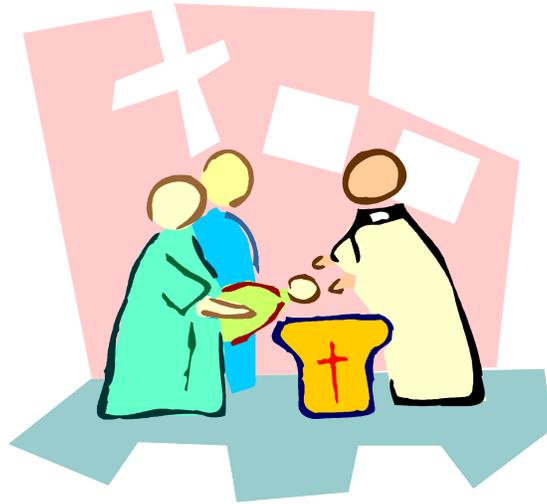


# Baptisms & Thanksgivings



**Parish of Aston and Nechells**

Thank you for coming to explore the possibilities of baptism or a service of thanksgiving for your child. Hopefully this leaflet will answer any questions you may have thought of. Please speak to Andy Jolley (Vicar), Becky Jones (Associate Vicar) or Mike Harmon (Curate) if anything is not clear.

At the end of the booklet are the orders of service for Baptism and Thanksgiving that we use. Please read them through carefully and then fill in the form and hand it back to one of the clergy.

## **THANKSGIVING SERVICE**

In this parish, we offer a service of thanksgiving to every family who receives the gift of a child. This is a simple service in which we gather together to give thanks to God for the child's safe arrival, we name him or her, and pray for the Lord's blessing on the whole family. If you wish to have your child blessed, but do not intend to continue coming to the church after this, then a thanksgiving service is more appropriate.

Before the service takes place a member of the clergy will meet the family to explain the service in a bit more detail.

The service can take place as soon as the family have had a meeting with one of the clergy, and it is normally incorporated into an ordinary morning service in each of our churches. There is no charge for this service. A certificate of thanksgiving will be given to you on the day.

This service means that the child can be baptised later on in their lives if you or they so wish.

For more information contact one of the clergy at one of our Sunday morning services, or come to 'Vestry Hour' at 5.30pm at Aston Parish church on Sundays.

## **BAPTISM**

### **Infant Baptism**

Baptism marks the beginning of a journey with God which continues for the rest of a child's life. As a young child is too young to speak on their own behalf, parents and godparents commit themselves to bring the child up as a follower of Jesus, within the fellowship of the local church.

The service itself paints many vivid pictures of what is involved in following Jesus. It includes the sign of the cross, the badge of faith in the Christian journey, which reminds us of Christ's death for us. Water is a sign of cleansing, and also a sign of new life, as we are born again by water and the Spirit. And as a sign of that new life, we give a lighted candle as a picture of the light of Christ conquering the darkness of evil. Everyone who is baptised is to walk in that light for the rest of their lives.

In this parish infant baptism is offered to Christian families who are regular worshippers in each of our churches. Such families are able, with integrity, to make the promises required to bring their children up as worshipping members of the Christian community. The congregation are also able to keep their promises, made in Baptism services, to support families in helping the children to grow up in the Christian faith.

If you are not a worshipping member of one of our congregations, but would like a service of baptism for your child, we would encourage you to join one of our churches and worship with us on a regular basis.

If you wish to ask for God's blessing on yourself and your child but do not feel ready yet to make the promises and the commitment to regular worship that is involved in baptism, then we would love to discuss with you the service of thanksgiving for the gift of a child.

## **Adult baptism**

Since the opening of our baptismal pool in 2008 we have been able to offer baptism by immersion in this parish. And we would encourage young people and adults who have made a commitment to follow Jesus as their Lord and Saviour to be baptised in this way if they have not already been baptised as an infant.

As for infant baptism, the service paints vivid pictures of what is involved in following Jesus. It includes the sign of the cross, the badge of faith in the Christian journey, which reminds us of Christ's death for us. Water is a sign of cleansing, and also a sign of new life, as we are born again by water and the Spirit. The imagery of 'drowning' in the waters of baptism – which a service by immersion provides – gives a vivid picture of dying to sin and being raised to a new life, even as Jesus died and rose again at the resurrection. And as a sign of that new life, we give a lighted candle as a picture of the light of Christ conquering the darkness of evil. Everyone who is baptised is to walk in that light for the rest of their lives.

If you are considering adult baptism please have a word with one of the clergy at a morning service, or come to vestry hour at 5.30pm on Sundays at Aston Parish Church. Preparation for this service will be provided by one of the clergy.

## **Common questions**

If you are reading this, you are most likely interested in arranging a Baptism either for yourself or a new family member. To help you understand what is involved, we have prepared answers to some of the common questions that we are frequently asked to get you started.

### **What is Baptism?**

Baptism is the start of a lifetime's journey with God. It is a practice used to represent one's commitment to Jesus. Adults and young people can declare their own faith and commitment. For young children not yet able to speak for themselves, there is a commitment on the part of their parents and Godparents to bring them up within the Christian family. It is therefore a practice with great spiritual significance and a wonderful way of introducing someone into the Christian community.

### **Is Baptism the same as Christening?**

Yes. Baptism is the word Jesus uses, and which we therefore prefer. He was baptised himself. "Christening" as a name came along a lot later and picks up the aspect of Baptism about God's people becoming like Jesus.

### **At what age are you baptised?**

People can be baptised at any age. Often children born into Christian families are baptised a few weeks after birth. For adults, their Baptism is often combined with Confirmation within the same service.

### **What is involved in baptism?**

At the start of the Baptism Service, there are important promises that the Baptism party and the congregation make about choosing to follow Jesus and living life His way. The promises talk about turning away from sin and evil and towards Jesus as the one who will rule our lives from now on.

The service then moves onto a ceremonial cleansing. Most often, baptism of infants involves them being sprinkled with water. Older children and adults are normally immersed in water. The water is a sign of God's washing us clean. Baptism is actually from the Greek word for "dipping". Someone is baptised in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit which means they are "dipped" into the life and love of God, Father Son and Holy Spirit.

At the end of the Baptism service you will see the “Welcome”, where the baptised person is welcomed into the family of the Church. That is what the Church is, not a building or a place for a service. The Church family takes its responsibility for its members very seriously and so the congregation will want to be able to fulfil the promises that they make to those being baptised.

Because of the seriousness of the promises involved in Baptism, we want to make sure that you understand them and are ready to commit yourselves to keep them. To do this, we always offer a Baptism preparation session. This can either take place in your home, or alongside others at one of our regular preparation classes (these usually take place on a Sunday afternoon at the start of a month at Aston Parish Church Centre).

### **Who can be baptised at Aston Parish Church / St James Church / St Matthew’s Church?**

Someone can be baptised in one of our three churches (Aston Parish Church, St James or St Matthew’s) if they:

- regularly attend of one of our churches and are on our membership list (Electoral Roll) or
- live in our parish

If you are unsure as to whether you live within the parish, one of the clergy will be able to tell you, or you can check the parish boundaries shown on our map in the contact section.

You or your child can then be baptised at any of our three churches. You may want to choose the one nearest to where you live, or there may be other good reasons to choose one of the others.

### **Do the parents / Godparents have to be baptised or confirmed?**

When baptising a child, both parents should be baptised and confirmed, as should the Godparents. This is because you are making a commitment to raise your child within the Christian Church, and so you are expected to have made this commitment yourself. If you are being baptised as an adult, you are able to make this commitment and the associated promises for yourself.

If you have not been baptised and wish your child to be baptised, you should discuss how you wish to proceed with a member of the clergy. If you are uncomfortable making the baptism promises, you may want to consider a Service of Thanksgiving as a first step. You will still have a special service and a celebration, but you won’t say things which you are not certain about. When you are ready to make the promises in the Baptism service, you can then go on to that as the next step. For more information of this, go to page 4.

### **Do I / we have to regularly attend church?**

To be able to keep the promises that you will make in the Baptism service you will need to be part of a worshipping community of other people who are also following Jesus. This will involve meeting regularly with them for worship and to help each other along in our journey with God. The Church community also makes promises to the people being baptised as part of the Baptism service. These are to welcome the person being baptised and to help them grow in the Christian faith. They can only keep those promises if those who are being baptised make sure that they come to regularly worship with them.

Some people feel a bit apprehensive about bringing small children to church – what if they make a noise? Don’t worry, we are used to it! Also, each of our churches provides special activities for children of all ages on Sunday mornings, including monthly services designed for people of all ages to worship together.

### **How do I / we arrange it?**

The first thing to do is to speak to one of the clergy after one of the services, at Vestry Hour (which is at Aston Parish Church at 5.30 pm on Sunday evenings), or by telephone. The clergy will explain the process to you, and arrange for appropriate preparation for you and (if appropriate) your child.

**When would it happen?**

Baptisms take place during one of the main Sunday morning services. Which Sunday depends on you and what is happening in the Church.

**What does baptism cost?**

Nothing. Baptism is a sign of God's total love, which comes free.

**Is there a rehearsal or practice?**

Not normally, but there will be some preparation which will include explanation of what happens when during the service and what you will need to do.

**Can I / we choose songs or hymns?**

Baptisms take place as part of our regular Sunday service, but we would be glad to try and include a song or hymn in the service that is particularly meaningful to you. Be sure to discuss it with the clergy before the day of the service.

**Guide to Godparents**

Each infant or child who comes to be baptised needs to have at least three Godparents. Two of the must be the same gender as the child, and there must be one of the opposite gender. The child's own parents can count as Godparents. However, most often Godparents are family members or friends. However, it is important that they are people who will take an interest in the child's spiritual welfare and who will pray for the child and its parents.

It is a requirement that all Godparents are baptised. It is important that they are good Christian examples to their Godchild, and hence they are normally confirmed or full members of a Christian church. All the Christians gathered round the font together represent the Church of Christ, into whose fellowship the children are received when they are baptised. But the Godparents also represent the children, promising on their behalf to renounce what is evil, to believe what is true and to do what is right, according to Christ's teaching and example.

Being a Godparent is like being a second father or mother to the child. With the father and mother, the Godparent will see to the child's Christian upbringing and, if anything were to happen to the parents, should be prepared to assume full responsibility for this. So a Godparent should love their Godchild as if he or she were their own child. That means far more than giving the child presents.

Godparents must pray regularly for their Godchildren. When the children are handed back after the baptism, they are entrusted to the Godparents' care as well as to that of their father and mother. And immediately afterwards everyone prays that they may lead the rest of their lives according to this holy beginning. So, even if they live far away, Godparents should often think of their Godchildren and pray that God's grace may be with them and lead them through good and ill.

## **ORDERS OF SERVICE**

In general, the words in normal font are what are said by the minister taking the service, whilst the words in bold are those said by the parents and godparents and by the congregation.

### **THANKSGIVING FOR THE BIRTH OF A CHILD**

#### **Introduction**

We are here today to give thanks for *these children*, with *their* family and friends, and to support *their* parent(s) 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, grown in faith, and come at last to the eternal city where his love reigns supreme.

#### **Thanksgiving and Blessing**

*The minister says*

Do you receive *these children* as a gift from God?

**We do.**

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

**We do.**

*The minister says*

God our creator,

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 from all eternity.

We thank you for Jesus Christ,  
who has opened to us the way of love.

We praise you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*The minister may say for each child*

What name have you given this child?

*A parent replies*

*His/her* name is .....

*The minister may take the child. The minister says*

As Jesus took children in his arms and blessed them,  
so now we ask God's blessing on (*child's name*).

Heavenly Father, we praise you for *his/her* 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*    **May *they* 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**

*The minister prays for the parent(s)*  
May God the Father of all bless .....  
and give *them* the grace to love and care for *their children*.  
May god give *them* wisdom, patience and faith,  
help *them* to provide for the *children's* needs  
and, by *their* example,  
reveal the love and truth that are in Jesus Christ.

*All*    **Amen.**

**Prayers by the whole congregation**

**God our creator, we thank you for the gifts of *these children*,  
entrusted to our care. May we be patient and understanding,  
ready to guide and to forgive,  
so that through our love *they* may come to know your love;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen**

**Blessing**

*All*    **Amen.**

## Baptism at a Service of the Word

Welcome

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with you all

*All*    **and also with you.**

*The minister may say*

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.  
Here we are washed by the Holy Spirit and made clean.  
Here we are clothed with Christ,  
dying to sin that we may live his risen life.  
As children of God, we have a new dignity  
and God calls us to fullness of life.

Prayer

**Heavenly Father,  
by the power of your Holy Spirit  
you give to your faithful people new life in the water of baptism.  
Guide and strengthen us by the same Spirit,  
that we who are born again may serve you in faith and love,  
and grow in the full stature of your Son, Jesus Christ,  
who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit  
now and forever. Amen**

Readings

*At the end the reader will say*

This is the word of the Lord.

*All*    **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon or talk

### **The Baptism**

Presentation of the Candidates

*The candidates may be presented to the congregation. Where appropriate, they may be presented by their godparents or sponsors.*

*The Minister asks who are able to answer for themselves.*

Do you wish to be baptised

**I do.**

*The minister of baptism addresses the whole congregation*

Faith is the gift of God to his people.

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

All **With the help of god, we will.**

*At the baptism of children, the minister of baptism then says to the parent and godparents*

Parents and godparents, the church receives *these children* with joy. Today we are trusting God for *their* growth in faith. Will you pray for *them*, draw *them* by your example into the community of faith and walk with *them* in the way of Christ?

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

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?

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

The Decision

*The minister addresses the candidates directly, or through their parents, godparents and sponsors.*

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.**

Prayer over the water

*The minister and candidates gather at the baptismal font. The minister of baptism stands before the water of baptism and says*

*All* Praise God who made heaven and earth,  
**who keeps his promise forever.**

*All* Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
**It is right to give thanks and praise.**

We thank you, almighty God, for the gift of water to sustain, refresh and cleanse all life. Over water the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through water you led the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the promised land. In water your Son Jesus Christ received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ to lead us from the death of sin to newness of life.

We thank you, Father, for the water of baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Through it we are reborn in the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in joyful obedience to your Son, we baptise into his fellowship those who come to him in faith.

Now sanctify this water that, by the power of your Holy Spirit, they may be cleansed from sin and born again. Renewed in your image, may they walk by the light of faith and continue for ever in the risen life of Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be all honour and glory, now and for ever.

*All* **Amen.**

Profession of faith

*The minister addresses the congregation*

Brothers and sisters, I ask you to profess together with *these candidates* the faith of the church.

Do you believe and trust in God the Father  
source of all being and life, the one from whom we exist?  
**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?  
**I believe and trust in Him.**

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

This is the faith of the church.  
**This is our faith.**  
**We believe and trust in one God,**  
**Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

*If the candidate can answer for themselves the minister asks*  
*N* is this your faith?

*Each candidate answers for themselves*  
**Yes, this is my faith**  
followed by any testimony

*The minister dips each candidate in water, or pours water on*  
*them, saying*

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

*All*    **Amen.**

Signing with the cross

*The minister makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of*  
*each candidate, saying*

Christ claims you for his own. Receive the sign of his cross.

*The minister may invite parents, godparents and sponsors to sign the candidate with the cross.*

*when all the candidates have been signed, the minister says*

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

May almighty God deliver you from the powers of darkness,  
restore in you the image of his glory,  
and lead you in the light and obedience of Christ.

*All* **Amen.**

*A song may be sung, and the minister says*

You have been clothed with Christ  
as many as are baptised into Christ have put on Christ.

May God, who has received you by baptism into his Church,  
pour upon you the riches of his grace,  
that within the company of Christ's pilgrim people  
you may daily be renewed by his anointing Spirit,  
and come to the inheritance of the saints in glory.

*All* **Amen.**

Commission

*A minister addresses the congregation, parents and  
godparents, using these or similar words*

We have brought *these children* to baptism knowing that Jesus died and rose again for *them* and trusting in the promise that God hears and answers prayer. We have prayed that in Jesus Christ *they* will know the forgiveness of *their* sins and the new life of the Spirit.

As *they* grow up, *they* will need the help and encouragement of the Christian community, so that *they* may learn to know God in public worship and private prayer, follow Jesus Christ in the life of faith, serve *their* neighbour after the example of Christ, and in due course come to confirmation.

As part of the Church of Christ, we all have a duty to support *them* by prayer, example and teaching. As *their* parents and godparents, you have the prime responsibility for guiding and helping *them* in *their* early years. This is a demanding task for which you will need the help and grace of God. Therefore let us now pray for grace in guiding *these children* in the way of faith.

Faithful and loving God,  
bless those who care for *these children*  
and grant them your gifts of love, wisdom and faith.  
Pour upon them your healing and reconciling love,  
and protect their home from all evil.  
Fill them with the light of your presence  
and establish them in the joy of your kingdom,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*All* **Amen.**

*Or* *To the newly baptised who are able to answer for themselves,  
the minister says*

Those who are called to worship and serve God.

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

**With the help of God, I will.**

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

**With the help of God, I will**

Will you proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ?

**With the help of God, I will**

Will you seek and serve Christ in all people, loving your neighbour as yourself?

**With the help of God, I will.**

Will you acknowledge Christ's authority over human society, by prayer for the world and its leaders, by defending the weak, and by seeking peace and justice?

**With the help of God, I will.**

May Christ dwell in your heart(s) through faith,  
that you may be rooted and grounded in love  
and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit. Amen.

*These words may be added*

*N and N,*  
today God has touched you with his love  
and given you a place among his people.  
God promises to be with you  
in joy and in sorrow,  
to be your guide in life,  
and to bring you safely to heaven.  
In baptism God invites you on a life-long journey.  
Together with all God's people  
you must explore the way of Jesus  
and grow in friendship with god,  
in love for his people,  
and in serving others.  
With us you will listen to the word of God  
and receive the gifts of God.

**God of grace and life,  
in your love you have given us  
a place among your people;  
keep us faithful to our baptism,  
and prepare us for that glorious day  
when the whole creation will be made perfect  
in your Son our saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

*All*    **Our Father in heaven  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.**

## The Welcome and Peace

There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism:  
*N and N*, 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.**

*The congregation may greet the newly baptised.*

*The minister introduces the peace*

We are all one in Christ Jesus.  
We belong to him through faith,  
heirs of the promise of the Spirit of peace.

*All* The peace of the Lord be always with you  
**and also with you.**

*A minister may say*

Let us offer one another a sign of peace

## The Blessing

### Giving of a lighted candle

*The minister may give each of the newly baptised a lighted  
candle and says*

God has delivered us from the dominions 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 to the world  
to the glory of God the Father.**

## The Dismissal

Go in the light and peace of Christ.

*All* **Thanks be to God.**

## Request for Baptism or Thanksgiving

(Please PRINT!)

Your child's full name ..... Gender: M / F (delete as appropriate)

Date of birth .....

Your full names MUM .....

DAD .....

Your address

.....

Tel. no. ....

Your occupations MUM ..... (This is for the register)

DAD .....

### Please delete as appropriate

I/We have read the leaflet Y / N

I/We would like to talk about baptism or Thanksgiving Y / N

I/We would like to talk about our own Baptism/Confirmation Y / N

The Godparents would like to talk about their Baptism/Confirmation Y / N

Please send me/us a leaflet about the Parent + Toddler group Y / N

Please let me/us have a copy of the Child Protection Policy Y / N

Name of Godparents

.....

.....

.....

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*For office use only Date of Baptism .../.../... Date of thanksgiving .../.../...*