



St Stephen's
In the parish of
Holy Trinity Redditch

What is Baptism?



What does Baptism mean for you and your child?



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

The Baptism of Young Children

We're delighted you're thinking of baptism for your child. Your child is precious to you and precious to God. At baptism you promise to raise your child to know God loves them, and to help them to follow Jesus as a member of the Church.



But there's a bit more to Baptism than that.

Baptism is one of the special ceremonies, or sacraments, that Jesus Christ gave to his followers as a sign of belonging to him (the other is Holy Communion). It's a visible sign of God's love for your child. Also, in the Bible, those who want to follow Jesus are instructed to repent and be baptised.

Baptism therefore is about thanking God for his gift of life, but also about marking the beginning of a journey of faith: making a new start with God and becoming a member of the local church and the worldwide Christian family.

What promises do we make?

Baptism involves parents and godparents making promises. You will be asked to declare publicly on behalf of your child that you believe in God and that you will bring your child up to follow Jesus. During the service parents and godparents will be asked:

Will you pray for *your child or children*,
draw *them* by your example into the community of faith
and walk with *them* in the way of Christ?

And as you speak for them as they start out on their journey of faith:

Will you care for *them*, and help *them* to take *their* place
within the life and worship of Christ's Church?

You are asked to say, "with the help of God I will".



The Priest will then say:

In baptism, God calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light. To follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with him. Therefore I ask

Do you turn to Christ?

You say "I turn to Christ."

Do you repent of your sins?

You say "I repent of my sins."

- meaning I am sorry when I've not gone God's way.

Do you renounce evil?

You say "I renounce evil."

- meaning I turn away from all that denies God.

Your choices

You can see that you are making promises. If you feel that you are unable to make these promises there is an alternative service called a service of Thanksgiving for the gift of a child. In this service we give thanks to God and the child is blessed however you do not make the same promises that are made in Baptism. Thanksgivings do not involve the symbolism of water, signing with the cross or the giving of a candle.

If you choose to have a Thanksgiving, you can still have a Baptism service for your child at a later date.



Not Just for Babies

Baptism isn't just for babies and young children. It's primarily a sign of becoming a follower of Jesus, and so is appropriate for anyone of any age – from 0 to 100 or more. The baptism of older children, teenagers and adults is a very special event, and is often included within services of Confirmation. If you've not been baptised, and would like to think about Baptism for you, then please do get in touch with us, as we'd love to discuss this with you.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What's the difference between a baptism and a christening?

A. None, they are just different words for the same thing.

Q. What is the right age for baptism?

A. Baptism can happen at any age. What matters is that those concerned are committed to bring up a child as a Christian.

Teenagers and adults may also be baptized. This is celebrated with confirmation by the Bishop. You can only be baptised once, but there are ways of renewing your Christian commitment publicly as an adult - your priest will be able to advise you.

Q. I'm not a regular churchgoer. Can I still have my child baptized?

A. Yes. The Church believes that God's love is available to all, regardless of their background. Your parish priest can talk you through the options: you might prefer to have a Thanksgiving service first and then consider baptism when you have had time to talk through what is being asked of you.

You may also wish to find out more about the Christian faith and what joining the Church involves before you make a decision about baptism. Again, your parish priest can give you guidance.

Q. What does it cost?

A. A Baptism service is free.

Q. Do Parents and God Parents need to be baptized?

A. Godparents must have been baptized themselves, and it's best if they are also confirmed. Baptism or confirmation preparation can help with questions about the Christian faith. It will also help Godparents to support a godchild in developing their own faith. If you or an potential Godparent have any questions at all, why not speak to your parish priest or another Christian you know.

Lord God, I pray that you will guide and support me in being a godparent. Give me your wisdom and your love. Help me to be a good example of Christian living and keep me mindful of my precious godchild [child's name]. Amen.



Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of [child's name] and for all the joy he/she brings us. Be with her/him on her/his Christian journey so she/he may come to know our Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and friend. Amen.