

# *Special Services for Families*



St Mary's

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Ferndown

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**WELCOME!** It is great to hear from you.

Thank you for enquiring about a special service for your child. We cherish every child as a gift from God, and we look forward to helping you find the right service to celebrate God's goodness to you.

This booklet hopefully explains everything you need to know about the special services we offer. Explanations and full texts of these services can be found later on.

You may well have made an enquiry for a Baptism (Christening) which is a ceremony in which Christians celebrate the new life that Jesus brings and commit themselves to following Him. It is a very precious, important step and we want to help you to make the most of it. There are however, other service options which you may not be aware of, and, which you may feel would be more appropriate for you as a family.

## **FIRST STEPS**

Whichever service you choose for your child we ask that you attend church regularly prior to the service. Part of Baptism involves welcoming your child into our Church family, and the church community committing to support you, and so it is important that we get to know you.

You will also be expected to attend a preparation course which will run on two consecutive weeks. During these sessions the different types of service we offer will be fully explained, and you will have the opportunity to ask questions as well as meeting the Clergy team and other families. We will talk together about what it means to follow Jesus, and give you some ideas about how to encourage your child to grow in faith. During the final session you will be able to book the service you feel is right for you, in consultation with the Clergy team.

These sessions will take place via Zoom, and you will be sent the Zoom meeting link in good time before the first session.

To receive more information and to book onto our next preparation sessions [please click here to complete our enquiry form](#) or contact our Church Office team on 01202 897087 or email [office@stmarys-ferndown.org.uk](mailto:office@stmarys-ferndown.org.uk)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q. What's the difference between a Baptism and a Christening?**

A. None, they are just different words for the same thing.

### **Q. What time is the service?**

It will take place during either our 9am Breakfast Church, or our 10:45 Family service, depending on your preference.

### **Q. What happens during the service?**

A. It is advisable to arrive about 15 minutes before the start of the service. The Welcome team will greet you at the door and will make sure you know where to sit. The member of the clergy taking the service will let you know when you need to move to the front. Some parts of the service will be for the whole congregation to join in, some will be for you and the Godparents or sponsors, if applicable.

### **Q. What does the service cost?**

A. There is no cost regardless of which service you choose.

### **Q. Can we have a private service?**

A. Baptisms, Thanksgivings and Dedications always take place in the church's main service, as it is important that the church congregation is there to support you and welcome your child.

### **Q. What is the right age for Baptism?**

A. Baptism can happen at any age. What matters is that those concerned are able to declare their faith and make a commitment to follow Jesus.

Teenagers and adults may also be baptised and we often do this by full immersion. Some people who have been baptised as children may choose to reaffirm their Baptism vows by Confirmation or by immersion.

### **Q. What do I need to know about Godparents?**

A. You normally would choose at least three Godparents: two of the same sex as the child and one of the opposite sex. Godparents can be family members or friends. However, it is important that you choose people who will take an interest in your child's spiritual welfare and who will pray for you and your child. They need to have been baptised themselves.

If you choose a Thanksgiving or Dedication service, you may choose sponsors instead of Godparents, should you wish to.

You will no doubt have other questions you wish to ask, and we will endeavour to answer these during the preparation course. A summary and full text of each of the services can be found on the following pages.

## The Thanksgiving Service

A Thanksgiving Service is a short Church of England ceremony within the main morning service, whereby we thank God for your child, and ask God's blessing on them. Your child may be a baby, a Toddler or a few years old. The Thanksgiving Service reminds us that we can thank God for:

1. The safe arrival of your child  
(or the first few years of life if your child is older!)
2. The privilege and joy of parent-hood
3. The way God blesses us by giving us a family to belong to & care for.

The service expects nothing more of you than you commit yourselves to be loving and faithful parents. The congregation offers you love, support and prayers for your family. A full text for the service can be found on the next two pages.

# THANKSGIVING FOR THE BIRTH OF A CHILD

## Introduction

Minister: We are here today to give thanks for *N*, with *their* family and friends, and to support *their* parents in their responsibilities with prayer and love.

God became one of us in Jesus, and understands all that surrounds the arrival and upbringing of children. It is God's purpose that children should know love within the stability of their home, grow in faith, and come at last to the eternal city where his love reigns supreme.

## Questions to the Parents

Minister: Do you receive *N* as a gift from God?

**Parents: We do**

Minister: Do you wish to give thanks to God and seek his blessing?

**Parents: We do**

Minister: Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the wonder of new life and for the mystery of human love. We thank you for all whose support and skill surround and sustain the beginning of life. We thank you that we are known to you by name and loved by you for all eternity. We thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ, who has opened to us the way of love. We praise you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**All: Blessed be God forever**

Minister: Gracious God, we thank you for the gift of *N*, entrusted to the care of *N* & *N*. May they be patient and understanding, ready to guide and forgive, so that through their love *N* may come to know your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen**

## Bible Reading

Minister: Listen to the Word of God in Mark's Gospel:

*"People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him bless them, but the disciples turned them away. When Jesus saw this, he was very cross. He said to the disciples, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them."*

## **The Blessing Of The Child**

Minister: As Jesus blessed the children then,  
so now we ask him to bless *N*.

Heavenly Father, we praise You for *N*'s birth;  
surround *him/her* with Your blessing,  
that *he/she* may know Your love,  
be protected from evil, and know Your goodness all *his/her* days.

*When all the children have been prayed for all join in saying:*

**All: May N learn to love all that is true,  
grow in wisdom and strength, and, in due time,  
come through faith and baptism to the fullness of your grace;  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

## **Giving of the Gospel**

*A children's version of the Bible is presented, with these words*

Minister: Receive this book. It is the good news of God's love.  
Take it as your guide.

## **A Prayer for the Family**

*Minister:* Heavenly Father, bless this family, watch over them, reveal your love and purposes to them, and draw them closer to you, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen.**

## **The Baptism Service**

Baptism requires you as parents to state your faith in Jesus, and your desire for your child to be brought up within the Church Family. The service acknowledges the important influence parents have upon children and so asks from you a commitment to support your child spiritually. Godparents make the same promises on behalf of the child being baptised as parents. Godparents promise to pray and support the child and to help the parents to bring up the child in the Christian faith. It is an important and responsible role.

A full text of the Baptism service can be found on the next pages.



# THE BAPTISM OF CHILDREN

## Introduction

Minister: Our Lord Jesus Christ has told us that to enter the kingdom of heaven we must be born again of water and the Spirit, and has given us baptism as the sign and seal of this new birth.

Children who are too young to profess the Christian faith are baptized on the understanding that they are brought up as Christians within the family of the Church. As they grow up, they need the help and encouragement of that family, so that they learn to be faithful in public worship and private prayer, to live by trust in God, and come to Confirmation.

*The Minister addresses the Parents and Godparents*

Parents and Godparents, the *children* whom you have brought for baptism depend chiefly on you for the help and encouragement *they* need. Are you willing to give it to *them* by your prayers, by your example, and by your teaching?

## Parents and Godparents: I am willing

*The Minister addresses the whole congregation*

In baptism the Lord is adding to our number those whom he is calling. People of God, will you welcome *these children* and uphold *them* in *their* new life in Christ?

**All: With the help of God, we will.**

## The Decision

*The Minister (addressing parents and godparents) then says:*

In baptism, God calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light. To follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with him. Therefore I ask:

Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God?

**I reject them.**

Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil?

**I renounce them.**

Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour?

**I repent of them.**

Do you turn to Christ as Saviour?

**I turn to Christ.**

Do you submit to Christ as Lord?

**I submit to Christ.**

Do you come to Christ, the way, the truth and the life?

**I come to Christ.**

## **Signing With The Cross**

*N*, Christ claims you for His own.

Receive the sign of His cross.

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

**All: Fight valiantly under the banner of Christ, against sin, the world, and the devil, and continue his faithful *soldiers* and *servants* to the end of your *lives*.**

## **Prayer Over The Water**

Heavenly Father, thank you, for the water of baptism.

In it we are buried with Christ in his death,  
and by it we share in his resurrection.

By your Holy Spirit, please bless *N* as they are washed in this water,  
And raise *them* to full and eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen.**

## **Profession of Faith**

Let us all declare the Christian faith into which *these children* are to be baptized.

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, who made the world?

**All: We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in his Son Jesus Christ, who redeemed the world?

**All: We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in his Holy Spirit,  
who gives life to the people of God?

**All: We 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 Baptism**

*N*, I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit

**All: Amen.**

## **The Welcome**

There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; by one Spirit we are all baptised  
into one body.

**All: We welcome you into the fellowship of faith;**

**We are children of the same heavenly Father;**

**We welcome you.**

## **Giving of a Lighted Candle**

God has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and has given us a  
place with the saints in light. You have received the light of Christ; walk in  
this light all the days of your life.

**All: Shine as a light in the world to the glory of God the Father.**

## **Giving of the Gospel**

*A children's version of the Bible is presented, with these words*

Receive this book. It is the good news of God's love.

Take it as your guide.

## **A Service of Dedication**

Child Dedication is a public commitment you make before God, your church, and your family. The Dedication service provides you, the parents, an opportunity to express publically your desire to lead and spiritually nurture your child in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, so your child will develop a desire to love God and love others. This service is ideal for parents who want their children to decide when they wish to be baptised.

A full text of the Dedication service can be found on the next pages

## **DEDICATION SERVICE**

### **Introduction**

Minister: We gather today to give thanks for N's life, and dedicate his/her life to God. Let us pray.

God, our Father, creator of all life, we praise you for the wonder and joy of creation. We thank you from our hearts for the life of N, for his/her coming into this family, and for the privilege of parenthood.

Accept our thanks and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen.**

### **Question to parents**

Parents, as you have brought N for dedication, we realise he/she depends chiefly on you for the help and encouragement they need.

Will you give this to N by your prayers, by your example and by your teaching?

**Parents: With the help of God, we will.**

### **Question to the sponsors**

Sponsors, the Church receives N with joy. Today we are trusting God for his/her growth in faith. Will you commit to pray for N, and support (Parents) as they aim as a family to follow Christ?

**Sponsors: With the help of God, we will.**

### **Question to the congregation**

As the local Church in this place, will you do all you can to offer love and care to N and his/her family, as we join with them in living out our Christian faith?

**All: With the help of God, we will**

## The Affirmation of Faith

Brothers and sisters, I ask you to profess together with N's parents and sponsors the faith of the Church.

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, who made the world?

**All I believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in his Son Jesus Christ, who redeemed the world?

**All I believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in his Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God?

**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.**

Hear the words recorded in the Gospel of St. Mark:

"People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them."

## The Blessing and Dedication

*The Minister may take each child in their arms*

*Minister:* As Jesus blessed the children then,  
so now we ask him to bless N.

Lord Jesus, we praise you for N's birth and we dedicate him/her to you today. Surround N with your blessing, that he/she may know your love, be protected from evil, and know your goodness all his/her life.

**All: Amen.**

**All:** Lord God, may N love all that is true,  
grow in wisdom and strength,  
and in due time come through faith and baptism,  
to the fullness of your grace;  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord.  
Amen.

## **The Giving of a Children's Bible**

Receive this book. It is the Good News of God's love.  
Take it as your guide.

### **Prayer**

Heavenly Father, bless this family,  
and fill them with your Holy Spirit.  
Go on revealing your love and purposes to them,  
and draw them ever closer to you,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All:** Amen.

## Useful Contacts

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