

# + Thanksgiving and Christening



“Turn to God and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ, so your sins are forgiven. The promise is for you, your children... whomever our God calls.”

from Acts 2.38-39 (The Bible)

# CONGRATULATIONS!

The birth of some children is carefully planned; others come as a surprise. But it is always a wonderful privilege to care for a young child. It's natural to want to thank God for such a great gift and to ask for his blessing on the family.

## Two options

Church has changed a bit since we were children. Parents now have a choice. You can opt for a Thanksgiving Service or a Baptism Service.

## Come to church first

We strongly encourage you to come as a family to All Saints' over the next few months. It will give you a feel for what we're all about. The main services for families are at 10:30am. They're quite informal with plenty of children present. Babies are welcome; we like their noise! There is a room for feeding in privacy.

## OPTION ONE: THE THANKSGIVING SERVICE

Thanksgivings usually take place within a normal service, typically the third Sunday of the month. They are very happy occasions. The whole service will last about 1¼ hours; the Thanksgiving will take place during the service.

### What happens?

There are three main parts in a Thanksgiving Service:

- Thanking God - the purpose of the service is to say a heartfelt thank you to God for his wonderful gift of your child (the minister will say these prayers)
- Praying for your family - we will bless your child and pray for you as parents, in your responsibility of bringing him or her up
- Receiving a Bible - you will be given the gift of a children's Bible

### Why thanksgiving and not baptism?

There are 3 main reasons why more and more families choose this option:

- Their main wish is to give thanks to God for their child.
- In the Baptism Service parents have to make promises and commitments (see below); but not in a Thanksgiving Service.
- Some parents want their child to experience baptism when (s)he is older; delaying baptism until (s)he is old enough to make his or her own choice to follow Christ means they will experience baptism and remember it
- In a Thanksgiving, children are not christened with water.

Many parents now choose this option.

## OPTION TWO: THE BAPTISM SERVICE

Baptisms also usually take place within a normal Sunday service, typically at 10:30am on the third Sunday of the month. The service lasts about 1¼ hours; the Baptism would take about 10 minutes of that time.

## What happens?

- Parents and Godparents make promises to God about their own Christian faith and about raising their children as part of the Christian community
- Water is poured over the child; the minister will take your child into his or her arms and pour water three times over the child's head, baptising 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit'
- Baptism is about belonging; the church family welcomes its newest member
  - You will be given the gift of a children's Bible and a lighted candle

## The promises

Quite rightly, people want to know what promises they will be making to God so that they can decide whether Baptism will be right for their family.

The words you speak standing before the congregation during the service are reproduced overleaf. Essentially you will be making three promises:

- To pray regularly for your child
- To teach your child about Jesus: his life, death and rising again
- To come to church regularly as a family

## Preparation

There is a lot to consider in deciding to have a Baptism for your child. A minister, or a couple from the church with children of their own, usually arrange to hold a relaxed preparation session at your home.

## Why baptism and not thanksgiving?

There are two main reasons why families choose Baptism:

- They want to make a commitment to God - some couples feel the promises they made before God at their wedding has helped them to be better husbands and wives and now they want to make promises to God after the birth of their child, because they feel this will help them be better parents
- They want to be part of All Saints' - baptism is a way of identifying you and your family with your local church

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Who, and how many, can I invite to the service?

As many people as you like (Godparents, family, neighbours and friends). *If you invite over 30 people we might have to arrange a separate private service in the early afternoon as the church has a capacity of 200 and is usually quite full.*

### What should people wear?

Some parents come as they are and choose everyday clothes for their child. Others dress smart and have a baptismal gown – whatever you prefer is fine.

### What about fees?

There is *no charge* for either Baptism or Thanksgiving services.

### And what about Godparents?

Whichever option you choose, it is normal to have Godparents. Traditionally, a boy has two Godfathers and one Godmother while a girl has two Godmothers

and one Godfather. But you may have as many as you want. It is important that they have a faith so they can encourage and pray for your child.

### What do they have to do?

All Godparents (Thanksgiving or Baptism) promise to:

- care for your child, taking a special interest in their Godchild
- encourage your child to learn about Jesus
- pray for your family, asking God to especially bless your child

If you choose to have Baptism, the Godparents *also* promise to:

- encourage your child to take his or her place in the local church

The affirmations made in the Baptism Service (words said by parents and Godparents are in **bold**).

Parents and godparents: In baptism your child begins a journey in faith and we are trusting God for his/her growth in faith. You speak for him/her today. Will you pray for him/her and help him/her to take his/her place within the life of the Church? **With the help of God, we will.**

Parents and Godparents: We all wander far from God and lose our way: Jesus comes to find us and welcomes us home. In baptism we respond to his call.

Therefore I ask: do you turn away from sin? **I turn from sin.**

Do you reject evil? **I reject evil.**

Do you turn to Christ as Saviour? **I turn to Christ.**

Let us profess the faith of the Church. *[parents, Godparents and congregation together]*

**We believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life.**

**We believe and trust in God the Son, who died for us and rose again.**

**We believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives us life and makes Christ known.**

This is the faith of the Church.

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

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