

“I’ve been able to connect with families when they bring baby home... More importantly, parents have theologically sound information about how to begin being the primary faith teachers for their children.”

## Churches and New Babies

Like many churches, we recognize the birth of a baby as a new member of our congregation. The baptism may happen later, but the Sunday after the birth, or as close as possible, we place a rosebud on the altar. The parents aren’t usually at the service, but the congregation rejoices with them as another child of God is welcomed into the world.

The actual delivery of the flower to the family was often just a drop-off event, with no real contact between church and family. Recently, we challenged ourselves to make this experience more than just a flower. In other words: what could we do to make a better connection between family and faith?

## Our New Model: Going Deeper

As my ministry delves deeper into fully equipping parents to be the primary faith foundation of their children, I accepted the challenge to start those formational moments right away. At their baptism, every child and family receive a story Bible, a certificate of baptism, and a candle to light every year on their baptism date. But Baptism doesn’t occur right away, it can be weeks or months as family gathers, parents prepare, and the baby grows old enough to be out and about.

How to connect parents to the ministry of the church in a way that is more immediate and still meaningful? The answer came in a simple wooden cradle cross. Years ago, when my youngest son was born, our church delivered us a simple wooden cradle cross. I’ve treasured it ever since. It inspired me to create a new baby ministry.

The premise is simple. A short, personal visit by either me or another leader in our Children’s Ministry. We bring the parents the flower from the altar, a wooden cradle cross with a card of presentation, and a folder of resources. The folder is full of information on our children’s ministry programs, printed articles on faith formation from Building Faith, and additional resources about child development, nursery ministry, and faith formation. We

also include family graces and seasonal resources.

If there are older siblings, we include articles on helping children adjust to family changes, and I also bring a small inexpensive gift for the sibling (coloring book, stickers, or small toy). I also place my card in the folder so that the parents have my contact information. The folder is designed to be read at their leisure, to be returned to again and again.

## **Be Flexible and Open**

We have found about 20 minutes from start to finish is a good amount of time. For many of our young families, they may know who I am, but if this is their first baby, they probably have not connected with me directly. Through the visit, they know my face, have talked to me, and hopefully made a connection. They can ask questions big or small - the most common being about the church nursery - and know that I am there to support them.

The response has been very positive, and I've been able to connect with families whom I might otherwise have missed until their kids were in the nursery or Sunday School. More importantly, parents have theologically sound information about how to begin being the primary faith teachers for their children.

## **Items in the Baby Ministry Folder**

Again, here is the list of items we include in the folder delivered to the new parents.

- Information on our children's ministry programs
- Printed articles from Building Faith
- Additional resources about child development, nursery ministry, and faith formation
- Family graces
- If there are older siblings, articles on helping children adjust to family changes
- A small inexpensive gift for the sibling (coloring book, stickers, or small toy)
- My business card (church formation director) so parents have my contact information



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