

## **Introduction to Baptism**

We offer you our congratulations if you have recently had a baby.

If you are a teenager or adult who has become a Christian and would like to be baptised, then we offer you our support and encouragement.

Please take the time to read this 'Introduction to Baptism' and discuss it with a member of staff. Every Church offers Baptism in a slightly different way; this can be confusing so we hope this introduction helps you to understand our policy and practice.

We believe that Baptism marks an important step in Christian commitment and so it is right that those to be baptised (or their parents in the case of a child,) should have an understanding of the meaning of Baptism.

It is our responsibility as a Church to encourage seekers of Baptism to carefully consider and understand the implications of the step they are taking, by providing informal preparation, teaching, support and encouragement concerning the Christian faith.

In terms of policy this means:

### **The Church's part**

To welcome and encourage enquiries about Baptism and to provide preparation for Baptism:

- By discussing the meaning of Baptism - with particular emphasis on personal faith in Jesus, and the role of the Church in nurturing that faith. This will be done by a member of staff or other trained members of the Church during the preparation period of approximately 2-3 months.
- By welcoming everyone wanting to be baptised as they join in our Church Services\* which are able to accommodate them (\*except in very exceptional circumstances like serious illness or infirmity.)
- By providing ongoing encouragement and support to those who have been baptised in order that they may continue to grow in Christian faith and commitment to the Church.
- By attempting to provide a friendship/contact link between one or more Church members and those to be baptised and/or their parents for the purposes of encouragement and follow up.

### **The Part of those to be Baptised/Parents of those to be Baptised**

To accept preparation for Baptism by:

- Becoming part of the regular worshipping Church family for a period of 2-3 months before the Baptism, and where possible to accept invitations to events or courses run by the Church.
- Making use of the opportunities offered to talk about the meaning of Baptism, the Christian faith and the role of the Church in developing and encouraging faith.
- Carefully considering the meaning and significance of Baptism and personal faith in Jesus.

## **Further notes and explanations**

### **Godparents or Sponsors**

It is the normal practice to have three godparents, two the same gender as the person to be baptised and one of the opposite gender. Godparents should be people who have themselves been baptised, believe in the Christian faith and who will encourage their godchild in the faith. Becoming a godparent is a serious matter, those who undertake this role should sincerely mean the answers they will give to the questions asked them in the Service. Please ensure that prospective godparents have read a copy of the Baptism Service before they agree to take on this role. (Being a godparent implies no legal responsibilities if anything happens to a child's parents.) Sponsors are often used in place of godparents in the case of adult baptism and have a similar role.

## **Church people**

During the period of preparation you are likely to be introduced to members of the Church Baptism Support Team. They will talk with you about Baptism, Christian faith and Church. These people are appointed by the Minister to help you in the preparation period and to help you feel at home in the Church. However, you will meet lots of other friendly people at Church and we encourage you to stay after the services for refreshments.

## **The Baptism Service**

Please study the Service we will give you carefully and ask whatever questions you like. The Baptism will take place at noon on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of the month except Easter Sunday or the Sunday after Christmas, or occasionally during the Morning Service. If you were thinking of having your baby baptised, but after thinking through the commitment this involves, you feel you are not quite ready to take this step, you might prefer a 'Service of Thanksgiving' or Dedication instead, which contains prayers for you, your baby and your family, but does not imply the same commitment as Baptism.

## **Times and Places**

Church Services take place at St Mary's at 10.00 a.m. During the Morning Service children and young people go into Junior Church (Sunday school), after the first 5 minutes of being in the Church Service. The exception is the 3rd Sunday in the month when we have a Family Service for everyone.

## **Simple administration - no problem**

There is no fee charged for Baptism, However, you will be asked to pay make a donation of £25 towards administration, there will also be a retiring offering at the back of the Church after your Child's Baptism to which you will be encouraged to give using a gift aid envelope. During the service a Baptism certificate will be given to you and cards for the Childs' Godparents. Please fill in a simple application form after you have agreed a date for the Baptism - we can help.

## **On the day...**

Wear what you are comfortable in; most people come to church these days dressed in smart casuals. We suggest you arrive 15 minutes before the start of a Service if you want to sit as a group; seats are not normally reserved. Wheelchair access and seating is possible. An induction loop will be working for those with a 'T' setting on their hearing aids.

The font containing the water used for Baptism is sited at the front of the church. The Minister or the person leading the Service will tell you and your guests what they need to do during the Service, so please feel relaxed and enjoy the whole Service.

## **Thoughts and Feelings**

We hope you are excited about the prospect of Baptism, but we realise that you may be confused or have lots of questions to ask. You may be uncertain about your own beliefs or may not have thought much about Christianity since childhood - if at all. You may just have the feeling that it's right to be baptised or have your baby baptised. This is perfectly alright - please allow us the opportunity to chat with you. We will not put you under any pressure, and we shall respect your right to make up your own mind about spiritual matters. We want you to have the time, space and contact with friendly people that will help you to take this step of commitment and faith.

## **The Future**

We hope you (and your child) will continue to be part of the Church Family. We offer a range of activities to help people grow in faith and make friends as well as some social activities. For children and young people, we run a Sunday School and across the partnership Messy Church on the second Sunday of the month at Holy Trinity Shaw at 4.00pm. For adults, we run Home Groups, courses, prayer meetings and special events. If you would like to enquire about receiving Holy Communion, then please speak to the Minister.