



Baptism Policy and Practice

Introduction

Baptism sometimes known as Christening marks a new beginning of Christian life whether we are adults or children. That journey to faith may already have been long or dramatic or even difficult or convoluted but this service provides us with a way in which we now become full members of God's church. Baptism also presents to us the Christian story and invites us to make that story even more part of our life story. Baptism is available for children, young people and adults.

A: What happens in the service?

- In the baptism service we turn towards God and we turn away from all that hampers good relationships with people, with creation and with God.
- We are marked with the sign of the cross (the badge of Jesus Christ) and we profess our Christian belief.
- We give thanks for the gift of water and we remember that like God's people of old who came through the sea to freedom in the Promised Land, so we go into and through the waters of baptism to a new life. This is symbolised by the sprinkling or pouring of water or by immersion into water just like the Jesus' baptism in the River Jordan.
- Promises are made to follow Jesus Christ.
- We are baptised in the name of God the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit reminding us that just as there is a relationship within God, so we are called to build relationships that transform the world.
- We receive God's gift of being adopted into his people (the church).
- We are given a lighted candle signifying that God journeys with us as we grow in faith and as we serve our neighbours near and far.

Baptism although immensely personal is also dramatically public! It normally takes place within main church services as part of the whole church of God so that new Christians can really be welcomed by their brothers and sisters of faith.

Within church life we provide groups for adults, young people and children to grow deeper in faith as we learn together. Parents and Godparents have a key role to play for newly baptised children and other Christians provide that same role for newly baptised adults.

B: Alternatives and other services

Christians who have been baptised some time ago sometimes renew their baptismal promises e.g. at Easter or maybe as part of a return to a more intentional Christian way of life. The Church of England recognises baptism in any Christian Church that uses water and undertakes this commitment 'in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit'. So if you have been baptised in another denomination, you do not have to be baptised again. In fact, it is not possible to be baptised a second time but we can renew our commitments any time. Please ask the clergy if you wish to do this.

The Church of England does offer Baptism to infants and children who are unable to profess faith themselves on the understanding that they are brought up as Christians. But there are cases where in all in conscience, parents are not able to make the necessary Christian promises whilst keeping their personal integrity. Yet they want to come to church to say thank you and to offer prayers. If this is the case, a service of Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child can be arranged which may include supporting friends and a naming ceremony. This service does not require parents to commit to promises but it enables parents to celebrate the new birth and to give thanks.

Confirmation in many ways completes our Baptism as we profess our faith with our own lips and as the Bishop lays hands on our head, praying for the gift of the Holy Spirit to strengthen us. So this service is reserved for adults and young people who are able to make their own promises. For adults Baptism and Confirmation usually happen at the same time

There is more information about these services at www.cofe.anglican.org/lifeevents

C: Who may be baptised?

Baptism can be arranged for babies, children and adults who

- a) live within the Cathedral parish boundaries (a small area of the city centre) **or**
- b) who are regular attendees or members of the Cathedral Community **or**
- c) have a strong pastoral reason which will be considered by the Canon Precentor (the Dean making the final decision). If you qualify through this later category, you will then be required to consult your local Church of England parish where you live before a Baptism can be arranged.

Those who approach the Cathedral but who do not fit into the above criteria will be encouraged to become part of the Cathedral Community before making a formal request for Baptism.

Those who would like to have a Service of Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child as explained above in section B need to contact the Canon Precentor to make arrangements. This service may be included on a Sunday morning or at another convenient time.

D. When does baptism take place?

Baptism normally takes place for children on designated Sundays (approx 4-6 times per year) during the main 10.30am morning Eucharist. We try to publish dates at least 6 months in advance. Baptism for young people and adults normally takes place as part of the Diocesan Confirmation services which take place approximately three times per year in the Cathedral, including early on Easter Day. Confirmation preparation groups are provided for these occasions.

E. What about Godparents?

Babies, children and young people who are baptised are supported by parents and godparents. Godparents do not have any legal status but they promise to assist in bringing up the children as Christians. Therefore, they themselves must be baptised (any recognised Christian denomination). They do not have to be confirmed, but that is our preference.

We ask that Godparents be at least 16 years or over.

Sometimes people also have sponsors who do not necessarily have to be baptised. They offer support and example to the newly baptised. For example, adults sometimes have sponsors from the congregation or beyond to accompany them.

It is possible to include others as sponsors who parents wish to have an on-going involvement in the life of their children but who are not baptised or who may come from another faith community. They will have a special concern for the on-going wellbeing and development of the child.

F. What else is required?

- We will need you to complete an application form available from LeicesterCathedral@leccofe.org or telephone the office on **0116 248 7456**
- This form will include a request that we use your contact details, to be kept on our computer database as a means of keeping in touch over the longer term
- Assuming we can use your contact details, the Members of our Mothers Union will send greetings cards to children as they grow up within our community.
- There is no fee for baptism but we encourage you to make a generous thank offering in the collection during the service, using wherever possible the Gift Aid envelopes provided.

On return of the completed paperwork to the Leicester Cathedral, St Martins House, Peacock Lane, Leicester, LE1 5PZ, the Canon Precentor will liaise with you and he will arrange for a Baptism Preparation session.