



# Baptism in the Anglican Church

One of the first decisions you will make regarding the faith of your child is whether or not to have them baptised (some people call this a Christening). This is a decision only you as parents can make. Some people like to have their child baptised within weeks of the birth, others like to wait and allow their child to make the decision for themselves later in life. Before you can make that decision you need some basic knowledge about what baptism is and why it is important to the Christian faith.

## Baptism in the Church: What does it mean?

Baptism is the sacrament through which Christians become one with Christ and the Church. For Anglicans, baptism has always been an integral part of the faith journey. Historically, an infant would be baptised as soon as it was born. This was especially true through the 5th and 6th centuries when the infant mortality rate was high.

Baptism is very important in the New Testament. John – the cousin of Jesus and the man appointed by God to ‘prepare the way of the Lord’ – is known as John the Baptist because his ministry was to preach God’s word and baptise those who believed. His most important act was to baptise Jesus.

Baptism can occur at any stage in life. Infant baptism is a wonderful symbol of your commitment to bringing your child up to know and love God in the church. It formally welcomes your child as a member into the family of the church and is the first step towards receiving communion in the Anglican Church.

## Luke 3:21-22

<sup>21</sup>When all the people were being baptised, Jesus was baptised too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened <sup>22</sup>and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

## What do you need to do to get your child baptised?

The first step is to talk to a priest in your local church. They will guide you through the baptismal process and explain fully what it all means.

## Some basic information

During the baptism you will have to answer three questions about your faith.

1. How do you respond to God's promise of forgiveness?
2. Do you renounce all evil influences and powers that rebel against God?
3. Do you trust in Christ's victory which brings forgiveness, freedom and life?

Your priest will help you to fully understand these questions and allow you to answer in confidence and knowledge.

## Godparents

When a child is baptised it is customary for the parents to ask close family or friends to serve as Godparents. The role of a Godmother or Godfather is to pray for their Godchild and support the parents as they raise their child in faith.

## The Symbols of Baptism

The baptism service is full of beautiful symbols – each drawing on parts of the Christian faith your child is being welcomed in to.

The placement of the font in a church is important because of the symbolism it embodies. As baptism is the first stage in a person's faith journey, it is often placed at the main entrance or even in a separate room – a baptistery. Historically, churches had a baptistery separate from the main body of the church. This made the point that baptism is the beginning of life in Church and God – and after the baptism service the newly baptised would be formally welcomed in to the main body of the church as a member of the family of Christ. Not all churches adhere to this historic placement of the font anymore. Find out where the font is in your church, and you may like to ask why it is in that particular spot.

## Luke 3:16

John the Baptist said

<sup>16</sup>“I baptise you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

In the Anglican Church the candidate for baptism is anointed three times with water. The priest uses water for baptism to link with the above bible passage. In doing so, Christians believe they are being anointed by the Holy Spirit as well as with water. The thrice anointing is also important – once for each of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit).

Your child will also have the sign of the cross bestowed upon them. This is a symbolic marking that they are now a child of God and member of Christ's Church.

Finally, a candle will be given by a member of the congregation. Jesus is described as being the light of the world, and the candle is a symbol of this light.

“Walk in the faith of Christ  
crucified and risen.  
Shine with the light of Christ.”

These beautiful words go with the presentation of the candle.

The baptism concludes with a promise by parents and Godparents to raise the child in faith. Then the community of faith formally welcomes the newly baptised into the family of the Church.

Baptism is one of the first steps in the Christian faith journey and a beautiful commitment to life as a member of God’s Church. It is a wonderful gift to give your children, but a decision that only you can make at this early stage in their lives.