



AN EXPLANATION OF THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY

You've enquired about having your child baptised?

Firstly we want to congratulate you. Bringing a new life into the world is an amazing thing. It is something to celebrate and give thanks for. You can be sure that we celebrate with you and will give thanks to God for the event

Secondly we hope that this small booklet will help you discover part of what the process of baptism is about. Together with this booklet is a copy of the baptism you will use. The front (Part 1) of the booklet deals with Baptism and the promises and commitments that parents and godparents take on and make. If you would like to talk further about baptism, or any other matter, do please contact the person indicated at the back of this leaflet.

Our hope and prayer is that this booklet will help you better understand baptism and the role of Parents and Godparent.



Part 1 So what is Baptism?

The birth of a baby is one of the most sensational experiences in life. If you are the Mum, or the Dad, it is something that you are thankful for and want to celebrate. Getting all the family together at the baptism of the child is often part of that celebration. The local church can celebrate the birth of the child at any of the regular services. At the baptism thanks is again given for the birth of the baby. Christian baptism also marks the beginning of a journey of faith in Jesus the Son of God.

During the baptism one of the traditional creeds of the church is said. This section of the service is called the *profession of faith*. In it the congregation including the parents and godparents explain what the beliefs of the Christian Church are. In the baptism service the parents, godparents and congregation make a commitment to bring the child up in that faith.

Promises

So what does a godparent say he or she will do?

The church congregation is the Christian family in which the child is going to grow up and the members of the congregation commit themselves to welcome the child and to help the child to live a Christian life. The part of the service that outlines this is set out below.

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* and uphold *them* in *their* new life in Christ?

With the help of God, we will.

Because the child is too young to be able to make promises for himself/herself the parents and godparents make promises on the child's behalf. The parents and godparents are the people which the child lives with every day. If the child is going to grow up and become a Christian the parents and godparents will need to help that child understand and live a Christian life. The part of the service below is where the parents and godparents promise that, with God's help, they will do this.

The minister of baptism then says to the parents 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.

They are big promises but what do they mean?

When you say that you will pray for 'them' you are really saying that you will talk to God and ask him to help you and the child get to know him better. If you are not used to talking to God it might seem a bit strange but this is part of the Christian life and the Christian walk in faith. God wants us to talk to him as we do our closest friends. He wants us to tell him about the things that worry us and the things that make us happy. He wants us to ask him for help. He also wants us to be thankful but that's another matter, for another time.

But what does 'draw them into the community of faith' and 'walking with them in the way of Christ' mean? For a child, it is very hard to decide to become a Christian if they do not experience what being a Christian means. As a parent or godparent you are saying that you will show them what it means to be a Christian. In practice this might mean:

- Taking them to church on the Sundays.
- Reading a bible story and saying a prayer with them before they go to sleep:
- Talking to them about the things that God would want them to do and helping them see that some things are wrong.
- Celebrating the anniversary of their baptism.
- Through your example showing the child how a Christian lives .

(If you live a long way away from the child it does not mean that you cannot be a godparent but will mean that careful thought is needed as to how you will help the child grow up in the Christian community)

Decisions

Because you are going to make promises for the baby and are going to lead the baby by your example you are asked to publicly declare the sort of life that you believe the baby and you should live.

You are asked about this in the section of the service that is called the *DECISION*. In it you are asked if you will

'Reject the Devil and all rebellion against God.' This is really asking if you and the baby will attempt to live the type of life that God would want you to live.

'Renounce deceit and corruption of evil.' This asks if you will attempt to live a truthful life; a life that is good by God's standards.

'Repent of the sins that separate us from God and our neighbour'. Sins are things that God would not want us to do. They damage our relationship with the people that we live with and stop us enjoying the life God had planned for us. When we repent of our sins it is more than saying we are sorry. It is also saying that we will attempt to make sure that we will not make the same mistake again.

' Turn to Christ'. When we turn to Christ we also turn away from the bad things that we do in our lives.

'Submit to Christ as Lord'. As people we live under laws. Some of these are written others are unwritten. When we submit to Christ as Lord we accept the laws by which God and Jesus want us to live. This is not simply keeping the 10 commandments found in the Old Testament of the bible, but requires us to make decisions about what is the right thing to do in lots of

difficult situations. Sometimes it is very clear what we should do, other times it is much more difficult and we need to talk to God (in prayer) about the correct way forward. In this we attempt to find out what Jesus would want us to do.

'Come to Christ.' Lastly parents and godparents will be asked if they and the Child **'come to Christ'**. A parent or godparent aims to lead the child into the family of God.

- ✿ At the centre of that family is the Jesus who was born in a stable, lived as a man in Galilee; performed miracles while he was still a young man; died on a cross; rose from death after three days; was seen alive by many of his friends and others and then without dying again joined his Father in Heaven. The Jesus who made it possible for us to communicate with God and join him after our own deaths. The Jesus who knows what it is to suffer and is able to come along side us in our suffering (all the things mentioned in the creed).
- ✿ At the centre of the family is 'God the Father' who created the world and is actively involved in the maintaining the world today.
- ✿ At the centre of the family is the Holy Spirit who helps Christians today live their lives in fullness and in the way God planned.

You are not alone

The promises for a parent or godparent are not easy ones, but you are not being asked to do it on your own.

Firstly God promises that, if asked, he will help. God sends his Holy Spirit to help every person that asks Jesus to be their Lord. For some people the Holy Spirit works in a quiet way, so slow that one hardly notices things changing. For others the change is very sudden and very noticeable. God can work in many ways and the way he chooses to work in any individual will be unique to that person. However God cannot help if a back is turned to him. It is only if he is welcomed in that he makes the difference.

Secondly the local Christian church makes promises. They make a commitment to help and encourage and support parents, godparents and the child. If you want to talk to somebody either now or in the future there will be somebody available to do this. If you or the child move town, or country, the promises that the congregation made hold true. The promises were made for the whole Christian Church not just for the local congregation, so if you need help ask whether it be in England or Japan.

ARE YOU READY FOR BAPTISM?

We hope that the sections above have helped you think through the questions linked with being a parent or godparent.

It may be that you are excited at the possibilities.

It may be that you want to ask more; if so pick up a phone and call.

It may be that you have some questions that you want to ask about your own faith or how you can get closer to God; if so pick up a phone and call.

It might be that having thought about it you decide that you do not wish to carry the process any further. It is much better to do that than let yourself in for something that you are not ready for. We shall fully understand and respect your decision.

What ever you decide the church will be praying for you and the child.

A service of thanksgiving is a possibility. This service celebrates and gives thanks for the birth of a child but does not look for the commitments made in the promises of baptism. If you would prefer a service of this type do please speak to your contact. You may find this an easier step which may in time lead to baptism.

Contact person:.....
Tel:.....

Useful books: These can be ordered from book shops like W. H. Smith or can be obtained through your local Christian book shop.

Godparents by Anne Watson Practical guide-lines for parents and godparents. Published by Kingsway publications ISBN 0 86065 646 2

This leaflet has been put together by
Revd Geoffrey Bayliss 1999