



Baptism Policy and Practice

This policy sets out our understanding of what Baptism is and who can be baptised in the churches in the Tenpenny Villages. The aim is to set out the steps we take to engage with individuals and families seeking a Christening / Baptism and to encourage their faith journey.

This ministry is the ministry of the whole church, evidenced by the welcome from the family of the church in the Baptism service. This policy is set out to encourage the PCCs and the wider church families to play an active part in this ministry.

At Baptism any person, of whatever age is welcomed into the Christian understanding of faith in God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Any person is welcomed into the community/family of the Church commitments and welcomed to walk in a life of faith for the rest of their lives.

The Baptism service also provides an opportunity for older children, teenagers and adults, to give thanks for their journey of faith so far and to commit their lives to God, an opportunity for family and friends of babies or young children to give thanks for the new life and for a safe delivery. It is also a time for parents and Godparents to commit themselves afresh to God and to bring the child up in the Christian faith.

Baptism is a serious undertaking to mark a stage in a child's life and in the life of the parents and Godparents. Serious vows are made to God and in the presence of families, friends and usually the wider congregation. Where candidates or parents feel that they cannot make those vows at the time or feel that is a decision for their child to make for themselves when they are older, a service of Thanksgiving is a deeply meaningful alternative.

Baptism and Thanksgiving services will normally take place on Sunday morning or other normal church family time of worship. In exceptional circumstances the main part of the service can take place on other occasions with the service being completed with the giving of the candle and handing out of certificates on the following or next possible church family service.

WHO CAN BE BAPTISED

Any one living in a parish or on the electoral role of the parish church can be baptised in the parish church. Those living outside of the parish with a qualifying connection can be baptised in the church e.g. parents or grandparents live or have lived or were married in the

parish. Clergy will suggest families make contact with their home parish and may inform their colleagues so that ongoing support can be given.

There may be other circumstances where people can be baptised at the discretion of the Rector. Baptism of children does need the consent of those with parental responsibility. Where this may be difficult for whatever reason this is to be discussed with the clergy.

GODPARENTS AND SPONSORS

For Baptism of babies and young children there should normally be 3 Godparents but more or fewer is acceptable. Godparents must have been baptised themselves. Where the supporting adults are not baptised, they can be Sponsors rather than Godparents. They would normally make the same promises. Where they feel unable to do so but are still firmly committed to the wider role of supporting the child and their parents it may be possible to offer alternative vows. This would need to be discussed with the clergy.

Godparents must be present at the service. Where this is not possible for any reason they can be Sponsors and they would be expected to confirm their acceptance of the vows and promises. There must be at least one Godparent. Parents who have themselves been baptised can be Godparents. Situations where there are no baptised adults to be a Godparent should be discussed with Clergy.

Process: Babies and Children

- Families can find out about Baptism/christenings and Thanksgiving services through our website. First contact is either through the Clergy team. At first point of contact families are sent a copy of our own booklet which sets out the difference between the two services for children: Baptism and Thanksgiving. It also gives information about a new Church of England information site, www.churchofenglandchristenings.org. It also explains the process of preparation for the baptism. Firstly, a visit from the person taking the service and then a session in.
- A date for the service is agreed and in the light of that the person taking the service is decided within the Clergy team
- The service will be in the morning service unless very good reason otherwise – and then they are encouraged to come to a service afterwards to be ‘welcomed’
- A time is agreed for the Clergy team to meet with the family and we will discuss the difference between the two services for children: Baptism and Thanksgiving. The family decide which service they feel is appropriate for them and fill in the booking form (includes information for registers & gives GDPR permissions for us to keep their data for later contact)
- They are given a leaflet explaining everything we offer as a benefice for children and young people and families and encouraged to attend church before the Christening and get involved in other groups as appropriate.

- At the service itself, the child baptised will be given a Children's Bible and a baptism candle Baptism Bear (potentially a Baptism Bear).
- In the summer a 'Teddy Bear's Picnic' will be held to which Baptism families from the last 5 years are invited to bring their Baptism / Teddy Bear.
- An aspiration would be for the first 5 anniversaries of the baptism they will be sent an Anniversary of Baptism card.
- Ideally, invitations will be sent to contacts and other groups annually, to Mothering Sunday, Easter and Christmas services and other special events planned for children and families. An invitation will also be sent out to parents to attend the Alpha course.

Adults

- Adults seeking baptism will be encouraged to attend an Alpha Course (or similar).
- They will be encouraged also to be confirmed when the next opportunity arises.

REAFFIRMATION OF BAPTISM VOWS

It is only possible to be baptised once. In some sense we reaffirm our baptismal vows each time we attend church family worship. At Easter it is traditional to do so explicitly.

Normally where a person has been baptised Confirmation is the appropriate time to reaffirm the promises made on their behalf by parents and Godparents. However, it may be possible to arrange for an opportunity to reaffirm baptismal vows to mark a significant stage in coming into a new or revitalised personal faith.

CONFIRMATION

A service of Confirmation is where baptismal vows are confirmed in the presence of the bishop and the presence/gift of the Holy Spirit is explicitly confirmed. Candidates for confirmation will need to attend a course to prepare themselves for his

ADMITTANCE TO HOLY COMMUNION

The policy for admittance of any baptised person is a separate document.

This policy was agreed 19/03/2024

This policy will be reviewed 11/2024