

What is Baptism ?

- ▶ *A chance for all the family to get together, celebrate and thank God for the new life which he has given.*
- ▶ *It is a time when we remember that as well as being a member of a human family your baby is a part of God's family too, the family of the Church.*
- ▶ *It is sacrament, which means an outward and visible sign of God's love.*

When Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan he became aware of God as his Father and felt the special presence of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, it was a turning point in his life. After his death and resurrection Jesus commanded his followers to make new disciples and baptise them too. This has been done ever since by Christians throughout the world.

Why do we baptise babies?

Most parents feel a need to say 'thank you' to someone for the wonderful gift of their child, that 'someone' is of course the God who gives life to us all. Jesus told his disciples to baptise people who wanted to become Christians and join the church. The Bible tells us that whole households were being baptised and of course soon parents wanted their children to be baptised too.

Baptism is not like an insurance policy which you take out to make sure that your baby goes to heaven - God loves your child just as much now as after the baptism service. However, it does make sense to give your child the very best start in life and what could be better than to encourage them from the very earliest days to be open to God and to know of His love for them.

Some churches do not baptise children until they are old enough to understand everything for themselves. However we do make all kinds of decisions on behalf of our children including schools and medical treatment as we do our best to encourage them in the best way for their lives. We are pleased that you have decided to give your child the benefit of being welcomed into the church family. Please make the effort to bring them along to church throughout these early years so that they can have the best start that they deserve.

In the baptism service we also pray that one day they will want as adults to stand up for themselves to confirm the baptism vows which have been made on their behalf: this is called Confirmation.

When will the baptism take place?

Baptisms take place in the main Sunday Morning Service at church, because part of the service is the welcoming of the child by the congregation. Usually the baptism occurs in the Family Service which is held on the first Sunday of the month. In certain circumstances it may be possible to arrange another service in the month, however although we welcome children to all our services we find that Family Services are best for baptisms. At The Church on Fairford Leys the time of the morning service is 10.30am..

The Promises

The Service of Baptism begins with this question to the parents:

A & B, having heard these things, how do you respond to the offer of God 's grace?

The parents answer:

We/I thank God, and ask that our/my child be baptised.

The minister then says:

What name have you given this child?

The parents respond with the Christian names of the child. After which the minister takes the child into his/her arms and baptises him/her . Then the child is presented to the congregation and after that a lighted candle is presented to the child, (usually via Dad!) after which the parents and godparents are asked the final set of questions.

First of all the minister says to the parents:

A&B, I ask you now to respond to God's love and grace to your child/ren by making these promises:

Will you provide for your child a Christian home of love and faithfulness?

They answer: **With God's help we will.**

Will you, therefore, ensure that he/she is nurtured in the faith and life of the Christian community?

They answer: **With God's help we will.**

Will you set before him/her a Christian example, that through your prayers, words and deeds, he/she will learn the way of Christ?

They answer: **With God's help we will.**

And finally to the Godparents, the Minister asks:

Will you help these parents to nurture this child in the Christian faith?

They answer: **With God's help we will.**

The service continues with the final prayers, after which a final hymn is sung.

The service of baptism takes place within the normal Sunday Worship and we request that photographs are not taken during the service. However, at the conclusion of the service we invite families to gather round the font to take photographs.

Symbols used in the service

A Candle.

We present a candle to show that we pass from darkness to light. Jesus is described in the Bible as the light of the world and as Christians we are to shine

as lights in the world. Our world needs more than ever for us all to reject the ways of darkness and follow Christ in the Christian faith.

The Welcome.

At the end of the baptism the congregation are asked:

Will you so maintain the church's life of worship and service that he/she may grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord?

They reply: **With God's help we will.**

In this way the congregation are formally welcoming you as a family and your child in particular to the life of the church. We do hope you will join us for worship and make use of the various organisations that form part of the church's life, including our Sunday School which meets at 10.30am each Sunday apart from the first Sunday of the month when a Family Service is held

.

Records

A permanent record of the baptism with family details is recorded in the official registers of the church. A copy of this is given in the form of a special certificate as a reminder of this day.

Not just for babies!

Remember that parents can make their own profession of faith in baptism at the same time as their children. You may like to discuss this with the minister .

Godparents

You will need to consider names of godparents and these will be included in the church register and the baptism certificate. Being asked to be a godparent is always a real privilege and shows that you have a special place in the family, but there are expectations and responsibilities too. You are asked to promise that you

will love and encourage the child in the Christian faith by prayer, example and teaching.

Parents should not feel pressurised to choose the wrong people but try to find people who can make the promises and mean them.

Remember there is no right or wrong number of godparents; have as many or as few as you wish. Godparents often buy a small present for the child; they should remember that this is a Christian occasion and so perhaps buy the child a children's Bible or story book of Bible stories.

Prayers for families considering baptism

Your child isn't just your child - but God's as well. God loves your child and went to enormous lengths to show how much he loves all of his children, even to the point of dying on the cross.

This means that in a sense there are no such things as a "single parent", God is a loving parent too. In the days and years ahead try to remember that you should not try to bring your child up on your own, but rather with the help and support of God as well.

Here are some prayers which you may find helpful.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

God our Father, maker of all that is living, we praise you for the wonder and joy of creation. We thank you from our hearts for the life of this child, for a safe delivery, and for the privilege of parenthood. Accept our thanks and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, you welcomed children when others turned them away. Help me to love my child as you love her/him. Give me patience when I am tired, strength to cope when things get tough. Give your Holy Spirit of love and joy to abide in our home and keep us safe. Amen.

'God so loved the world that he gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal Life.'

The Gospel of John Chapter 3 Verse 16.