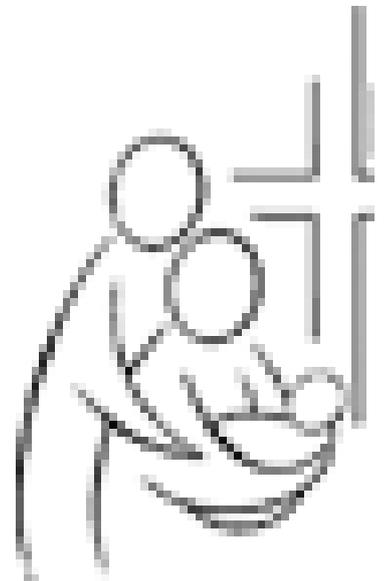




St. John's Wimborne
New Life, Full Life

Baptism Services

at St John's Church



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Introduction

Will you christen our baby?

This small booklet is designed to help unpack the meaning of baptism. We look forward to welcoming you and your family to explore this important issue. We thank God for the birth of your baby, and hope that we will be able to welcome a new member into the Christian family of the Church. Of course, if you are an adult who was not baptised as a child, then we hope that baptism may be something which you would like to consider for yourself.

This booklet will give you the answers to some of the questions which you may have; please contact the Vicar if you have further questions and he will be pleased to talk with you. We also offer a baptism preparation course.

There is no charge for a baptism service. At all our services there is an opportunity to give to the work of the church if you wish to.

Introducing our Church

At St John's Church we seek to welcome people of all ages, and our desire is to help each person come to know Jesus Christ more fully.

The life of our church is expressed in many ways, and if you want to know more then please do not hesitate to telephone the Vicar.

We also have further literature available in the church, giving information about all our services and activities.



Thanksgiving and Baptism: What's the difference?

Both services take place during a Sunday service, and both are a chance for all the family to get together and to celebrate with you.

The Thanksgiving service provides an opportunity to thank God for the new life that he has given, and to pray for his help for you as parents in your role in bringing up your child, and to pray for his help and blessing on your child as he or she grows up.

The Baptism service has a more specific focus on Jesus Christ, and his death on the cross. After his death and resurrection, Jesus commanded his followers to make new disciples and baptise them too. Christians throughout the world have done this ever since. Therefore in a baptism service, parents and godparents make clear declarations that they have put their trust in Jesus, and they promise to bring up their child within the life of the church.

Normally, the Thanksgiving service is the most appropriate for those who are not already part of the church family.

We would be happy to discuss this further with you.



Thanksgiving service

When will the Thanksgiving take place?

Thanksgivings take place as part of one of the main Sunday morning services, usually on the third Sunday of the month, at our all-age service at 11.00am.

In certain circumstances it may be possible to arrange another service in the month, however, although we welcome children to all our services, we find that all age services are best. Please arrive at least 10 minutes before the service begins. We only reserve places for immediate family.

What does the service involve?

When it comes to the thanksgiving (usually about 15 minutes into the service), the minister will invite you to come to the front with your child.

He then leads the congregation in the prayer:

*God our Father, maker of all that is living
we praise you for the wonder and joy of creation.
We thank you from our hearts for the life of this child,
for a safe delivery, and for the privilege of parenthood.
Accept our thanks and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

As parents, you can then say together:

*God our Father, in giving us this child you have shown us your love.
Help us to be trustworthy parents. Make us patient in understanding
that our child may always be sure of our love and grow up to be happy
and responsible; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

There then come some statements and responses in which the whole congregation joins in. Then the minister gives you a copy of one of the gospels, saying:

This book contains the Good News of God's love. Read it, for it tells how you and your family can share in eternal life, through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

Almighty God, look with favour on this child; grant that, being nourished with all goodness, he/she may grow in discipline and grace until he/she comes to the fullness of faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Then the minister leads prayers for you as parents, and for the wider family:

Father in heaven, bless these parents, that they may cherish their child; make them wise and understanding to help him/her as he/she grows, and surround this family with the light of your truth and the warmth of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God our Father, we pray to you for all who have care of this child. Guide them with your Holy Spirit, that they may bring him/her up in the ways of truth and love. Through their care enable him/her to grow in grace and become daily more like your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Thanksgiving service then ends with a final prayer, said by all:

God our Father, we pray for this child, that in due time he/she may be received by baptism into the family of your Church, and become an inheritor of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Do we need to choose godparents?

There is no specific role for godparents in a thanksgiving service, though obviously you can still ask particular friends or family members to play a spiritual role in the life of your child as he/she grows up.

Baptism: what's it all about?

Baptism is a chance for all the family to get together, celebrate and thank God for the new life which he has given. But baptism is also a sacrament. That means an outward and visible sign of God's love. When Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan He became aware of the special presence of God and the power of the Holy Spirit; it was a turning point in his life. After His death and resurrection Jesus commanded His followers to make new disciples and baptise them too. This has been done ever since by Christians throughout the world.

Why do we baptise babies?

Jesus told his disciples to baptise people who wanted to become Christians and join the church. The Bible tells us that whole households were being baptised and of course soon parents wanted their children to be baptised too.

Baptism is not like an insurance policy that you take out to make sure that your baby goes to heaven. God loves your child just as much now as after the baptism service. However, it does make sense to give your child the very best start in life and what could be better than to encourage them from the very earliest days to be open to God and to know of his love for them.

Some churches do not baptise children until they are old enough to understand everything for themselves. However we do make all kinds of decisions on behalf of our children including choosing schools and medical treatment as we do our best to encourage them in the best way for their lives. We are pleased that you are thinking about giving your child the benefit of being welcomed into the church family. We would like to encourage you to make the effort to bring them along to church throughout these early years so that they can have the Christian start they deserve.

In the baptism service we also pray that one day as adults they will want to stand up for themselves to confirm the baptism vows which have been made on their behalf. This is called Confirmation.

If you would like a chance to think more about the Christian faith, then you may like to join one of our Christianity Explored courses which attract people of all ages and can lead to Confirmation. Please ask the Vicar for more details.

Christening?

Baptism is also called Christening by some people. Both services are one and the same whichever name you choose. Baptism is an occasion when we receive our Christian name and are called to be like Christ... 'Christ-likening'.



Baptism Service

When will the baptism take place?

Baptisms take place in one of the main Sunday morning services usually on the third Sunday of the month, at either 9.15am or 11.00am. This is because part of the service is the welcoming of the child by the

congregation. In certain circumstances it may be possible to arrange another service in the month, however, although we welcome children to all our services, we find that all age services are best for baptisms. Please arrive at least 10 minutes before the service begins. We only reserve places for the immediate family and godparents.

What promises do I need to make?

Baptisms take place during a service of worship because the parents and godparents will be asked to stand up and declare their own Christian faith. In the service you are asked a number of questions as parents about your lifestyle and belief. We need to consider whether we have turned our backs on sin and God-less living; whether we are committed to Christ, and whether we are living in the light of the Bible's teaching. The questions asked are:

Question 1 Do you turn to Christ?

Question 2 Do you repent of your sins?

Question 3 Do you renounce evil?

There will also be questions about belief. These are:

Question 1 Do you believe and trust in God the Father who made the world?

Question 2 Do you believe and trust in his Son Jesus Christ who redeemed mankind?

Question 3 Do you believe and trust in the Holy Spirit who gives life to the people of God?

Each time you will be asked to answer honestly:

I believe and trust in Him.

It is important to make sure that you can make these promises and only you can truthfully know that.

If you have any difficulty we will discuss these promises with you. If you feel unable to say these things then perhaps you would prefer a service of thanksgiving for the child and a naming ceremony.

All of the congregation will then join in saying together:

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

Having declared your own faith you are asked to promise that you will bring the child up in a Christian home and set an example to the child through your prayers and attending church regularly.

Therefore a baptism is a very important occasion, and not to be undertaken lightly.

Other aspects of the service

Naming

When the minister baptises the child he will ask what name you have chosen. This will be the Christian name for the child for the rest of its life.

The minister takes the child and says:

N., I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Water

Water is a sign of cleansing and also an important sign of life. Water symbolises how we are all washed clean by God and forgiven and

accepted by him. As we cannot live without water, so this sign reminds us that we also need the cleansing and renewing presence of God in our lives.

The sign of the cross

The minister will make the sign of the cross on the forehead of the child. This reminds us of how Christ died for all on the cross. The cross is the badge of our faith, to remind us that we must not be ashamed to profess our faith and fight against all that is evil.

I sign you with the cross, the sign of Christ. Do not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified.

The congregation says:

Fight valiantly under the banner of Christ against sin, the world and the devil, and continue his faithful soldier and servant to the end of your life.

At the end of the baptism, the congregation joins to say:

We welcome you into the Lord's family. We are members together of the body of Christ; we are children of the same heavenly Father; we are inheritors of the kingdom of God. We welcome you.

Records

A permanent record of the baptism with family details is recorded in the official registers of the church. A copy of this is given in the form of a special certificate, as a reminder of this day.

Cry Baby

Superstitious people once thought that when a baby cried at baptism it meant that it was the devil being cast out. In fact if a baby didn't cry it was thought a bad thing and some people even pinched their baby to make them cry! Today we prefer not to upset children and hope that they do not get too upset by all the attention. Don't worry if they do cry, and feel free to take children in and out of the crèche during the service.

Godparents

Being asked to be a godparent is always a real privilege and shows that you have a special place in the family, but there are expectations and responsibilities too.

You are asked to promise that you will love and encourage the child in the Christian faith by prayer, example and teaching. Parents should not feel pressurised to choose the wrong people but try to find people who can make the promises and mean them.

Remember there is no right or wrong number of godparents; have as many or few as you wish. (We would recommend not more than four, and that they should be not less than 18 years of age.) Godparents often buy a small present for the child; they should remember that this is a Christian occasion and so perhaps buy the child a children's Bible or story book of Bible stories. We would be pleased to advise you.

Parents were once advised that they should choose three godparents for their baby, two of the same sex of the child. Nowadays some parents decide not to have any godparents at all. The Royal Family on

the other hand tend to prefer to go for about six... well, there's more presents!

I didn't know that

Because baptism is a sign of entering the Church, the font that held water was once nearly always situated at the main door of the church. Today we have a movable font and we place it at the front of the church. It is easier for everyone to see!



Some Prayers

Your child is very special to you, which is one of the reasons why you have gone to the effort to ask about baptism or thanksgiving. It is a wonderful time to say thank you to God for the gift of a child.

But of course your child isn't just your child, but God's child as well. God loves your child and went to enormous lengths to show how much he loves all his children. This means that in a sense there are no such things as single parents, God is a loving parent too. In the days and years ahead try to remember that you should not try to bring your child up on your own, but rather with the help and support of God as well. Here are some prayers and readings that you might find helpful:

- ♦ *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.*
- ♦ *Lord Jesus Christ, you welcomed children when others turned them away. Help me to love my child as you love him/her. Give me patience when I am tired, strength to cope when things get tough. Give your Holy Spirit of love and joy to abide in our home and keep us safe. Amen.*
- ♦ *"God so loved the world that he gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 (The Bible)*
- ♦ *"Jesus said: "Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28 (The Bible)*



A Fresh Start, Now!

Sometimes a baptism or thanksgiving service can remind us of how much we have let our own Christian life slip. It can be an opportunity to affirm our trust in God and to make a fresh start. We hope that the welcome you receive will encourage you to be a regular member of our church. We understand the effort that is involved for parents with young children to get organised and make a habit of going to church, but the parents who do make the effort are usually pleased that they took the trouble.

It may also be that you would appreciate the chance to explore the Christian faith in more detail. Do talk to the Vicar about the 'Christianity Explored' course that we run a few times each year. It's a great chance to ask any questions you might have in a relaxed setting.

Welcome!

We hope that your child's baptism or thanksgiving will be a wonderful and memorable occasion, and that it will mark the beginning of a long and happy association with our church. We hope that you have been encouraged to feel able to join us in worship here regularly. We hope you will join us in the whole range of services that take place on Sundays. Our services attempt to combine the very best of traditional and modern styles. We do our best to welcome all children to our services, and provide a crèche and Junior Church. There are also various activities run by the church that may be of interest to you, including Tots and Toys, which meets on Monday mornings at the

church and Tuesday mornings at Leigh Park Community Centre at 10am during school term times.

If you would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact the Church Office, we will be pleased to help you:

*St John's Church Office, 71 Leigh Road, Wimborne BH21 1AE. Tel 01202 842255
office@stjohnswimborne.org.uk*

Frequently Asked Questions

Below are some questions that are often asked. We would be happy to discuss either these, or other questions, with you in more detail at the Baptism and Thanksgiving Preparation evening.

How much does it cost?

There is no charge for a thanksgiving or baptism service. At all our services there is an opportunity to give to the work of the church if you wish to.

What if I'm not baptised?

This is not a problem for the thanksgiving service. However, in the baptism service, you will be making promises about what you believe that are only appropriate for a Christian who trust in Jesus. If you do trust Jesus, but just haven't been baptised yet, why not ask the Vicar about baptism for yourself!

What if we're not married?

One of the promises you make in the baptism service is that you want to follow Jesus' teaching in every area of your lives. One of the things that Jesus taught was that people should either be single, or else be part of a couple in the lifelong union of marriage. Therefore we would advise you to consider the Thanksgiving service.

Do the godparents need to be baptised?

Yes! Since you are asking them to play a role in the spiritual upbringing of your child, they need to be trusting in Jesus for themselves, and baptism is the 'formal' way we express that trust.

Is there a limit of how many people we can invite?

Certainly not! We recognise that thanksgiving/baptism is a great time for family to come together, and we welcome everyone to the service. We also limit the thanksgivings and baptisms to a maximum of two in any one service, to make sure there's room for all the guests!

Christianity EXPLORED

A SEVEN-SESSION COURSE INVESTIGATING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Each meeting begins with coffee and cake in St John's Church Centre. There is a talk based on the Bible, followed by an opportunity for open and honest discussion in small groups.

courses held at St John's during the year

www.christianityexplored.org