

**Are you thinking
about baptism
or a
thanksgiving service
for your child?**



Information Pack



Are you thinking about having a baptism or thanksgiving service for your child at St. Mary's?

We are delighted that you are thinking about a baptism or thanksgiving service for your child here at St. Mary's Church,

We hope that this information pack will give you all the background information you need in order to decide whether this is the right choice for you and your family. In it you will find sheets covering:

- ◇ the choice between a Baptism and a Thanksgiving Service
- ◇ some key details about baptism you need to be aware of
- ◇ what parents will need to say about their own faith at a baptism
- ◇ guidance on choosing godparents for your child (2 copies)
- ◇ a Thanksgiving Application Form
- ◇ a Baptism Application Form
- ◇ Information about what's on at St. Mary's for families - giving details of a wide range of activities and services designed to help you and your children worship, learn, have fun and feel welcomed at St. Mary's and above all come to know Jesus

Who to contact with any initial queries or questions you may have:

Parish Office: Tel: 01483 772134 Email: stmaryshorsell@btinternet.com

(Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday mornings 9am-1pm)



Baptism or thanksgiving? Which is the right choice for our family?

The birth or adoption of a child is an occasion for great celebration. It also, however, makes us very conscious of the huge responsibilities we have as parents. We always want to give our children the best possible start in life and to make sure that our children are brought up in the very best way.

Consequently many parents start thinking fairly soon about whether they should have their child baptised, or how they can give thanks to God for this amazing gift of life.

What is a Thanksgiving Service?

It may be that a thanksgiving service is best for you initially. It provides an opportunity for parents and families to say 'thank you' to God for their child. It also provides an opportunity for prayers to be said for your child, and also for you as parents, asking God to bless your family life together. You can also include a role for 'supporting friends' for your child.

When can a Thanksgiving Service be held?

Thanksgiving services are very flexible. They can be held in your home, or in church, perhaps on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, with only family and close friends present. Alternatively if you prefer a thanksgiving can also form part of a main Sunday service at St. Mary's.

Does it matter if we are a bit unsure about our own Christian faith?

A thanksgiving service is ideal if you are a bit unsure about your own beliefs and faith. A lot of people want to thank God for their child but don't necessarily feel comfortable with making all the promises and statements that a baptism service requires from parents (see the accompanying sheet).

When else might a Thanksgiving Service be appropriate?

Some Christian parents like to have a Thanksgiving Service and dedicate their child to God and then let their children decide about baptism for themselves when they get older. This is not at all unusual.

Additionally some parents don't want to rush into baptism but they would like to give thanks to God for their child fairly soon. A thanksgiving service can be a preliminary to a later baptism. It doesn't preclude baptism later.

Other parents very much want their children to share in 'Christian' values and morality and so would like their child to have links with the church but they don't necessarily have the personal Christian faith at the present time which baptism envisages them sharing with their child. Thanksgiving is a good choice if this is you!

What is Baptism - is it all my child needs to be a 'Christian' ?

Baptism is "an outward and visible sign of an inward work of grace." In other words it is a symbol, pointing to what God does in the heart of a person when they come to know Christ and accept him as their Saviour.

But baptism is a symbol, not the reality itself. Baptism symbolises the inner washing (forgiveness) and new life that Christ offers us all. It marks the start of a Christian journey which your child will one day need to choose to complete of their own accord. That's why you as parents and godparents make such serious commitments about accompanying your child on his or her Christian journey.

When can a Baptism be held?

Baptism involves the church family at St. Mary's welcoming your child into the church and committing to support you and your child on your Christian journey. This is why it takes place as part of a main church service. Baptism is much more than a private family celebration.

Thinking about baptism for your child - what will parents need to promise and say about their own faith?

In the baptism service parents (and godparents) promise very specifically:



- ◇ to care for your child
- ◇ to pray regularly for your child
- ◇ to help your child follow Christ, showing them by your own example and companionship what being a Christian means
- ◇ to help your child become an active member of the Christian family, the church

These are BIG promises to make. Hence it is really important you don't rush to bring your child to baptism if you are unsure about your own Christian faith, or your own commitment to worshipping together in church as a family. After all you can't set a young child off on a journey all alone can you! .

Baptism is essentially all about helping your child grow spiritually and to come to love and know the Lord Jesus, so that one day your child can make their own decision to follow him as Lord and accept him as their Saviour.

Consequently, in the Baptism Service, you will be asked to affirm very publicly before the whole Church congregation, the Christian faith into which your child is to be baptised. This faith is centred on Jesus – indeed the whole of the Christian faith is about our relationship with him! Consequently each parent will need to be comfortable in acknowledging their own commitment to following Jesus - that Jesus is both their Lord and their Saviour.

What if only one parent feels comfortable with all this?

It's not unusual for only one parent to feel comfortable making the promises and declarations required by the Baptism Service. If that is the case for you then please don't hesitate to discuss this with the Minister. We can work around that. It's best to be honest about where you have got to in your own journey of faith.

Do we need to have been baptised ourselves?

No, parents do not need to have been baptised themselves (although godparents do). However, if you haven't yet been baptised yourself you might also want to think about whether now is the right time for you to be baptised. Thinking about baptism or thanksgiving for your child is a great time to think about your own Christian faith. We would love to help you do that too!

Thinking about baptism for your child - who should you choose as godparents?

The godparents you choose for your child are very important people. You are choosing them to be very special people in your child's life. They will have a very particular role to play in helping your child on their journey of faith – in helping them both to understand what the Christian faith is all about and to grow as Christians, so that one day your child will be able to decide for themselves whether they too wish to follow Christ.

At the baptism service godparents will be asked to promise very specifically:

- ◇ to care for your child
- ◇ to pray regularly for your child
- ◇ to help your child follow Christ, showing them by their own example and companionship what being a Christian means
- ◇ to help your child become an active member of the Christian family, the church



These are BIG promises and will require an active role in helping your child grow spiritually. It is really important that no one undertakes this role lightly and so godparents need to understand the commitments they will be making and feel able to fulfil them.

Additionally godparents will be asked to affirm their acceptance of the Christian faith into which your child is to be baptised. This faith is centred on Jesus – indeed the whole of the Christian faith is about our relationship with him! Consequently each godparent needs to be able to acknowledge their own commitment to following Jesus.

How many godparents should we have?

It is usual to have three godparents – two of the same sex as the child and one of the opposite sex. In certain circumstances it is possible to have less godparents and you can discuss this with Rev'd Dmitry Lutsenko.

Do the godparents have to be baptised themselves?

Yes all godparents need to have been baptised themselves. In addition it is helpful if they are people who have also acknowledged their own faith as an adult (eg: if part of the Church of England by being confirmed and so adopting for themselves any baptismal promises made for them as a child).

Do the godparents have to be adults?

There is no precise minimum age for someone to be a godparent. However they must be people who can understand and fulfil their responsibilities. Godparents are therefore usually adults. Young children would not be in a position to undertake the role of godparents but older teenagers might be.

What godparents are not!

Being a godparent does not make someone a legal guardian of your child in the event of your death. That is a matter which would be dealt with in a will. The role of a godparent is a spiritual one.

What should I do next?

If you are thinking about getting your child baptised then it's important to have an early discussion with your preferred godparents to ensure they feel comfortable with the role and feel able to fulfil their responsibilities. We suggest that you give them the duplicate copy of this leaflet.

Providing St. Mary's with details of godparents

You will need to complete the 'Application for Baptism', giving details of your chosen godparents, in good time before the Baptism Service. Please try to do this at least two weeks before the Baptism.



Thinking about baptism for your child - Some key points to be aware of

When can I have my child baptised?

Part of the Baptism Service involves welcoming your child into the Christian family. Hence it's important that the Christian family at St. Mary's is present for your child's baptism. For this reason baptisms need to take place at a main service. The exact date needs to be agreed with the Vicar, Rev'd Dmitry Lutsenko, and it's helpful to agree this date as early as possible so that we can make all the necessary arrangements.

Which service will suit the baptism best?

We have a wide variety of services here at St. Mary's so come along and see which suits you and your family best. It's good if the baptism can be at the service at which you feel most comfortable: and which you normally attend:

- ◇ the 'All Age Service', at 10am on the first Sunday of each month is a very good time to have your child baptised, as it is a lively, fun and engaging service for children and families
- ◇ the very family orientated Messy Church, at 4pm on the second Sunday of each month is also a great time for a baptism
- ◇ It is also possible to include a baptism on other Sundays at 10am. This will be a more formal communion service, with a longer sermon aimed principally at adults. Children usually attend their own teaching and worship session in JAM ('Jesus and Me') during part of this service.

How old should my child be?

You can have your child baptised at any age. There is no upper age limit, but if your child is over 7 they may be able to make the promises for themselves.

What is the difference between a Baptism and a Christening?

There is no difference between a Christening and a Baptism. It is just that churches tend to use one word or the other.

Do we need to live in the Parish?

In the Church of England it's usual to have your child baptised in your local parish church. You can check with our Parish Office if you live in the parish of St. Mary's, Horsell (the parish is slightly smaller than the area known as 'Horsell').

What if we don't live in the Parish?

If you don't live in the parish but would like to have your child baptised at St. Mary's then you can do that if your name is on the Church electoral roll. You may however already worship at St. Mary's but not yet be on the membership roll. Don't worry about that. What is important is that St. Mary's is the place at which you regularly worship and the local church family with whom you feel most comfortable.

Where you worship with us but neither live in the parish nor are on the membership electoral roll then there is one small formality which needs to be complied with. This is that the minister of your local parish church needs to be happy with the baptism going ahead here at St. Mary's.

What if we don't live in the Parish and don't yet worship at St. Mary's?

If you don't yet worship with us then do come along and try us out. In a baptism service you will be making a commitment to help your child grow in their own Christian faith by being part of a local church family. It's important you feel comfortable with us and are worshipping regularly with us before we baptise your child.

Does it cost anything?

The good news is that there is no cost for a Church baptism service.

Please complete this form if you would like a Thanksgiving Service for your Child

Parent(s) full names

.....
.....

Your address (including post code)

.....

Your email address

.....

Your phone number (landline and mobile)

.....

Full name of your child

.....

Your child's date of birth

.....

Where would you like the Thanksgiving service to take place?

At home

At a short special service in church for your family and friends

As a section within a main Sunday church service

What date ideally would you like the service to be?

(please note that the exact date will need discussion with Rev'd Dmitry Lutsenko)

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When you have completed this form please return it to the Parish Office at

The Vicarage, Wilson Way, Horsell,, GU21 4QJ or email it to

stmaryshorsell@btinternet.com

Dmitry Lutsenko will then arrange to meet with you

Please complete this form if you would like your Child to be baptised

Parent(s) full names

.....

.....

Your address (including post code)

.....

Your email address

.....

Your phone number (landline and mobile)

.....

Parents' Occupations

.....

Full name of your child

.....

Your child's date of birth

.....

We believe we live in the parish of St. Mary's, Horsell Yes / No

We don't live in the parish but are on the church electoral roll
Yes / No

Which service at St. Mary's do you think you might like your child baptised at?

.....

Which month ideally were you thinking of for the baptism?

(please note that the exact date will need discussion with Rev'd Dmitry Lutsenko)

.....

Full names and addresses of each of the godparents

1.

.....

.....

Has this person been baptised? Yes / No **Confirmed?** Yes / No

2.

.....

.....

Has this person been baptised? Yes / No **Confirmed?** Yes / No

3.

.....

.....

Has this person been baptised? Yes / No **Confirmed?** Yes / No

***When you have completed this form please return it to the Parish Office at
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***Rev'd Dmitry Lutsenko will then arrange to meet with you
to discuss this further***