



**St Leonard's Church,
Lexden**

Guide to Baptism for parents



*I baptize you in the name
of the Father and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit*

Church of England

What is baptism?

In baptism, you as parents are: thanking God for his gift of life, making a decision to start your child on the journey of faith and asking for the Church's support.

For your child, baptism marks the start of a journey of faith, becoming a member of the local and worldwide Christian family, the Church.

Baptism is a 'sacrament' a visible sign of God's love. In baptism, we are thanking God for his gift of life and publicly acknowledging his love. We are acknowledging that we all need to turn away from selfishness and evil and to accept God's offer of a new start and his help in our lives.

We can hold baptisms at a separate service for your family in the afternoon IT IS NOT A PRIVATE SERVICE; alternatively, a baptism can take place during the main Sunday morning service. If you have a separate service we ask you to return and come to our next All Age service - this is so that your child can be seen to be joining the family of the Church and be welcomed into membership. In turn the Church will promise to support and pray for you and your child.

Making decisions and promises

The priest will ask the parents and godparents to make declarations on behalf of the child.

When you bring your child for baptism, 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.

You will be asked to answer, on your child's behalf, that you have decided to turn away from everything which is evil or sinful and instead to turn towards Christ. Some people may be unwilling to make these important decisions and promises but we would rather these promises be made truthfully. Therefore

people unwilling to make these promises cannot be Godparents but are welcome to be present at the baptism – and, of course, will be involved in your child's life as they grow up.

Please give your godparents the accompanying 'guide for godparents' leaflet so they know what they will be expected to say and to promise.

Baptism is a good opportunity for both parents and Godparents to think about their own faith and commitment, since both will be making wide-ranging and serious promises during the service.

The role of godparents

It is an important and responsible role. You should have at least **three** godparents: **two** of the same sex as the child and **one** of the opposite sex. Godparents can be family members or friends. You should choose Godparents carefully based upon their willingness to commit to your child and be a Christian role model for them. Godparents **must** be baptized themselves, and preferably confirmed. We expect Godparents to be present at the service.

Symbols and actions used during the service

A number of important symbols and actions will be used during the service itself:

- **The sign of the cross** - the priest will make the sign of the cross on your child's forehead. This is like an invisible badge to show that Christians are united with Christ and must not be ashamed to stand up for their faith in him. The priest may also invite you and the godparents to sign the cross on the child's forehead after he or she has done so.
- **Water** - the priest will pour water on your child's head. Water is a sign of washing and cleansing. In baptism it is a sign of being washed free from sin and beginning a new life with God.
- **The welcome** - the church congregation will say some formal words of welcome to acknowledge that your child has

joined the Church and to show how pleased they are to have you among them.

- **Candles** - Jesus is the Light of the World. A large candle will be lit in the church and you will also be given a lighted candle at the end of the welcome service as a reminder of the duty we all have to bring Christ's light to the world.

You will meet one of our baptism visitors who will explain the parts of the service in detail and answer any questions you may have –but here are some **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, like wedding and marriage.

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.

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

A. Yes. The Church believes that God's love is given to all, but we ask you to come to some of our services before the baptism as your child is becoming a member of the church and you need to know what it is all about.

Q. What does it cost?

A. A Baptism service is free but we usually have a collection at the end of the service for the upkeep of the church.