



# WHAT IS BAPTISM?

*A guide for you or your kids*

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# What is baptism?

Baptism, at its most practical level, means gaining membership to the worldwide Church. There would be few Anglicans or Christians however, who would regard Baptism as only that. In getting baptised so, you are determining to turn from your old life towards a life which follows Jesus Christ.

Baptism is a sacrament where God is at work, an outward and visible sign of the inward and invisible action which is taking place by God, as the person being baptised makes promises in the way that they seek to live, and are then washed in the waters of baptism. That is, they are turning from their old life of living for self and turning to their new life of living for God through following Jesus Christ. The old is gone, the new has begun. Baptism marks the beginning of a new relationship between God and the person who has been baptised.

## Who can get baptised?

Baptism is for anyone who seeks to follow Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Jesus himself was baptised and commanded His followers to do the same. Where children are very young and not able to answer for themselves,

parents and godparents or sponsors make promises on the child's behalf. The parent/s and godparent/s are promising God they will raise the child to follow Jesus and hope that at a later stage, the child will confirm the decision made on his/her behalf. For this reason, it is vital for the godparents or sponsors to be committed Christians themselves.

The normal practice within the Anglican Church when a person has been baptised as a child is to be confirmed by the Bishop or Archbishop at a later time. This is a decision to follow Jesus where the child publicly confirms the decisions made on their behalf as a child.

We offer baptism for adults as well; for those who haven't been baptised as children and have chosen to follow Jesus in later life. It is an outward sign of an inward change. For some, it comes at great cost. For all, it involves the church community who is also making promises to God, to welcome you in and help you grow in faith in God.

## How do I organise a baptism for myself or my children?

If you would like your child to be baptised or feel you are ready to be

baptised yourself, you can contact clergy from a church near you to begin the journey. You may be asked to attend a few sessions where you will explore what it means to be a Christian and how the church can support you in your promises to follow Jesus. Once ready, you can discuss with the clergy a proposed date for your baptism. The baptism service is a special moment where your promises to God are witnessed and your belonging to God's family, begins. It may involve one person being baptised or more, depending on the circumstances.

## What happens during baptism?

Baptism involves making promises before God about the way you are choosing to live. You are publicly stating your belief and trust in God. You are then washed by sprinkling with or immersing in water and having the sign of the cross made on you, sometimes with oil, to mark you as God's own, forever.

If the person is too young to make these promises themselves, the parents will usually choose godparents or sponsors who will make promises for and on behalf of the child. They are committing to help raise the child to know God personally and be a model for them of

following Jesus. It's worth knowing that a godparent needs to be physically present during the ceremony in order to make these promises. It is recommended to choose people who can be present in faith development in the years to come, thus being a role model in following Jesus to your child.

Baptism in the Anglican Church is normally accepted as suitable for membership in any of the mainstream or orthodox Christian traditions.

## What happens after baptism?

This is when a life of following Jesus begins. Jesus came to bring you an abundant life and makes it clear in many places, that this comes through continuing to trust in Him, as Lord and Saviour. God has given us many things to help us in this faith journey: The Bible, The Holy Spirit, His Church Family and more.

Speak to the person who has baptised you about what 'next steps' would be most suitable for you.

The most exciting of journeys has begun, and The Church looks forward to supporting you in your commitment to live as God's own.