

Thinking about Baptism

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St Mary's



'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.'

(John 10:10)

Congratulations on the birth of your child and thank you for asking about having your child baptised (or 'christened') at St Mary's.

We are delighted that you're interested in finding out more about baptism and this booklet is here to help you think through whether it is the right thing for you to do now.

What is Baptism?

Baptism is 'a sign and a seal', given to God's people, of what Jesus has done for us.

But what has Jesus done for us?

The Bible tells us that we have all been made by our good and loving God, who is not distant and remote. God shows us what he is like in Jesus, his Son: The Lord, powerful over everything and everyone, yet loving and compassionate towards us.

'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.' (John 10:10)

Yet the Bible also tells us that we all reject God, turning our backs on him and not living with Jesus as our Lord (Romans 3:10-12). The Bible calls this 'sin'. Our sin means we face death and God's judgement (Hebrews 9:27).

But Christianity is good news! The good news is that through Jesus we can all receive new life! Jesus wants us to live and to flourish: a life rich towards others and towards God, a life that lasts beyond death and into eternity! And so, Jesus gave up his life on the cross, so that we could live. He died to take the punishment we deserve. Through his death we can be forgiven by God for rejecting him.

'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.'
(John 10:11)

But the story does not end there. Three days after dying, Jesus rose from the dead, and is alive forever, reigning as Lord over all.

Jesus is alive today and is pleased to give new life to anyone who comes to him. A life where we know that we are forgiven by God for the past. A life full of certain hope for the future, that we will be with God, enjoying him forever when we die. It is a life full of help now, as we receive guidance from Jesus, our Good Shepherd, and strength and encouragement from his Holy Spirit. It is a life full of family, as we are brought into the church, the family of Christians throughout the world.

And we receive this new life by believing in Jesus. We show this by admitting to God that we have been pushing him out of our lives, asking him to forgive us through Jesus' death and for his help to follow Jesus from now on. We begin with just a simple prayer like that.

As a sign that we have turned from sin and turned to follow Jesus, God gives us the 'sign and seal' of baptism.

In baptism, we are washed with water – a **sign** of being 'washed clean' from our sins. We are also baptised into 'the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit', which shows that we are God's and want to go his way from now on. Baptism is also a **seal** from God, that he will keep his promise to us of eternal life with him, if we continue to trust in him.

Bringing Children to Baptism

Children who are too young to profess belief in Jesus are baptised on the understanding that they are brought up as Christians within the family of the church. As they grow up, they need the help and encouragement of their family, their godparents, and the church, so that they learn to be faithful in public worship and private prayer, to live by trust in God, and by his grace come to confirm their faith in Jesus Christ when they are old enough.

Therefore, in the baptism service, the parents and godparents of the child are asked to promise that they will (with God's help) pray for the child, teach them to trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sin, draw them by their example into the church and walk with them in following Jesus. The parents and godparents are then asked to decide, on behalf of the child and until they can make the promise for themselves, to turn from sin and turn to follow Christ. Together with the church, we all then declare our faith in Christ Jesus.

Following that, we baptise the baby with water and in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Then we pray for the child and celebrate!

Preparation for Baptism

We want to help you raise your child as a Christian, and so we have baptism preparation classes to help you do exactly that.

It is our custom at St Mary's to hold a thanksgiving service for your child first (usually on the first Sunday in the month), to thank God for the gift of your child and to pray for you. If you are not yet part of our church family, then it is a good way to introduce you to the church too.

We then ask you to attend three baptism preparation sessions (parents and godparents) to help you understand what baptism is and what your role in it is. After that, if it is right for your child to be baptised, we will book in a date for the baptism. We hold baptisms within the main Sunday morning church service (on the third Sunday of each month).

We also ask that you attend church between the thanksgiving service and the baptism, so we can get to know you and your child and support you as you make this commitment. This will help you to get to know us too, as you commit to raising your child as part of the church family.

If you are interested in having your child baptised, please chat to Mark, our minister, as the next step. He can be reached on 0161 336 4529 or smhg.office@gmail.com.