

Your Child's Baptism

at St Thomas Parish Church



Welcome

We are delighted that you are considering baptism (sometimes called a Christening) for your child. It is a very special occasion for you, your child and your family. A baptism is not just a special day – it is the start of a whole lifetime of discovering what it means to be loved by God and to share that love with others.

You and your child's Godparents will promise to bring your child up as a Christian, as baptism marks the start of your child's Christian walk of faith. Baptism marks that your child belongs to the local and worldwide Christian family.

The Bible tells us that Jesus's own baptism marked the start of his ministry of preaching, teaching and healing. After his death and resurrection, he instructed his followers to continue to baptise people and help them to grow as Christian disciples:

In the Bible, Matthew 28:19 says 'Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'.

What happens next?

- Initial meeting

The first step is to contact the church and agree a date for an initial meeting as well as a provisional date for the baptism.

A member of clergy or one of the Baptism Preparation Team will meet you for around an hour. This could be at your home or in the church. They will explain more about the meaning of baptism. They will also ask for your name and address and those of the Godparents. If your child is old enough, they would like to speak briefly to them too. The date of the baptism will be confirmed at this stage. Please do not make other arrangements until the baptism date is confirmed. If you are new to Christian faith, there may be further meetings.

- The baptism service

Many baptisms take place during the Sunday morning service at 10.30. This is because a child is joining the church at their baptism. It may be possible to hold the baptism outside this service by arrangement.

Our services are family friendly and welcoming. Although a baptism is a significant event, we are relaxed in our approach, and love to have help from children. There are toys and books available for younger children.

- After the service

If the baptism is outside the main Sunday service, you will be invited back to be welcomed into the church family. As your child grows in their faith, they will benefit from the support of their family, Godparents and church community. You will be given a pack of resources to get you started. You may be interested in attending the Sunday morning Tots Groups or the St Thomas Tots group on a Thursday morning. Details of this, and other activities, are on the church website.

Have you been baptised?

If you are considering baptism for your child, perhaps this is an occasion to consider whether you have been baptised. We are also happy to baptise family members, such as siblings.

What happens at a baptism?

Baptism is a sacrament, which means that physical things are used to help us to glimpse God's love for us. These include water, oil and light.

The word 'baptism' means 'to dip' and so a baptism service always involves water. Water symbolises being made clean and a fresh start. When your child is baptised, the priest will pour water over his or her head.

The sign of the cross will be made in oil on your child's forehead. This is a sign that they have been chosen by God and follow the path of Christ. We use olive oil which has been blessed for this purpose.

Your child (or an adult) will be given a lit candle to represent that they are now a disciple of Christ: the light of the world. We light it from the Easter candle which reminds us of the light of God's love displayed in Jesus who by his dying and rising again demonstrated the power of God's love to overcome evil and save us.

Promises

The parents and Godparents will be asked the following questions:

Do you turn to Christ?

Do you repent of your sins?

Do you renounce evil?



You will promise to bring up your child within the family of the church and to help them by your prayers, teaching and example. You will also promise to nurture your child as they grow in their own Christian faith.

Choices to think about

Godparents. There is no fixed number for Godparents, although traditionally there are two men and a woman for a boy, and two women and a man for a girl.

Godparents will make promises to support the child in Christian faith, so it is better that they are baptised. They must be over 18 years of age.

Readings. If you have a special reading from the Bible which you would like included, please mention that at the initial meeting. Other readings may be possible in addition.

Beyond baptism

As a Church we want to continue the partnership we have begun at Baptism and support you in bringing up your child in the Christian faith. We hope that as your child grows up, he or she will decide to follow this path, and will want to confirm the choices they have made. This happens at a Confirmation Service led by the Bishop.

Here are just a few suggestions about how to live out the Christian life everyday as a family:

To say thank you to each other and to God at meals, for presents, for being there.

To tell stories from the Bible and say prayers at bedtime. Taking time to look back over the day is a great way to share the journey of faith together.

To think about how to help other people, especially in the neighbourhood.

To go to church or church events together.

To ask for God's help when sad or difficult times happen.

To retell the story of their baptism.



Your local parish

You are entitled to be baptised, or have your child baptised, if you are resident within the Parish of St Thomas. This can be checked on the website:

www.achurchnearyou.com/church/8702 . If you live in another parish, we would encourage you to contact your local church so you can develop a link near where you live. If there are good reasons for a baptism here, this is possible if you have a letter or email from your local Anglican Parish Priest giving permission.

Photographs

Please feel free to take photos inside the church before or after the service. If you take photos during the service, please do this in a way which does not distract others.

Fees

There is no charge for the baptism, however, we ask for donations to support the work of the church.

For further information, please contact:

St Thomas Parish Office 01392 437486 or Parish website:

www.stthomaschurchexeter.co.uk

You may also find further useful information on the Church of England national website <https://churchofenglandchristenings.org/>