

MARLOW AREA TEAM MINISTRY

Thanksgiving
and
Holy Baptism
Information Pack



THANKSGIVING FOR THE GIFT OF A CHILD AND HOLY BAPTISM

We are delighted that you are seeking God's blessing for your child. These notes are to help you understand the different services we offer, of thanksgiving for the gift of a child, and of baptism, and to help you choose which is right for you and your child.

The arrival of a new child is an occasion of joy, celebration and wonder, when we naturally wish to give thanks to God, and reflect upon the gift of new life. Parish churches have traditionally baptised children, and recently the Church of England has offered a service of thanksgiving for those wishing to give thanks without undertaking the particular promises to Christian living made at a baptism.

We invite you to explore with us the commitments involved in baptism, and its meaning for you and your child, through **three** evenings of preparation, during which you will be guided through the different forms of service by members of the clergy, as well as looking at ways of bringing your family into the life of the church. There will be opportunities to ask questions and break for group discussion, as well as talking to current church members. Through these two evenings, we hope that you will be able to make a well informed decision about the best welcome and celebration for you, your child and your family.

Baptism preparation

For those choosing baptism, you will need to attend the three session baptism preparation sessions. Although you can initially pre-book a date and time for the service, baptism bookings are only confirmed after attendance at the three baptism preparation meetings.

In order to prepare for the sessions, we would be grateful if you would think carefully about how you feel about baptism for your child at this time. Maybe these questions will help:

The baptism service involves promises about giving the child a Christian upbringing – not in isolation, but within the family of others in the Christian church. How do you feel about this? Will you be prepared to do this to the best of your ability?

As well as private prayer, Christianity has always been expressed in regular public worship. Part of this will depend upon your willingness to teach and set an example. Are we able to help you with this?

The service of baptism reminds us that this is only the first of three stages, the other two are confirmation and receiving Holy Communion. Will you encourage your child to do this and, if not confirmed, consider it for yourself as an example?

Your baptismal sponsor/ mentor

Baptismal sponsors are committed members of the churches' congregations who will visit you once before the baptism and will be present to welcome you to one of our regular services. They will also attend your child's baptism service to represent the church. In the case of All Saints' Marlow, they will also introduce you, your family and your new child at the TGIS service the month after the baptism, at which you will be given your child's baptismal candle. This is a short, informal service in which children are encouraged to express their spirituality, and learn more about the Christian faith. It starts at 11.15, and lasts for about 45 minutes.

Godparents

You will need at least two godparents who are baptised and confirmed. There is no maximum number of godparents.

Godparents are welcome to attend the preparation meetings, and to meet with the clergy to discuss their role and responsibilities.

Where and when?

Baptisms take place...

At **All Saints' Church Marlow** on the first Sunday of each month at 2.30, 3.15 and 4.0pm, usually with two children being baptised at each service.

At **St. John the Baptist Church, Little Marlow** on the second Sunday of each month (either during or immediately after the 11am service).

At **All Saints' Church, Bisham** on the third Sunday of each month (either during or immediately after the 9:30am service).

At **St. Mary's Church, Marlow Bottom** on the 4th Sunday of each month (either during or immediately after the 9:30am service).

For those who worship regularly at any of our churches, we can explore the possibility of having the baptism at the service they normally worship.

Baptisms are popular during the summer and may be booked up several months in advance.

If your baptism is at All Saints' Marlow, there may be a baptism service before yours; please be aware that you may not have immediate access to the church. Similarly, there may be a baptism after yours, so please ensure that you and your guests arrive promptly, remembering to allow time for parking in Marlow on Sunday afternoon.

Some frequently asked questions

Who can be baptised in the churches of the Marlow team ministry?

If you live within the area of the parish, you may bring your child for baptism. Please check with a member of the clergy team as to your eligibility.

Is baptism the same as christening?

Baptism and christening are two names for the same ceremony, which involves anointing with blessed oil, and pouring water on the candidate's head three times, in the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Must all the godparents be baptised and confirmed?

In promising to help guide your child in the way of Christian faith, it helps that godparents have made that journey themselves. However, we ask that a minimum of two godparents have been baptised and confirmed.

How many godparents may our child have?

It is only customary for a child to have three godparents, two of the same sex as the child, and one other, though it is possible for to have only two godparents. There may be more than three godparents, and a parent may also choose to act as a godparent.

Why might we choose a service of thanksgiving?

The thanksgiving service can be adapted to your family circumstances, and can take place either in the church or at your home.

You, your family and your new child receive God's blessing, but without making promises and commitments you may find difficult. Your child will always be welcome to explore the Christian faith as they grow and develop, and may choose to be baptised in due course, as a sign of their own commitment to following Jesus, and serving God's people.

Why might we choose a service of baptism?

The baptism service marks the beginning of your child's Christian journey, and draws parents and godparents to undertake a new and important responsibility for the nurture of your child within the life of the church.

Exploring the way of Christ together with your child will bring you to new experiences and understandings of your own baptismal faith.

Is a service of thanksgiving 'second best'?

No. The services of baptism and thanksgiving both celebrate the joy of love and the wonder of new life in the gift of a child, and we welcome the chance to talk with you and help you to discern which service is right for you and your child.

If we choose a thanksgiving service, can our child be baptised later?

Yes, your child can be baptised at any stage later in their life. You may choose thanksgiving, with a view to having a later baptism.

Will the choice of baptism or thanksgiving make a difference if we want to enrol our child at a church school?

At the moment, Church of England schools do not have a policy favouring children who have been baptised, though regular attendance at a church is more likely be favoured by some schools in the future.

If we baptise our child now, how could they celebrate and express their faith as an adult?

Baptism in the Church of England happens only once, but as children grow in their faith, and develop spiritually through the support and care of their parents, godparents and the church, we hope they will hope to honour the promises made at baptism and choose to be confirmed and receive Holy Communion as expressions of their belief. The service of confirmation, at which the bishops lays his hands on candidates heads and prays, represents the child 'confirming' the promises made for them at their baptism by parents and godparents, and owning for themselves that decision to follow Christ to new life.

How many times can a child be baptised?

Baptism in the Church of England is once and for all, and a child cannot be baptised twice under church law.

**PLEASE NOTE:
THERE IS NO CHARGE FOR THE BAPTISM OR
THE THANKSGIVING SERVICE**