

THINKING ABOUT BAPTISM?

Baptism is a sign of commitment to the Christian faith, not a rite of passage into life and while the Church of England traditionally offers baptism to infants there is no age requirement on baptism – it is also available to all people, regardless of their age, so long as they have not been baptised previously. In a service of baptism for babies and children, the parents and godparents make a commitment to pray for the child and to draw him or her in the community of faith; to walk with them in the way of Christ; and to help them to take their place within the life and worship of Christ's Church. In adult baptism, the candidates make the promises for themselves.

What is important to note is that you can only be baptised once. Baptism is permanent and irrevocable – and even if we or our parents renege on the promises made at baptism – God doesn't go back on his promises. While you can only be baptised once, it is possible to renew your baptism vows. You should speak to your local minister if you are considering this.

Baptism marks the beginning of a journey with God which continues for the rest of our lives, the first step in response to God's love. For all involved, particularly the candidates but also parents, godparents and sponsors, it is a joyful moment when we rejoice in what God has done for us in Christ, making serious promises and declaring the faith.

The wider community of the local church and friends welcome the new Christian, promising support and prayer for the future. Hearing and doing these things provides an opportunity to remember our own baptism and reflect on the progress made on that journey, which is now to be shared with this new member of the Church.

GODPARENTS AND SPONSORS

The role of Godparents is often confused with the legal role of guardians, but the two roles are entirely separate.

The Godparents' role is to speak on behalf of the infant being baptised during the baptism service itself and to support the parents in bringing the child up as a Christian within the family of the Church, so that that they will confess the faith for themselves and come in due time to confirmation.

In order that they can fulfil their role Godparents need be able to make the declarations and promises in the baptism services, which is why the Church of England requires all Godparents to be baptised themselves and normally to be confirmed as well. That is also why it is not possible for a member of another faith to be a Godparent. (The Church of England, Diocese of Lichfield)

You can read more about the baptism service and the promises which parents and Godparents make on this page:

<http://www.churchofengland.org/weddings-baptisms-funerals/baptism-confirmation/baptism/the-baptism-service.aspx>

PREPARATION FOR PARENTS SEEKING BAPTISM OF THEIR CHILDREN AT ST GEORGE'S

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Thank you for showing an interest in having your child baptised, I have written this letter to help explain the preparation for baptism that we have for you. If anything is not clear please contact me and I will do my best to help, I look forward to working with your family in the future.

1 It will be helpful if you read the information from the Diocese & the national guidelines about baptism [above]

2 Please come to St George's to worship, Sunday services are at 10.30am. Normally they are centred on Holy Communion; however we also have a monthly "Family Service" which we tailor to families with children, and this is always on the first Sunday of each month. Come along for a few months to see if you feel comfortable about committing to bring your baptised child back to St George's. We don't expect you to come each week, just get to know us and let us begin to get to know you.

3 Complete a Baptism enquiry form available at church at a Sunday morning service

4 When you are happy that St George's is the church you want to bring your child to regularly, contact me and I will arrange for Pauline, a member of St George's church, to contact you and find a date to meet with you and take you through the basic Christian faith that the baptism welcomes your child into. Pauline will also lend you a super DVD specially made for parents to explain the Baptism, which you can watch at your leisure.

5 Once you have met with Pauline, the vicar, Murray will make a date to meet with you and take you through the different baptism services we use and I will be happy to answer any questions you might have. I will give you a simple leaflet explaining the 4 promises for parents made at a baptism. At this stage we will both be ready to plan a date for your child's baptism.

6 The Baptism Service in St George's, where parents promise to bring their child to church so that they can grow in the Christian faith. This is where you and your child are welcomed into the church.

7 Life is very busy for parents so we don't expect you to remember when our family services are so each month we will contact you, by email or post to let you know when the family service takes place.

As you can see we really want your family to have the best possible preparation for your Baptism service so you feel fully involved in this sacrament of the church. Please contact me at any time if you have questions.

God bless you and your family.

Revd Murray McBride Tel: 01743 - 235 461