*Transcript to video* [*https://youtu.be/\_KQNNJdHzS8*](https://youtu.be/_KQNNJdHzS8)

**Be confident in what you have to offer**

Lots of churches have places where people can pause and reflect, perhaps light a candle or place a stone, or maybe put something on a prayer tree or on a notice board.

Recently I was on holiday and as I walked down a path towards a particular church, my eye was caught by a tree glowing with colour. And as I got closer I realised the colour was not actually blossom and it was not actually fruit. But what it was was multicoloured gift tags that visitors had hung onto the tree as a sign of their semi articulate unformed prayer as they got into that space and sat with their memories and their thoughts and their feelings.

That actually confirms something that we found out in our research. That prayer is one of those things in which the Church of England can be confident in offering.

It fitted in with the same sense in the research that we could be confident that what we offer is both valued and valuable, and that the people of England really don't mind us talking about God. After all, where else can they go for that conversation? But particularly that prayer 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 or perhaps to leave a card that has a simple prayer in 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 very often that moment becomes a space in the busy-ness and the emotional intensity of all that's happening to the family at that time.

Recently we were doing some research with couples who have had to go to church in order to connect and be married there, and one of the ideas we asked them about was a simple gift of a little prayer candle presented in a simple box. It says on it 'loving God, bless us as we plan our marriage', and one bride in the research said how much she loved this and how much she would have liked to be given it. She said it reminded her of, as she put it, of the religious aspect of her marriage and that she would keep it in her keepsake box for always.

And then we've learned over the past couple of years how very popular it's been to offer a gift to godparents. It's really really simple. It's a fridge magnet and who knew that a fridge magnet could be something that drew people into a journey of prayer? It simply says 'loving God bless my godchild today'. We invite people to put it up, to pray each time they see it for their godchild, perhaps other children in their family.

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 way in to starting a journey of faith.