



BAPTISM AT ST. DAVID'S

You have enquired about **baptism** in St. David's Church, and this sheet is to both give details about our procedure, and help you think through the meaning and significance of the baptism. Also included are a few words about a **thanksgiving** service. Many couples now feel that they are unable at present to make the vows that form part of the baptism service, but still want to mark the birth of their child in some way - to thank God for the new life, and ask His protection upon the child. For this we offer a thanksgiving service, which is explained below.

The birth of a child is always a wonderful event, and it makes us aware of the huge responsibilities we face as parents. We want to ensure that the child is brought up in the best possible way, and has the best chances in life. As part of this baptism can be an extremely important event.

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

First a word about what baptism is **not**:

- It is not some magical practice whereby the child is instantly transformed into a model of placidness and obedience - sadly!
- It is not simply a social event, an opportunity for getting the family together to celebrate the birth of the child, although it does have that side.
- It is not a means of ensuring that the child is brought up in a Christian way, although both parents and godparents make promises to that effect during the service. A child can be taught the Christian faith, and grow to know the Bible whether he / she is baptised or not.
- It is not a means of making the child a Christian. Many people who have been baptised would not admit to being Christians, and similarly many who are not baptised would claim they are Christians.

What baptism is:

- It is, as the Church of England describes it, "An outward and visible sign of an inward work of grace." In other words it is a symbol, pointing to what God does in the heart of a person. But it is a symbol, not the reality itself. As an illustration of that, we may wave the Union Jack as a symbol of the fact that we are British. But simply waving the Union Jack does not make a person British, and equally a person can be British without waving the Union Jack. Baptism symbolises the inner washing (forgiveness) and new life that Christ offers to all of us.
- It is a service during which parents and godparents make certain very specific and significant declarations about their own faith and belief. These are declarations that many might feel unable to make honestly.
- It is an opportunity for the church congregation to give thanks for the life of the child and welcome the child publicly into the family of the church. It is not just a family occasion since the promises and statements involve the church community as a whole.

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For these reasons we make certain stipulations regarding baptism at St. David's.

- Baptisms take place within the main Sunday morning service, in particular the Family Service, which takes place on the third Sunday in the month at 11 am. This makes it much easier for the whole family to be part of the service, and other children to join in. But it also means that the whole church can be involved in the service and welcome.
- Parents should attend at least two family services before their child is baptised, so that they can get the feel of the service, and learn a little about what church it is their child is being baptised into!
- Parents are prepared to see the rector on three occasions before the service, to go through the content and meaning of the service. Since it is such an important occasion it is vital to have a clear understanding of what is actually taking place.

GODPARENTS

It is customary to have three godparents - two of the same sex as the baby and one of the opposite, but it is not obligatory - you can have less, or even more. Since the godparents also have to make very clear and direct promises, it is important that they know what these are and are comfortable making them. Please ensure that they are well briefed and are happy to abide by this.

THANKSGIVING SERVICE

Should you feel that you are not able to make the promises in the service, but would still like to mark the birth of the child in some way, we also offer a service of thanksgiving - an opportunity to give thanks to God for the baby, and asking God's blessing on him / her. This can be arranged outside the main services. It will consist of some prayers of blessing and a short Bible passage and explanation.

FOLLOW-ON

The child's experience of church should not end at the baptism or thanksgiving. Indeed the promises made by parents and godparents in the baptism service state that they will seek to bring the child up in the Christian faith. The following activities can help both the youngsters and their parents.

1. **Mums and Tots.** Every Wednesday morning from 9:30 to 11, at St. David's Centre. a chance to share friendship with other parents and pre-school children.
2. **Sunday Club.** Every Sunday, at the 11 am service there is a Sunday Club for children of 0-14. This consists of Mini-Scramblers (0-3), Scramblers (3-5), Climbers (5-7), and Explorers (7-11). For these groups the children leave the church about 10 minutes into the service. For the Family Service all the groups bar the Mini-Scramblers join everyone else in church for the whole service.
3. **Big Fish / The Bridge.** For older children and teenagers, these groups aim to provide both friendship, fun and Christian teaching, meeting Friday evenings (Big Fish 11-14s) and Sunday evenings (The Bridge 14-18s) in the Church Centre.
4. **Women's Bible Study.** This is a group for women, most but not all mothers, who meet once a week on a Monday morning at the Church Centre for fellowship and Bible discussion. If you would like further details ring Gillian Wookey on 652680.
5. **Life at its Best.** This is an introductory course to the Christian faith, run by St. David's with meal, talk and discussion. It is friendly, unthreatening and easy to understand. If you want details of our next course ring Stephen Wookey.

It is our desire to do all we can to help parents in the task of bringing up children in today's world. We believe that the best foundation any child can have is the one offered by the Christian faith and we try to provide a lively and friendly environment in which children can begin to understand that faith. Thanksgiving and baptism can be a vital part of that journey of discovery, both for parents and children, and we would count it a great privilege to be involved in any way.