways we can be confident in engaging those who are present that day as well. And it can be as simple as something like a little prayer gift tag inviting people to hold it between their palms to focus their thoughts and prayers on the couple, or the child, or the bereaved and then to collect those gift tags up, to place them in a container and leave them with a family as a reminder of all those who supported and prayed for them that day.

Having the conversation about faith, about God, is something we can be confident in, and we can be confident that prayer is a very special gift and a wonderful way to start a journey of faith.