



# Congratulations

## You are considering baptism for your child

*The following notes may help guide you in making this decision*

### **Baptism (or Christening) of babies & children**

The life of every child is precious and Christians believe that the most important thing for any child is to find God through Jesus Christ. Baptism is all about helping this to happen by welcoming the child into the family of God's world-wide church and declaring the great promises that God makes. In a Baptism service we declare God's promises to us:

- \* *Be with us and love us as our heavenly Father*
- \* *To change our lives as we live in the power that Jesus the Son brings us*
- \* *To help us serve him & the world through his Spirit's strength*

In the service we declare all these promises, and we hope that as the child grows up that they will chose to accept these promises for themselves and follow the examples of the parents, godparents and other Christians.

### **Why choose Baptism for a child?**

Think for a moment about your reasons for choosing baptism for your child. Here are some common motives behind asking for baptism:

- ◆ I want to thank God for the birth of my child
- ◆ I want my child to be prayed for in church, for God to bless them.
- ◆ I want to have a party to celebrate my child's birth.
- ◆ I want the child to have Godparents so that my child will be cared for should anything happen to me.
- ◆ I want to please someone in the family who says I should have my child baptised.
- ◆ I want my child to be made a Christian.

On the surface, these reasons may seem OK, but NONE of them actually are included as part of the Baptism Service.

**Baptism is the right choice...** When the family know in their hearts that following the Lord Jesus is important to them and they want to encourage the child to have every chance to be part of that step of faith.

### **Does a service of Baptism make the child a Christian?**

No. A Christian is a person who follows Christ, so you can't be a Christian without knowing it or if someone else wants it but you don't. God is the only one who knows our inner motives of faith, but all who come to him are welcomed. When a child is baptised, they are usually too young to decide to follow Jesus, and so in our church, we baptise infants on the basis of the faith of the parents and god-parents. This comes from stories in the Bible, where whole families were baptised together, showing us that children were welcomed into the Christian faith on the basis of the adult's belief. A service of Baptism, whether for adults or children, never stands on its own: it only makes sense when the family keeps on following God and worshipping him. This means that when the child then grows older, they are prepared to make the step of faith themselves so that they might become a Christian & experience the love of God afresh in their own life. Being a Christian is a wonderful decision to make because we are asking God to take our lives, to clean us up and give us his peace & power. The Baptism of children or adults has this belief at the centre. If you would like to think more about this, please have a word with the Vicar.

### **What if the parents/godparents don't really believe?**

Some people would like a church service for their child, to give thanks for them, to pray for them and to ask God to bless the family; but, when they realise the need for true Christian commitment, they feel that they are not in the position to really make this promise. If this describes you, then we are very happy to provide a service of thanksgiving for a child (babies and toddlers), which can be part of a regular Sunday service in church, or at another time. This is a wonderful way of praying for your child and giving a role for godparents to care for the child but without them (or the parents) making promises about following Jesus in their life. Please see the Vicar if you'd like to know more about a service of thanksgiving.

### **If I choose to have a baptism, what next?**

At least one parent must be a practising Christian, and godparents too must be chosen on the basis of their Christian faith as the responsibility is to make sure that your child grows up knowing the Christian faith. To take a service of baptism seriously is to be ready to join in the life of a local church for the child can see what it means to love and follow God with our whole lives. Being part of a church also brings lots of support and encouragement for young parents.

## How to chose a good godparent...

Being a good godparent is mainly about being a Christian not about being a good friend to the child's parents, so each godparent MUST

- ♥ be a practising Christian believer
- ♥ have been baptized (or christened) in the Christian faith
- ♥ be completely happy about making promises in God's presence
- ♥ be willing to show the way of living as a Christian.

You can chose as many godparents as you wish, but normally people have three. Sometimes, for personal reasons, parents feel obliged to chose someone as godparent who has little or no Christian faith. This is a decision that parents must make, but if they have their child's spiritual welfare at heart, then they should ensure that godparents fulfil the requirements above. When you have chosen the godparents, please give each of them the leaflet explaining their responsibilities and make sure that they have each signed the application form.

## What happens in the Baptism service?

Because a baptism service is about the child becoming part of God's church, ALL BAPTISM SERVICES ARE HELD AS PART OF OUR USUAL SUNDAY SERVICES. It does not matter how many people you think may be coming - baptism is about joining the church family & so it makes sense to be baptised when the church is present not just when family/ friends are there.

During the service, the parents (with the child), the godparents and the Vicar will go to the font at the back of the church. During the baptism, the parents and godparents affirm their Christian faith:

- \* Do you turn to Christ? **I turn to Christ**
- \* Do you repent of your sins? **I repent of my sins**
- \* Do you renounce evil? **I renounce evil**

They will also make these promises in the presence of the church congregation and in the presence of God. As sponsors for the child, they are making these promises on their behalf:

Do you believe in God the Father, the Creator of all?

\* **I believe and trust in God the Father.**

Do you believe in his Son Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world?

\* **I believe and trust in God the Son.**

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life?

\* **I believe and trust in the God the Holy Spirit.**

The Vicar will remind us of the way that water is a Christian symbol of

life, healing and freedom, and then *he* will take the child in *his* arms, and three times pour water on the child's head saying,

....., ***I baptise you in the Name of the Father  
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.***

The child is then handed to one of the godparents and a lighted candle is given as a symbol of the promise that our Lord Jesus leads us out of the darkness of sin into the glorious light and freedom of new life. Later in the service, the church will pray for the child and family.

*(You will be given a sheet with all the words of the service and asked to stand at the back of the church near the font where the child will be baptised. **It is important that you say your vows loudly** as they are a public declaration — you may be asked to repeat them if they are said a little too quietly. There is no 'dress code' for the church service, feel free to wear what you wish.)*

### **After baptism**

For baptism to make sense, your family should consider afresh the great blessing that comes from worshipping in church and being part of church life. For your child to grow in faith it is important that the family grows in faith too and this is very hard without being part of a local church. You are very welcome to come to our Sunday church services where we will promise to support you in nurturing your child in the Christian faith.

### **When and where to have the baptism**

All our area is divided in parishes which is a geographical area covered by our churches. If you live in the top end of Pontypridd around Graigwen and Glyncoch then you are resident in the parish of St Catherine's Pontypridd. This means that you have a right (by Church law) to have your child baptised in St Catherine's. If you do not live in the parish, but worship with us or at Glyncoch Community centre, then you also have a right to have your child baptised with us. If you do not fall into either of these categories, then it is normal for you to have the service of baptism in your own parish church (i.e. the church where you live); it is expected that this church is your place of regular worship where the child will grow up in the Christian faith and so the baptism should take place there. If you do not currently worship anywhere at all, then I would say that you should seriously question whether baptism is the best choice for your child and think instead of a thanksgiving service which we will be happy to arrange whether you live in our parish or not.

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