

Christening/Baptism Information Pack

We really are delighted that you are thinking of being baptised yourself or (more likely) bringing your child for baptism. For the purposes of this information pack we are going to assume the baptism is of a child. We hope that you will find the information helpful and we have laid it out in a question and answer format based on the usual questions we are asked.

Q What is the difference between a christening and a baptism?

A Really, the two words refer to the exactly the same ceremony. The church prefers to use the word baptism as christening does not describe the ceremony well but there is no difference. We will talk about a christening service but the importance bit in the middle of it will be a baptism. We will use both words as we go along!

Q What is baptism?

A Baptism is a ceremony that goes back 2,000 years to the beginnings of Christianity, of rinsing with water, as a one-off event. In church tradition it involves the sprinkling of a child's head with water from the font - the ancient stone basin located near the back of the church. The parents and godparents, on behalf of the child, make some promises that they will encourage the child in their own journey of faith. As we baptise, we welcome your child into God's church.

During the service all kinds of images and symbolism will tell the Christian story: -

- the cross which reminds us of Jesus' death for us will be traced on the child's forehead
- 'going under' the water reminds us of God's cleansing love and that one day we all die and yet be raised up in Jesus
- a lighted candle will be given reminding us that Christians are meant to be a light in all of the world's dark places.

“Baptism is about beginning, believing and belonging”

Q How did the tradition of baptising babies start?

A In the early years of Christianity, when adults came to Christian faith, and so were baptised, they naturally wanted to share the ceremony with their children as well, as a seal of God's love; a sign of belonging to the wider Christian family. So the tradition of baptising newborn babies soon became established.

Q How do I arrange to have my child christened?

A There are all kinds of ways to contact us and you will find these on the website but we really do like to get to know you before booking a baptism so please do come and visit us once you have read these notes and completed the application form. In each of our churches we have people able to discuss things with you but mostly we just want to get to know you.

Q Do I need to do anything before booking the service?

We think that what you are about to do is about as big as it gets and so before we book dates with you we are going to invite you to an evening session (about 90 minutes) where we are going to try to explore what exactly is going on when we get to the day. There will usually be a few families together at the same – it is part of the ‘getting to know you’ exercise but we will also try to give you a little intro in the Christian faith you are choosing for your child. At the end of the session we will book dates with you – please don’t assume dates are free until we get to that evening.

Q When do baptisms usually take place?

A Sometimes christenings are part of a normal Sunday morning service but, depending on the type of service, this may last over an hour. If you have lots of children likely to attend the service, or lots of guests not used to church services, then we may be best considering a lunchtime service which will be much shorter and just be tailored for you, your guests and any other baptism family booking for your date.

Q Can the service take place in any church?

Parents may bring their child to their own parish church – the one covering the church where they live. It is also possible in a parish church where there are other significant family links but that can never be assumed and we can talk to you about this. We are sorry – it isn’t possible for us to do it because you think a church is pretty. We have to establish a significant link.

Q How much does will it cost?

A Nothing - the service celebrates the free gift of God’s love! However, in order to enable the church to meet its practical running costs we are always happy to receive donations and we will leave your family and friends some envelopes for them to use for that purpose but it’s entirely up to you and them!

Q What about godparents?

There is a tradition of a having two godfathers and one godmother for a boy, and two godmothers and one godfather for a girl. It is just a tradition and we will not hold you to it. Three is the normal number for godparents but we are happy to stretch that to four but we cannot go beyond four. The role of godparent is a spiritual role of promising to pray for the child, and take an interest in their spiritual development and would normally be undertaken by people christened themselves and preferably practicing their faith. We will not be testing anyone (!) but it may help you keep below four candidates!

Q Can an older child or adult be christened?

A Absolutely! Yes! In this case the person makes the promises and recites the vows personally. We may also ask them to attend a different course of preparation but we are always delighted welcome people of all ages.

Q Can we choose some hymns and songs?

Sometimes, yes, there is a section on the form for you to tell us some of your favourite hymns and songs and where possible we will try to include at least one of them.