

Babies Bring Families to Church

An interview with Mick Smart
Pastor
London, England
Trans-European Division

Interviewer: *Why do you value baby dedication so much?*

Pastor Smart: We use the “Blessing of Children” as a form of outreach into the community. Over a number of years in the Swindon church we have made friends in the community. We let people know that we are available for them, that we see them as part of God’s family and that He is interested in them and their families. They now know that we are happy to do blessings for their children even if the parents are not married and do not go to church. People know we are not judgemental and really care about them as a family.

Interviewer: *When someone requests the Baby Blessing how do you respond?*

Pastor Smart: When someone from the community asks for their child to be blessed, I go to meet them at their home and explain what the Baby Blessing means. We let them know that we usually do the blessing as part of the divine worship service at church. If that is not possible, then we offer to have the blessing at the church on Sabbath afternoon. We will even have the service in their home so we can have that special time with their family. I also invite them to choose a favourite Bible reading or hymn if they would like to do so.

Interviewer: *Do most of the blessings take place at church?*

Pastor Smart: Usually they do, during the Sabbath morning second service.

Interviewer: *How many usually attend?*

Pastor Smart: We have often had twenty or more people come to the church who would normally never come inside the building.

Interviewer: *What else goes on during their time at church?*

Pastor Smart: The basic service includes:

- Welcome
- Explanation of the Blessing
- Scripture relating to the service
- Hymn (preferably chosen by the family)
- Children’s story
- Collection/offering

- A message on God's love for the child and the family and how God makes a difference in our lives
- Prayer of blessing with all family members and friends invited to the front
- Presentation of the Baby Blessing certificate
- Special musical selection for the child and family
- Closing hymn
- Benediction
- Introduction of family to the children's Sabbath School leader
- A fellowship lunch with opportunity for the church to build relationships with the guest family

Interviewer: *The Baby Blessing is part of your outreach ministry. How successful has it been in bringing people to Jesus and the church?*

Pastor Smart: We have made many contacts this way. Some send their children to Sabbath School; others attend our Easter or Christmas services. Most of all, we are building bridges into our community. People hear about a God who cares about them. They discover our church as a community of people interested in them. They find that we're there for them whenever they need help, not just when they want to celebrate their baby's birth.