

Christian Baptism at St Mary's, Andover



What is Baptism?

Christian Baptism (commonly known as christening) is a Christian sacrament that signifies spiritual cleansing and rebirth. Baptism comes from a Greek word meaning 'to immerse' and in the church service it is the ritual act, with the use of water, by which a person is admitted to membership of the Christian Church. Baptism marks the beginning of a lifetime journey of turning away from evil and living a Christian life.

Parents

When a child is too young to speak for themselves the parents give thanks for God's gift of their baby and his or her new life following Jesus. So when, as parents, you bring your child for baptism, you will be asked to say, on behalf of your little one, that you believe in God and that you will bring up your child to follow Jesus.

One important decision is the choice of godparents.

Why have Godparents?

The role of godparents is to help parents bring up the child in the life of the church, and to set a Christian example through the life they lead. The Church of England expects that all godparents are baptized themselves and prefers that they are also confirmed, when they make commitments for themselves.

The Church of England expects you to choose at least three godparents; two of the same sex as the child and one of the opposite sex. Parents can also be godparents, but there must be at least one other godparent.

What are Godparents for? What do they do?

Godparents make the same promises as parents: that, on behalf of the child, they will:

- ▶ pray for the child
- ▶ encourage and support the parents in giving the child a Christian upbringing
- ▶ set an example of Christian living
- ▶ bring them to church to share in worship

Parents and godparents need to take these promises seriously, to think through the meaning of what is being asked of them and to think carefully of how they will fulfill their promises.

Choosing Godparents

Choosing the right people as godparents for your child is a big decision. Being asked to be a godparent is not only a compliment and a privilege, but also a responsibility.

Godparents will be people you know well. They need to be willing to make the promises of faith on your child's behalf at the baptism service, and continue to support your child's journey of faith.

Promises, Decision and Profession of Faith

During the baptism service, parents and godparents make a number of commitments and statements in public.

It wouldn't make any sense to have godparents promising to lead by their example if they did not believe the Christian faith for themselves.

Parents and godparents are asked questions which they answer together about turning to Christ and making a fresh start by saying sorry to God for anything they have said or done which is wrong.

Before making these promises, godparents and parents must ask themselves whether they have decided to follow Jesus and therefore whether they are ready, willing and able to say these things about their own faith.

Service of Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child

As an alternative to baptism, this service enables you to say thank you to God without the extra commitment and promises which baptism requires. There are no godparents.

If you choose to have a Thanksgiving Service, you may also have a baptism service for your child at a later date when you feel ready.

Steps towards Baptism or a Service of Thanksgiving

Following your initial enquiry, you will be invited to attend an All Age Service, where you can experience the sort of service that includes baptisms.

1 - All Age Service

There you will meet two Baptism Team Members who will be able to chat with you after the service about the choice between baptism and a service of thanksgiving, provide more information, give you the application forms for either service, and outline the next steps.

Service of Thanksgiving

If you decide that you are unwilling, or not ready, to make the promises required in a baptism service, you may still want to give thanks for your child and pray for God's support throughout his or her life. If so, you could choose instead to have a **Service of Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child**. You will need to apply on the form provided.

Thanksgiving Services will normally be part of the 10.30am service on the 3rd Sunday of the month.

2 - Formal Application for Baptism

If you do wish to proceed with a baptism, you will need to complete the application form you are given at the All Age Service and return it to the Church Office together with the certificate fee (£14 for 2018).

Once this has been received, the Parish Administrator will discuss a date for the baptism with you.

3 - Baptism Preparation Evening

You will be invited to a Baptism Preparation Evening which you will need to attend before the baptism can take place. Godparents are also expected to attend if possible.

Baptism Preparation Evenings will be held from 6.45pm to 8pm on the following dates, in St. Mary's Church:

Wednesdays 26th September and 28th November 2018, 30th January and 27th March 2019.

During this evening:

- ▶ We will show a video explaining what Christian baptism entails
- ▶ We will go through the service so you know what to expect
- ▶ We will discuss the role of godparents
- ▶ We will outline various activities to help you raise your child in a Christian way.
- ▶ There will be opportunity to ask questions and meet other parents

4 - Baptism Services in St. Mary's

Baptisms will normally take place during the 10.30am All Age Services on **Sundays 7th October, 4th November and 2nd December 2018, *6th January, 3rd February, 3rd March, 7th April 2019.**

All friends and family members will be very welcome to attend your child's baptism. Guests, particularly parents and godparents, are asked to be in Church at least 15 minutes before the start of the service.

During the service, parents, godparents and godchildren will be seated together.

We would ask that videos and cameras are not used during the service (please inform your guests), but at the end do feel free to gather round the font to record or take photographs of this very special occasion.¹

5 - After your Child's Baptism

After your child's baptism, you will have become part of our church family here at St. Mary's. St. Mary's Children's Church (ages 4 to 13 plus) meet at 10.20am on the 2nd & 4th Sundays of the month in the Church Centre, with a mix of fun, worship, interactive prayer and child friendly Bible based teaching. The children are brought back into church to join their families for a blessing/communion and refreshments.

Someone from our ministry team, will get in touch with you after the baptism to see how we can best support you and your family in your journey of faith.

I do pray you have found this booklet to be helpful in providing you with the information you need to make a decision about the best way forward for you and your family.

If there is anything you are not sure about, or need to double check, Diane Wilson, the Parish Administrator will be more than happy to answer your questions, please contact her on 01264 366373.

We look forward to meeting you at the service you have chosen.

¹ * 10am service To be confirmed nearer the time



A Parent's Prayer

Father God,
You have given us the joy of a new baby.
We thank You for and wish to share our lives with
..... and You.
Teach us how to grow together as a Christian family and always
remember that You love and care for us as Your children.

Amen

A Godparent's Prayer

Father God,
I thank You for and ask that You will Help me to set a
good example to him/her.
I know I have not always done or said the right things, but I
would like to start again.
With Your help, Lord, I know this can happen.

Amen



St Mary's Baptismal Font