

Will you Christen our baby?

This is a question which we are often asked at St. Mark's and the answer is **YES!** We have never refused a request for baptism. We look forward to welcoming you and your family to celebrate this important occasion. With you we will thank God for the birth of your baby, name the child with its Christian name and welcome a new member into the Christian family of the Church. Of course if you are an adult who was not baptised as a child then we hope that baptism may be something which you would like to consider for yourself.

You will not be placed in any embarrassing situations, we will not make you feel guilty about coming to church, but we do encourage you to start thinking of this as your church. This booklet will give you answers to some of the questions which you may have; please contact one of the ministers if you have further questions and they will be pleased to talk with you.

Contact Details

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You can learn a lot more about St Mark's Church and the Christian faith by visiting our website

www.thisischurch.com

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Church of
England

**St. Mark's Church
Bedford**

www.thisischurch.com



Methodist
Church

Baptism and your baby



Madonna Litta c 1490-91
Leonardo da Vinci 1452 - 1519

Prayers for families considering baptism

Your child isn't just your child - but God's as well. God loves your child and went to enormous lengths to show how much he loves all of his children, even to the point of dying on the cross. This means that in a sense there are no such things as single parents, God is a loving parent too. In the days and years ahead try to remember that you should not try to bring your child up on your own, but rather with the help and support of God as well. Here are some prayers which you may find helpful.



Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

God our Father, maker of all that is living, we praise you for the wonder and joy of creation. We thank you from our hearts for the life of this child, for a safe delivery, and for the privilege of parenthood. Accept our thanks and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, you welcomed children when others turned them away. Help me to love my child as you love her/him. Give me

patience when I am tired, strength to cope when things get tough. Give your Holy Spirit of love and joy to abide in our home and keep us safe. Amen.

God so loved the world that he gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life *The Gospel of John Chapter 3 Verse 16 (The Bible)*



Did you know?

There is no charge for a baptism service. In our services an offering is taken at which we have an opportunity to give to the work of the church.

A message from the Ministers

Baptism is a happy and special event, usually the first 'formal' event in a child's life and it provides an opportunity for all the family, relatives and friends to come together. We are pleased to be able to share it with you. We have found that people celebrating baptism at our churches enjoy the service. We hope that your baby's baptism will be a wonderful and memorable occasion and that it will mark the beginning of a long and happy association with our church. This booklet will help you with some of the questions which surround baptism or Christening (Christian-making) as some prefer to call it.

We do not put pressure upon parents or make them feel guilty about coming to church, but sometimes a baptism can remind us of how much we have let our own Christian life slip. It can be an opportunity to affirm our trust in God and to make a fresh start. We hope that the welcome you receive will encourage you to feel a part of our church. We understand the effort involved for parents with young children to get organised and make a habit of going to church but parents who do are usually pleased that they took the trouble.

The Family Service operates on the first Sunday of every month, but you will find something in the whole range of services which take place on Sunday mornings. We welcome even noisy children to our services and provide a crèche with toys and encourage parents to walk in and out during the service. It is our sincere belief that there is no better thing that you can give to a child than the opportunity to learn about God and his love for them. In the early years of a child's life they need to have this grounding of faith which will be vital for them if they are to develop into happy and balanced adults. It is a great sadness that this opportunity is not made available to all children but we will work with you to enable your child to be welcomed into the family of the Church.

Please feel able to contact the ministers to discuss baptism we will be pleased to spend time with you before and after the service.

Yours with our best wishes

The Ministerial Team

What is Baptism ?

- A chance for all the family to get together, celebrate and thank God for the new life which he has given.
- It is a time when we remember that as well as being a member of a human family your baby is a part of God's family too, the family of the Church.
- It is a sacrament, an outward and visible sign of God's love.

When Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan he became aware of God as his Father and felt the special presence of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, it was a turning point in his life. After his death and resurrection Jesus commanded his followers to make new disciples and baptise them too. This has been done ever since by Christians throughout the world.

Why do we baptise babies?

Most parents feel a need to say 'thank you' to someone for the wonderful gift of their child, that 'someone' is of course the God who gives life to us all. Jesus told his disciples to baptise people who wanted to become Christians and join the church. The Bible tells us that whole households were being baptised and of course soon parents wanted their children to be baptised also. Baptism is not like an insurance policy which you take out to make sure that your baby goes to heaven, God loves your child just as much now as after the baptism service. However it does make sense to give your child the very best start in life and what could be better than to encourage them from the very earliest days to be open to God and to know of his love for them.

Some churches do not baptise children until they are old enough to understand everything for themselves. However we do make all kinds of decisions on behalf of our children including schools and medical treatment as we do our best to encourage them in the best way for their lives. We are pleased that you have decided to give your child the benefit of being welcomed into the church family, now please take the effort to bring them along to church throughout these early years so that they can have the Christian start that they deserve.

In the baptism service we also pray that one day they will want as adults to stand up for themselves to confirm the baptism vows which have been made on their behalf: this is called Confirmation.



Did you know?

Parents were once advised that they should choose three godparents for their baby, two of the same sex as the child. This is not a rule and you can have as many as you like, but you should have at least one Godmother and one Godfather. The Royal Family on the other hand tend to prefer to go for about six... well there's more presents!!

GODPARENTS

You will need to consider names of godparents and these will be included in the church register and the baptism certificate. Being asked to be a godparent is always a real privilege and shows that you have a special place in the family, but there are expectations and responsibilities too. You are asked to promise that you will love and encourage the child in the Christian faith by prayer, example and teaching. Parents should not feel pressure to choose certain friends, but try to find people who can make the promises and mean them.

Godparents often buy a small present for the child; they should remember that this is a Christian occasion and so perhaps buy the child a children's Bible or story book of Bible stories. The Ministers will be pleased to help you decide.

A special card has been prepared to help Godparents to understand what it means to support a child in this way. Extra copies are available from the church if you should need them.

About St. Mark's Church

St Mark's is a special church, it is both a Church of England and a Methodist Church. We also welcome Christians from many other denominational backgrounds. We are proud of this and like to think that we reflect the prayer of Christ who longed that Christians should love one another without barriers. The certificate they will be given also shows that this baptism is recognised by all of the other Christian churches who baptise children.

Minister: I sign with the cross, the sign of Christ. Do not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified.



The congregation says:
Fight valiantly under the banner of Christ against sin, the world and the devil, and continue his faithful soldier and servant to the end of your life.

Following the baptism a lighted candle is given and the minister says,
Receive this light ... this is to show that you have passed from darkness to light.

The congregation says:
Shine as a light in the world to the glory of God the Father.

A Candle We then present a candle to show that we pass from darkness to light. Jesus is described in the Bible as the light of the world and as Christians we are to shine as lights in the world. Our world needs more than ever for us to all reject the ways of darkness and follow Christ in the Christian faith.

The Welcome At the end of the baptism the congregation joins to say, **'We welcome you into the Lord's family. We are members together of the body of Christ; we are children of the same heavenly Father; we are inheritors of the kingdom of God. We welcome you!'**

Records A permanent record of the baptism is made in the official registers of the church. A copy of this is given in the form of a special certificate as a reminder of this day.

Not just for babies! Remember that parents can be baptized at the same time as their children.

Water - is a sign of cleansing and also an important sign of life. Water symbolises how we are all washed clean by God and forgiven and accepted by Him. As we cannot live without water so this sign reminds us that we also need the cleansing and renewing presence of God in our lives.

If *you* would like a chance to think more about the Christian faith, please speak with a minister for more details.

When will the baptism take place?

Baptisms take place in the main Sunday Morning Service at church, because part of the service is the welcoming of the child by the congregation. Usually the baptism occurs in the Family Service which is held on the First Sunday of the month. In certain circumstances it may be possible to arrange another service in the month, however although we welcome children to all our services we find that Family Services are best for baptisms. At St. Mark's the time of the morning service is 9.30am. Please arrive at least ten minutes before the service, although we do reserve places for the immediate family and godparents.

The Promises

Baptisms take place during a service of worship because the congregation of the church is asked

"Members of the Body of Christ, who are now in his name to receive this child, will you promise to maintain the common life of worship and service that all the children among you may grow in grace and in the knowledge of God and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord?"

The congregation is promising you and your child that it will provide facilities for his/her Christian upbringing - usually through Junior Church and other organisations. This is why we cannot baptise on separate occasions in the afternoon etc.— please don't ask!

Did you know

Cry Baby.....
Superstitious people once thought that when a baby cried at Baptism it meant that it was the devil being cast out. In fact if a baby didn't cry it was thought a bad thing and some people even pinched their children to make them cry! Today we prefer not to upset children and hope that they do not get too upset by all the attention. However don't worry if they do cry and feel free to take children in and out of the crèche during the service.



After the congregation's promises, parents and Godparents will be asked to stand up and declare their own Christian faith. It is important to make sure that you can make these promises and only you can truthfully know that. If you have any difficulty we will discuss the promises with you; if you feel unable to say these things then perhaps you would prefer a Service of Thanksgiving for the child and a naming ceremony. The choice is yours but a baptism is a very important occasion and not to be undertaken lightly.



Did you know?

Because Baptism is a sign of entering the Church the font which held the water was once nearly always situated at the main door of the church. Today we have a movable font and we place it at the front of the church. It is easier for everyone to see!

Parents and godparents are invited to gather around the font, one family at a time. Please bring this order of service with you.

The minister says to the parents and godparents:

You have brought this child to baptism. You must now declare before God and His Church the Christian faith into which she/he is to be baptised, and in which you will help her/him to grow. You must answer for yourself and for her/him. Do you believe and trust in God the Father, who made the world?

Answer: **I believe and trust in him**

Do you believe and trust in his Son Jesus Christ, who redeemed mankind?

Answer: **I believe and trust in him**

Do you believe and trust in his Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God?

Answer: **I believe and trust in him**

The minister says to the congregation

This is the faith of the Church.

All say:

This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Three Questions

There are then three questions about the way you intend to live your life. Parents and Godparents make the promises for themselves and also for the child. Here are the questions with a short explanation;

Question 1

Do you turn to Christ?

You will be asked to answer - I turn to Christ

I want to change direction. I accept that my life is not totally my own. I acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and I will try to follow his teaching and his guidance for my life day by day.

Question 2

Do you repent of your sins?

You will be asked to answer - I repent of my sins

I'm sorry about the past and I know that I am accountable to God for my actions and thoughts. I can never be perfect but as I admit what is wrong he forgives and accepts me.

Question 3

Do you renounce evil?

You will be asked to answer - I renounce evil

I know that I sometimes have to make choices between good and evil. I want to set the evil behind me and from now on I will always try to choose the good.

Naming When the minister baptises the child he will ask what name you have chosen. This will be the Christian name for the child for the rest of its life.

The minister takes the child and says:

N., I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

The sign of the cross The minister will make the sign of the cross on the forehead of the child using the water. This is a sign to remind us of how Christ died for each one of us on the cross. As Christ died for us so we are now signed with the cross -the badge of our faith - to remind us that we must not be ashamed to profess our faith and fight against all that is evil.