

## Baptism



### **What is a baptism?**

During a baptism, your child will be baptised with water. This is the beginning of an exciting journey of faith for your child and a special day for you, your family, and your friends.

### **Is there a difference between baptism and christening?**

There is no difference between a baptism service and a christening service. Some churches will use the word 'baptism' and some the word 'christening'. The moment when your child has water poured or wiped on his or her head is the actual baptism and is at the heart of the service. Babies are baptised during a 'christening' service just as couples are 'married' during a 'wedding' service.



### **What does baptism mean?**

Your child is precious to you and precious to God. You want the very best for them, and so does God. You want them to make the right choices in life, for themselves and for others. A baptism is just the beginning of this and so much more. Over the years to come, it is a journey you will share together with your child by:

- **Being there for your child** to talk to about the bigger questions of life – questions about hope, faith, and love.
- **Praying for your child** through the ups and downs of their faith journey.
- **Showing them practically** how to make good choices in life.
- **Helping them to learn more about their Christian faith**, through their church and in other ways.

Essentially, it is a commitment to start as you mean to go on.

### **What age can you be baptised?**

There is no specified minimum or maximum age for having a child baptised. When a child is baptised, the parents and godparents will make promises on their behalf. Older children (perhaps around the age of 12) may be mature enough to make the promises for themselves. Talk to your priest about baptising an older child or being baptised as an adult, and how this differs from a baby's baptism service.

### **Do parents need to be christened?**

You can have your child baptised regardless of whether or not you, the parents, are baptised. It is only the godparents who are required to be baptised, (so the only time a parent would have to be baptised is if they were also acting as a godparent).

### **Choosing godparents**

Godparents are really important. Choosing them is one of the biggest decisions you will make. Whether you are still thinking about who to ask or you have already asked some special friends or family members, discover more about what it means to be or have godparents.

Here are some key things which might help you decide:

- Godparents will be people who will be in touch with your family for many years to come. They may be relatives or friends of the family.
- They will be people who you know you can trust and who will be there for your child to talk about the bigger questions in life; questions about faith, hope, and love.
- They should feel ready to make some big promises about faith for your child in church.



- Every child should have at least three godparents, two of the same sex and at least one of the opposite sex to your child. Although there is no official maximum number of godparents, three or four is usual. If you would like more than that, talk to your priest about the practicalities and they will be pleased to advise.
- Parents may be godparents for their own children, providing they have at least one other godparent.
- Because of the very special role they have in supporting your child's faith journey, godparents must be baptised themselves. Ideally they should be confirmed too, but this is not essential.
- If you are thinking about asking someone who is under 18 to be a godparent, talk to your priest first. There is no minimum age for godparents, but they must be mature enough to understand the responsibilities they are taking on; your priest can help you decide if this is the right choice for your child and the young godparent.

You can talk to your priest anytime about choosing godparents and involving them in the christening preparation.

### **What happens during the service?**

Some parts of the service will be for the whole congregation to join in and some will be for the parents and the godparents only. The priest will make sure everyone knows where to sit and when they need to move.

For the baptism, itself, parents and godparents will be asked by the priest to gather either at the front of the church or around the font.

There are a number of important moments during the service which have special meaning, including:

**Welcome** – The priest will welcome the congregation, especially the child/children to be baptised and their family. There will be a bible reading and the priest will explain the significance of baptism.

**The Promises** – The parents and godparents will be asked to make important promises for the child during the service.

**The Sign** – The sign of the cross will be made on the child's forehead. This is a significant moment which marks the child as belonging to God.

**The Water** – Water that has been blessed in the church's font will be poured over the child's head by the priest. This is the baptism. It is a sign of a new beginning and becoming a part of God's family.



**Prayers and Welcome** – The priest will pray for the child and all those who will support them in their path of faith. Everyone present welcomes the child into the family of the church.

**A Candle** – A candle may be given to the child at the end of the service.

### **What's Next?**

Families are warmly invited to come to church whenever they can. Even if you move there will be a Church of England church local to you in your new parish, so we are always there for you wherever you are.

The Akeman Benefice invites you to join us for our family-friendly activities, including Messy Church, family services, and an annual service especially for those who have had a child baptised in the Benefice. Even if we do not play a large role in your child's life we are always here to help - just get in touch.

If you have any questions or you would like to book a baptism, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Please note: **dates for baptisms** need to be mutually agreed in advance, as there is not always a suitable service or a priest available every Sunday for baptism services, so, to avoid disappointment, please discuss this before making any final arrangements.

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