

# Parish of St Mary's, Hambleton

## Baptism/Christening Enquiry



Thank you for enquiring about having your child baptised/christened. The birth of a baby is a very special time for the family involved and their relatives and friends. Young children are a reminder to us all of the amazing gift of life, of the importance of love and relationship, and also of human vulnerability. God is the giver of all life, the source of love, and the Father who longs for us to recognise our dependence on him.

St Mark writes in his gospel: "People brought children to Jesus to be blessed by him, But his friends the disciples tried to stop them bothering him. When Jesus saw this he was cross with the disciples and said to them, Let the little children come to me and do not try to stop them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will never enter it. And he put his arms around them, laid his hand upon them and blessed them." (Mark 10:13-16)

By wanting to bring your child to be blessed by God, you are following a tradition that began more than two thousand years ago, following in the footsteps of those who brought their children to Jesus. It is therefore entirely appropriate that you should want to bring your child into the church to thank God for him/her, to pray for God's blessing on them, and to celebrate with friends and family God's wonderful gift in your lives. This leaflet explains some of the things you need to consider if you would like to bring your child for baptism/christening.

### **A Service of Baptism**

Baptism is the way in which people become part of the church and requires the individual to declare their own Christian faith and promise to continue to follow God for the whole of their life. Young children who are unable to declare their own faith are baptised on the understanding that they will be brought up to live the Christian faith through the example of their parents and godparents. For this reason, as part of the service, parents and godparents are required to make a declaration of their own Christian beliefs (see below).

During the service, the family gather round the font and the priest pours water on the child's head as a sign of being washed free from sin and beginning a new life in Christ. The child is also 'marked' with a sign of a cross, as a symbol of belonging to Christ, and is given a lighted candle representing the light of Christ to guide them on their journey of faith. As part of the service, we pray for the child and their family.

### **Declaration of Faith for Parents and Godparents**

*(made by parents and godparents during the Baptism service)*

Parents and godparents, the Church receives this child 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 this child begins their journey of 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.**

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

Do you turn to Christ?	<b>I turn to Christ.</b>
Do you repent of your sins?	<b>I repent of my sins.</b>
Do you renounce evil?	<b>I renounce evil.</b>

If you are unsure about making the declaration of faith you should contact the Area Dean, John Weetman to discuss your concerns. This will give you the opportunity to talk further about the meaning of baptism before the service or to consider choosing to postpone the baptism or have a service of thanksgiving (see below) which can be followed by baptism at a later date if you wish. Enquiring about baptism for a child can be an opportunity for parents to consider the relevance of God in their own lives, if you would like to discuss this, please contact the clergy.

## **A Service of Thanksgiving**

One of the most important things that many parents want to do is to thank God for their child, to present the child to God before gathered friends and relatives and to announce their name. This is the core of the service of thanksgiving at which the minister takes the child into their arms and prays for God's blessing on them. A copy of a Gospel is presented as a reminder of the Good News of God's love shown to us in Jesus Christ and also a lighted candle as a sign of God's blessing. This service does not require the parents to make any declaration of their own Christian faith. Nor are godparents required however you may decide to have some people to take part as 'guardians' or sponsors for your child instead.

## **What to do next....**

You will need to fill in a Baptism/Thanksgiving Application Form and return it to us (if you haven't already). This will include details of the Godparents or Guardians/Sponsors you have chosen (see below). The Area Dean or another member of the clergy will contact you to arrange to meet with you before the service.

The purpose of the meeting is to:

- learn more about baptism and the Christian faith
- prepare by going through the baptism or thanksgiving service
- answer any questions that you may have

We also recommend that you join us for one of our Sunday services (e.g. 3.30pm on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of the month) which will give you an experience of worshipping with the church family that your child will become part of when they are baptised.

## **Choosing Godparents**

Godparents are chosen as people who will pray for your child and help him/her, by their words and example, to follow Jesus Christ. They must have been baptised themselves and it is preferable (although not essential) that they have been confirmed. Confirmation is a special service at which older children and adults confirm the promises that were made on their behalf when they were baptised, thus becoming adult members of the church. Godparents have to make the same promises as parents and you need to make sure that they are happy to do this.

You should choose three (or more) Godparents, two of the same sex as your child and one of the opposite sex. If you have any questions about the applicability of an individual as a godparent, please contact the vicar.

There are no such requirements concerning their own baptism/ confirmation or faith of those who may be chosen as guardians/ sponsors for a Thanksgiving Service.