



Being Baptised at St. James's Hampton Hill

www.stjames-hamptonhill.org.uk

Welcome to St. James's Church

Watching a child sleep peacefully is sheer joy for any parent. The wonder of life is something to be truly thankful for and should be celebrated.

Yet while a child is a miracle, the responsibility can be scary. Children are an endless source of fascination, concern, delight, anxiety and joy, but nobody teaches us how to bring up children. Parents have to sort out and make the best they can of all the experience, insights and truths available to them. Having a baby makes us acutely aware both of all that is most precious and all that is wrong and frightening in the world. Of course, when children are small we want to protect them but sooner than any of us realise we have to prepare our children to live in this world. Nothing challenges a sense of who we are and what we believe as much as becoming a parent. Parents quickly find themselves faced with big questions and no easy answers.

Whether or not you were brought up to believe in God or the Christian faith, new parents often find themselves looking at the questions of faith afresh and maybe this is why you are seeking baptism for your child. Maybe you see baptism as a way of introducing your child to the faith you were brought up in or maybe you feel drawn to exploring a faith you never had or maybe you simply want to thank God for the gift of a child. Baptism is about the beginning of a journey, discovering God and allowing ourselves to be formed according to the teachings and life of our Lord Jesus Christ. In order to be baptised you do not have to know lots of facts about the faith but you do have to feel confident that the Christian journey is something you wish your child to set out on with yourself as a supportive and encouraging companion. It is an act of trust and commitment – as with any important relationship.

At St. James's we wish to be with you on this journey in the following ways:

- You will receive a visit from a Baptism Visitor who will go through the meaning of baptism with you, discuss any practicalities of the service and answer any questions.
- The baptism itself. You will receive a genuine welcome into the church community during the service. We really do wish to support and encourage you. We are all at different stages on the journey of discovering God. Having a party and celebrating is right and proper and is a wonderful opportunity for bringing family members together as well as, we hope, for making new friendships.
- If at any point you decide that it is not right to baptise your child at this time, the clergy will be very happy to discuss with you holding a Service of Thanksgiving for the birth of your child.

What is Baptism?

Jesus told his disciples to 'fish for people.' Originally baptism was for adults who had been 'hooked' by Christ.

The images of fishing and being 'hooked' are good descriptions of the followers of Jesus:

- The first disciples were fishermen
- Jesus 'fed the 5000' with a miraculous meal of loaves and fishes
- The secret sign of the early church was the shape of a fish scratched in the sand outside a house to signify where a gathering of Christians was taking place.

No doubt there was a strong reminder of the imagery of fish when people saw new Christians being baptised and submerged under water and then coming up gasping and spluttering for air. Being submerged was for adults a new birth, the turning over of a new leaf. Baptism helped lift people's eyes from old, self-centred ways and, instead, focus on Christ and the coming of God's kingdom on earth. As baptism is about birth into a new life with God, it became the custom for babies and children to be baptised too.

Baptism marks the beginning of a journey with God which continues for the rest of our lives. It is the first step in response to God's love. The seasonal cycle of the church year continues the idea of a journey. It starts with expectant hope in the season of Advent during December. Then expectancy becomes reality with the birth of Jesus at Christmas. There then follows the story of his life, suffering, death and the new life of the resurrection at Easter. The church year ends in the month of November when, with the festivals of All Saints, All Souls and Remembrance Sunday, we remember how death comes to all of us, but is not the end.

Embarking on the journey of faith is an act of trust and we need a guide. The child has the sign of the cross made on their forehead in oil. The cross is the badge of faith in the Christian journey. Marking with oil (anointing) has traditionally been a symbol of setting apart and so a child is set apart for their journey with God. Each one of us is known and loved individually by God. There is a lovely passage in the Book of Isaiah where God says *'I will never forget you my people, I have carved your name on the palm of my hand.'* The child is named and so marked by God as water is poured over the head in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said 'I am the light of the world' and for this reason a candle symbolises Christ as that light leading the way as we leave the church after baptism.

Being a Godparent

Congratulations! It is very exciting to be invited to be a godparent, but it can also feel quite awe-inspiring as you are being asked to have a very special role in a child's upbringing, which is more than being a favourite aunt or uncle. As a godparent you have a very particular task. You have a spiritual role as well as a caring role.

Are there any rules for choosing godparents?

Those chosen to be godparents should be those who can be trusted to be a good friend and mentor to the child in the years to come, those who will take an interest and keep in touch with the child and be able to give support when needed.

Godparents **must** have been baptised (christened) in any part of the Christian Church.

As a godparent you are asked to pray for your godchildren, give them a good example to follow and generally encourage them to play a full part in the Christian community.

The traditional number of godparents is three: two women and one man for a girl and two men and one woman for a boy. This, though, is a tradition and not a rule.

What if a godparent is not confirmed?

You will be making the same baptism promises on behalf of your godchild as were made for you by your godparents at your baptism.

If you have not been confirmed then maybe this is the right time for you to be thinking about your own faith journey and maybe being confirmed yourself.

Does being a godparent involve being a legal guardian as well?

No. A godparent is not a legal guardian but the parents may be thinking of you in this role should anything happen to them. You may like to discuss this with them.

What exactly is a godparent promising?

Although it is God who enables faith to grow, what we do or do not do can help or hinder the process. The parents and godparents are therefore asked two questions:

'Will you pray for the children, draw them by your example into the community of faith and walk with them in the way of Christ?'

and

'In baptism these children begin their journey in faith. You speak for them today. Will you care for them and help them to take their place within the life and worship of Christ's church?'

The first question is asking you to make a commitment to the child and the second question is asking you to make a commitment to help them grow in the Christian faith.

In answer to both these questions you reply:

'With the help of God we will.'

There then follow another three questions. This time you are answering on behalf of the child who is too young to make a responsible commitment for himself or herself. The questions are:

Do you turn to Christ?

Parents & Godparents: I turn to Christ.

Do you repent of your sins?

Parents & Godparents: I repent of my sins.

Do you renounce evil?

Parents & Godparents: I renounce evil.

Also, during the baptism, the minister makes the sign of the cross on the child's forehead. The cross is the Christian sign. It is the badge of faith on the Christian journey. It is marked with oil, a traditional sign of being set apart for a special purpose. These words are said at the same time:

N, Christ claims you for his own; receive the sign of the cross.

Do not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified.

The congregation replies:

**Fight valiantly as a disciple of Christ
against sin, the world and the devil,
and remain faithful to Christ to the end of your life.**

What else do godparents have to do on the day?

During the service you, along with the child's family and friends, are asked to make some special promises of faith with the whole congregation. The promises of faith are:

Do you believe and trust in God the Father source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All I believe and trust in him

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

All I believe and trust in him

Do you believe and trust in the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the
people of God, and makes Christ known in the world?

All I believe and trust in him

This is the faith of the church

**All This is our faith, we believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

The day of the Baptism

At St. James, Hampton Hill most baptisms take place on a Sunday at 11.30am. We take bookings for up to two families per baptism service.

Is there any special preparation for the baptism?

Yes, a baptism visitor, or the minister conducting the service, will come and see you.

How do we get to meet the Baptism Visitor?

You will be contacted by one of our baptism visitors about two weeks before the baptism to arrange a mutually convenient time to visit you. This visit is *essential*. The baptism visitor will go through the service with you, answer any questions you may have and generally act as a link with the congregation. They will be there to welcome you in church on the day of the baptism and they take a part in the baptism service, too.

Who will be baptising our child?

The clergy take it in turns to conduct baptisms.

Do we sit anywhere special in church?

We ask parents and godparents to arrive by 11.15 am. (If you arrive earlier refreshments are served, in the church main hall ,with those who have attended the 9.30 am service).

You will be directed to the front of the church, child, parents and godparents sitting together in the front row.

Where should the other guests sit?

Your guests can sit anywhere in the church. *Please* encourage them to join in with responses and the prayers.

Do we move during the service?

If there is only one child being baptised, or if there are two, but not that many people present, the font at the back of the church will be used. The minister taking the service will make it clear when you are to move. If there are two children and/or a large congregation, a portable font will be placed on the platform at the front of the church. You will be asked to come forward when it is time for your child to be baptised.

Can a video or photographs be taken during the service?

Sorry, but no. The church has strict rules preventing the videoing of children without the express permission of their parents. If you wish to video the baptism service you will need to get the permission of any other family having a baptism at the same time as you. Flash photography during the baptism is undesirable because it disturbs the service when we should all be concentrating on the prayers. You are very welcome to take photographs of your family and friends around the font after the service.

What happens after the baptism?

Each autumn we hold a Sunday afternoon service to give thanks for your child's baptism followed by tea.

You will receive a card on the anniversary of your child's baptism for the next two years. We suggest you light your child's baptism candle and explain the pictures on the candle as a way of teaching them about the special day when they became a member of the church.

How much should be given as a thank offering?

There are no fees for baptisms but you are invited to make a thank offering in the special envelope provided. Please complete the Gift Aid Declaration if you are a UK taxpayer.

Some people ask for guidance on how much to give. Of course it should be no more than you can afford, but the upkeep of St. James, Hampton Hill is entirely due to the generosity and efforts of the congregation - we receive no grants. St. James, Hampton Hill is a beautiful church with a lot going on and many people to care for.

St. James, Hampton Hill has been looked after by the love and care of the people of Hampton Hill over the last 150 years – your child's baptism and his or her future life in this church is an important part of this ongoing tradition. Whatever you give as a thank offering – thank *you* very much!

What there is for families at St. James

Baptism is a wonderful gift and an occasion for which the whole family can celebrate. This is not just a joyous celebration for each individual family, but also for the church family of St. James, the greater church family and of course for the head of our Christian family, God himself.

Baptism is a gift from God by which we become members of a family beyond our individual family group. Through baptism we are formed in the likeness of Christ: 'For in one Spirit we were all baptised into one body' (*1 Corinthians 12:13*). Therefore by being baptised you become not only part of the family of St James's but also the Christian family world wide.

Families are a place where you are nurtured, loved, and are welcomed. Families are a place to grow, to question, to learn and to become you!

At baptism we begin a new way of life, a life in Christ which sets us on a pilgrimage, a journey of discovery. It is a journey that leads to a better understanding of ourselves, of others, and especially of the love that God has for each of us.

Here at St James's you will find many opportunities for sharing in the companionship of our community, to learn and be nurtured in the Christian faith, to be involved in the wider church and local community, to become the person God knows you to be, and journey together in the love of God.

Activities for families at St. James's.

All Age Service

This service is held several times a year. Please check our website for details.

The Shell Seekers Sunday School

The Shell Seekers is a lively, caring group for children age four upwards. It meets Sunday mornings, from 9.25 am, in the church main hall. The Sunday School joins the church service later to receive a blessing or Holy Communion and to sing the last hymn.

St. James's Ark

The Ark is a playgroup for carers and under fives which is Christian based. It takes place on Monday mornings, between 10.15-11.15 am, during term time.

A Thanksgiving Prayer

God our creator,
we thank you for the wonder of new life
and for the mystery of human love.
We give thanks for all whose support and skill
surround and sustain the beginning of life.
As Jesus knew love and discipline
within a human family
may our children
grow in strength and wisdom.
As Mary knew the joys and pains of motherhood
give us, as parents, your sustaining grace and love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

A Blessing

Wherever you go
May God the Father be with you
Wherever you go
May God the Son be with you
Wherever you go
May God the Spirit be with you

May the road rise to meet you
May the wind be always at your back
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
The rains fall soft upon the fields, and,
Until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of his hand.
The Lord bless you and keep you,
may his face shine upon you
and grant you his peace this day and evermore. Amen

