

Baptism policy

'Parents', below, means the parent(s) of a child under 16, or the guardian(s), or the step-parent(s), or the child's primary carer(s).

1. We will baptise infants and children under 16 where both parents consent and where at least one of the parents is baptised. Where parents are separated or divorced and both have custody of the children, both must consent and the parent who is the children's primary carer should be baptised. Where we cannot offer baptism because one parent withholds consent or where neither parent is baptised or willing to be baptised, we will offer a thanksgiving service and add the family to the follow-up list.
2. Individual candidates for baptism aged 16 or over will be referred to the minister co-ordinating confirmations. The minister will discuss with them whether they are to be baptised locally or as part of the confirmation service. Where candidates for baptism aged 16 or over come forward for baptism as part of a family group (e.g. a parent with a child being baptised, or one of a group of siblings being baptised), the baptisms co-ordinator will inform the minister co-ordinating confirmations so that appropriate arrangements for preparation for baptism and confirmation may be made.
3. Candidates who are not resident in the parish may be baptised in the parish if there is a strong pastoral reason for this and if they obtain the consent of the incumbent of the parish in which they are resident and if they are able to meet the requirements for preparation.
4. The baptising minister will make contact with the parents before the service.
5. Parents should attend a baptism preparation session before the date of the baptism. Baptism preparation sessions are offered once a month. Arrangements for preparation other than in the scheduled sessions will be made only in cases of exceptional pastoral need.
6. Parents should attend a commissioning before the service. Commissioning prayers are said in the course of a regular Sunday morning service in the church where the baptism service is to be held.
7. Godparents are nominated by parents. Godparents should have been baptised. Unbaptised sponsors may be included among the godparents, provided there is at least one baptised godparent. Godparents are encouraged to attend the baptism preparation session and the commissioning.
8. Baptisms are normally held as part of the main Sunday morning service on the designated Sunday of the month in each church in the parish. Exceptions to this policy are as follows:
 - Baptisms booked for St Mary's in the summer months will be held as part of the special baptism service on the afternoon of the first Sunday of each month. This exception is made because of the frequency of summer bookings and the numbers of guests attending. It is reviewed annually by the ministry team and the decision on whether to continue is made year by year by the Rector.
 - Baptisms of children may be held in the marriage service of their parents.
 - Private baptisms may be arranged where there is a strong pastoral reason for this.
9. For all these exceptions, baptism preparation and commissioning will be carried out as usual.

10. At the baptism service, parents are given a baptism certificate and a baptism candle for each child baptised. Godparents are given a card.
11. After the baptism, a card is sent annually to the family on up to four anniversaries of the baptism (until the child reaches primary school age, or where the child is already at school, on the first anniversary of the baptism only).
12. After the baptism, information is sent to the family about parish activities and groups which might interest them. Invitations to family-friendly parish events are sent to baptism families until the child reaches secondary school age.

Signature *Alastair Blaine*

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