



St Mary's Church Wargrave

With Knowl Hill



Baptisms/Christenings

at

*St Mary's
and St Peter's*

We are delighted that you're considering a baptism, and we have produced this short booklet to explain some of the things you might like to think through.

What is the difference between Baptism, Christening and Thanksgiving?

This is a question that many people ask, and the different words can be confusing! Essentially Baptism and Christening refer to the same thing - an outward sign of an inward reality, when a person becomes 'new' through trust in Jesus. Some people find it helpful to think of four B's to visualise what Baptism means - Bath, Burial, Birth & Badge. Baptism is a visual symbol of sins being washed away, this is possible through sharing in the death of Christ, and then a new identity comes through a 'new birth' into the Christian identity as one of the people of God. In the Bible, people's names would sometimes change when they started following Jesus to show they were starting a new life. The Church of England service involves using the child's name, which is perhaps why the term 'Christening' has colloquially come to be equated with naming. A Thanksgiving service is a good alternative if you don't feel ready to say the vows of a Baptism service with integrity but you and your family would still like to celebrate the birth of a child, give thanks to God and ask for his blessing.

What's involved?

The laws of the Church of England encourage 'adequate preparation' for a Baptism, and we agree that this is a good thing to do. One of the clergy team will generally arrange a visit to watch a DVD clip, talk through the vows that parents and godparents will make, and offer prayer for the family.

The vows that parents and godparents make express serious promises and core Christian beliefs. We would encourage parents and godparents to say these vows only if they can be said honestly. You're not claiming to be living a perfect life, but you are promising that you trust in Jesus and follow him, and that you will offer Christian nurture to the child.

Do I need to be a regular churchgoer?

We understand that family life is tiring and busy and that even leaving the house can be a complicated process! We try to do all we can to make our weekly 10:30 service at St Mary's as welcoming as possible for families, with crèche facilities and children's groups for 3-14 year olds. We'd recommend coming along to services before the date of the Baptism to get to know the church family better. There is a part of the Baptism service where we formally welcome your child into our church family, so it's good to know what kind of family you are being welcomed into.

Given the promises you have made in the service, it will be your responsibility to ensure that your child has an opportunity to be nurtured in the Christian faith and, alongside a Christian home, gathering with church family is the place to fulfil this commitment.

Following the Baptism we'll encourage you to find spiritual support and encouragement with us, and we run regular courses and groups to help you do this. Coming along to a course that explains the basics of Christian belief can be a great place to start, and we'll also offer reading material that might help you continue on the Christian journey as a family.

What should I consider when choosing a godparent?

This is a part of Baptism that is often misunderstood. In the Church of England service godparents make big promises regarding their own Christian faith and also promise to provide Christian nurture for the child.

Whilst it's tempting to just ask your closest friends or family members to step into this role, it is far better to think of the people you know who have a strong Christian faith. A godparent's role is to pray for their godchild and to encourage them to grow in love and knowledge of Jesus. Godparents should be people who set a godly example in their own lives.

As you will see on the Baptism form, Church of England law requires each of the godparents to be already baptised and (ideally) also confirmed. The minimum requirement according to law is that there is at least one godfather and

one godmother for the child, and a third godparent of the same gender as the child is strongly encouraged. Parents may be godparents for the child as long as there is at least one other godparent who isn't a parent.

It's also not possible to be a godparent 'by proxy,' ie without actually being there at the service. Of course, people who weren't there on the day can play a similar role in the years to come, but the part of the service where vows and promises are made is an important moment - just like at a wedding.

What do I do next?

If you contact the church office (details below) or speak to any of the clergy, we will arrange to meet with you. After talking through what is involved and any questions you have, you will be given a form which collects all the information we need to set a date. Ideally, Baptisms at St Mary's fall on the second or fourth Sunday of each month because on these Sundays there is more time for the Baptism within the service. At St Peter's the service would need to be on the second Sunday of the month.

Helpful resources

You may find the following websites helpful as you consider Baptism:

<https://churchofenglandchristenings.org>

<http://www.three-two-one.org>

Contact:

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