

**The Benefice of St Paul's Bentley Common,
St Nicholas' Kelvedon Hatch and St Thomas' Navestock**

BAPTISM POLICY

Baptisms are often referred to as Christenings. However, they mean the same: the Bible uses the term baptism.

Currently, all baptisms are taking place in a special baptism service in the afternoon. Additionally, numbers are restricted - please speak with the minister when booking to discuss the latest number of attendees allowed.

The Baptism of a Child

We hope your child's baptism will be very special. The first step is to contact the minister. During this initial chat, basic details of the baptism service are explained and some contact details will be taken. A leaflet called "Information and Guidance for Families considering Baptism" will be given / sent to you so that you can gain a more detailed insight into what having a child baptised really means.

Another option is for your child is to have a "Thanksgiving" service. This is a much shorter service within the main morning service. There are no godparents and the child does not have water poured over their head. Once you have read the leaflet, you may feel this is more appropriate for your family. Again, the minister can be contacted for more advice.

If you would still like to go ahead with a baptism, the minister should be contacted again and a meeting will be arranged.

At the meeting, the minister and a member of the baptism team will go through the baptism service. It will be suggested that you attend some services, so that you get to know people at the church and start to feel involved in the church. Services times are different at all three churches so depending on which parish you live, you will be invited to attend the 9.30am service at St Paul's, the 11am service at St Nicholas' or the 6.30pm service at St Thomas'.

Godparents

It is traditional for a child being baptised to have three godparents; two of the same sex as the child and one of the opposite sex. The laws which govern the Church of England state that the godparents must themselves be baptised. If this presents a problem, please speak with the minister as providing that at least two of the godparents are baptised, they can still stand and make the promises on behalf of the child.

Godparents should be chosen with the intention that they will take a spiritual interest in your child and be willing to support them on their spiritual journey as they develop. There is no minimum age for a godparent but they must be mature enough to understand the promises they are undertaking on behalf of the child.

At the baptism, the godparents will receive a card indicating they have made baptism promises on behalf of the child.

If a godparent is unable to attend the service, this does not mean they cannot be a godparent, however, they will need to speak with the minister to assure them of their desire to act as a godparent.

Fee

Baptism is a symbol of God's love and all baptisms are free. However, if you wish to make a donation for the service, this will be gratefully received.

Families that do not live in any of the Benefice parishes

It is usual to have your child baptised in your parish church i.e. the church in the area in which you live. If you do not live in the parish of any of the Benefice churches, the minister can give you details of your parish church. However, if you have a specific reason for wanting your child to be baptised in one of the Benefice churches, it may be possible to arrange this but may necessitate attendance at one of the Benefice churches. Out of courtesy, your parish church minister should be informed of your intentions.

Baptism Certificates and Gifts

After the baptism, a Baptism certificate and a Gospel book will be given to the family.

Cards will be given to each of the godparents.

A Baptismal Candle together with a small book will be given to the child that is baptised.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do parents need to be baptised? No. However this may be something that the parents may like to do either with their child or at a later date. Please discuss this with the minister.

If parents are not married, can the child still be baptised? Yes. Again, if this something you may like to do in conjunction with the baptism or a later date, speak with the minister.

If the parents are in a same sex marriage / civil partnership , can the child still be baptised? Yes.

If the parents are separated or divorced, can the child be baptised? The enquiring parent will be encouraged to inform the other parent of their desire to have the child baptised. They will be asked to provide written documentation from the other parent giving permission for the baptism to take place.

If the baby is fostered or adopted, would this cause a problem? If the child is fostered, then Social Services would need to be contacted and the situation discussed. If the child is adopted, then the procedure for baptism would be the same as for birth parents.

If you have any further questions, please contact Rev'd Julie Hardy

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