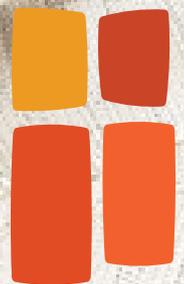




Christchurch
Windhill



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Christchurch LEP, Windhill

BAPTISM

A guide to baptism in the Church of England

West Yorkshire Methodist District

The Methodist Church
of Great Britain



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Diocese of Leeds

Why be baptised?

Jesus said "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly"
(John 10:10)

Some reasons people give...

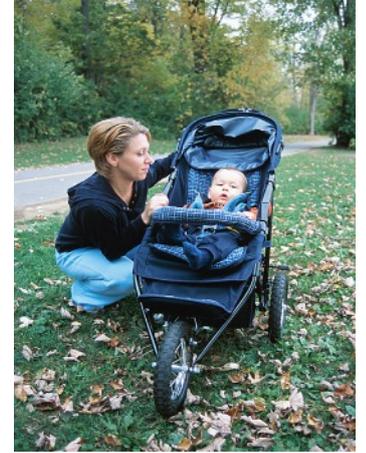
When asked the question "*Why do you want to have your child baptised?*" people often give many different answers:

- To be named properly
- To ensure good health
- Because parents / relatives want it
- To make sure children go to heaven if they die young
- To give children the best start in life

- To thank God for their birth
- So that they sleep better at night

But the real reason why people should want to be baptised is because they want to make that first step on the journey of faith.

Being baptised is only the beginning. Through baptism we are welcomed in to the family of the Church as we embark upon that new life in Christ.



What is baptism?

Baptism stands for forgiveness and a new life in Christ, the first step on that journey of faith

Introduction

Baptism marks the beginning of a journey with God which continues for the rest of our lives, the first step in response to God's love. For all involved, particularly the candidates but also parents, godparents and sponsors, it is a joyful moment when we rejoice in what God has done for us in Christ, making serious promises and declaring the faith.

The wider community of the local church and friends welcome the new Christian, promising support and prayer for the future. Hearing and doing these things provides us with an opportunity to remember our own baptism and reflect on the progress made on that journey, which is now to be shared with this new member of the Church.

So what is baptism all about?

Baptism says that Christians:

- Have been given a new identity in Christ;

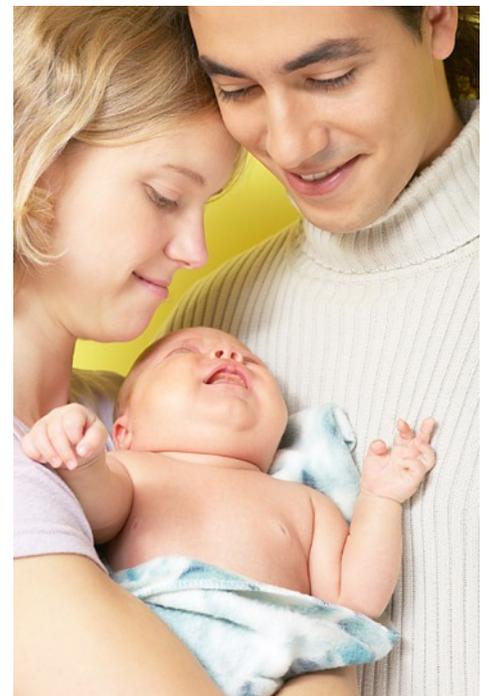
- Have made a decision to follow Christ on a lifelong journey into the fullness of God's love;
- Have turned away from sin and are living a new life;
- Have received both forgiveness and the Holy Spirit.

Pictures of the journey

The service paints many vivid pictures of what happens on the Christian way. There is the sign of the cross, the 'badge' of faith in the Christian journey, which reminds us of Christ's death for us. Baptism began with people being immersed in a river. Our 'drowning' in the water of baptism represents our dying to sin and rising to new life. And as a sign of that new life a lighted candle, representing the light of Christ conquering the darkness of evil is presented.

Washing away our sins

Baptism represents God washing away our sins. None of us is perfect and we all need God's forgiveness.



One day God will judge us all. When Jesus died on the Cross He took our sins onto Himself. This means we can be forgiven, and go free, even though we don't deserve it. Jesus asks us to admit our need of forgiveness and receive it from Him.

Baptism stands for a new life

Early Christians left behind paganism to turn to Christ. They recognised the need for their whole families to turn away from their past life. They were baptised out in the open. Coming out of the water, it was as if a whole new life had started and it means the same today. It's a spiritual life with the Holy Spirit living in us. Parents want their children to enter into that newness of life that baptism represents.



What do I need to do next?

Practical steps

The first step

Contact Rev Mark Watson at the Vicarage by telephone (01274 986447) or email. He will ask for some details and run through some initial questions with you.

If you live in our Parish or are in regular attendance at church, arrangements will then be made for you to have a Baptism preparation session.

If you live outside the Parish, and would like the Baptism service to take place at Christchurch LEP Windhill, out of courtesy you will need to speak first to your local parish priest to obtain their consent.

What happens in the Baptism Preparation Session

The minister from church will meet with you (and possibly other parents who also want to have their children baptised).

You will be asked to share what brought you to the point of wanting to have your child baptised, and also given a clear explanation of what baptism means. The minister will also explain what happens in the service so on the day you can relax and enjoy it.

You will also have an opportunity to raise any questions.

The next step

After the Baptism preparation session, a date for the Baptism will be confirmed and you will be invited to attend a Family service before the baptism.

What about Godparents?

It is a requirement within the Church of England for Godparents to be baptised. The role of a Godparent includes several Christian duties and responsibilities which include:

- Praying for their Godchild regularly;
- Setting an example of Christian living;
- Helping their Godchild grow in faith of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in which the child will be baptised;
- Give every encouragement to their Godchild to follow Christ and fight against evil;
- Help the Godchild in their faith journey with a looking forward to confirmation.

Godparents (along with parents) are asked to make promises in the service on behalf of the child with sincerity and conviction. Parents may wish to take these requirements into consideration when choosing suitable Godparents

What happens then?

The start of a journey of Faith. If you are not a regular churchgoer, we would hope that you and your family will take part in Church activities and eventually decide to be confirmed.

Activities for Families

- Family and Special Services
- Family community events

Activities for Adults

- Church services
- Alpha Course
- Social Events



The Baptism Service

What happens in the service?

When will it take place?

This is usually held on a Sunday at either 10 am (as part of the main service, lasting 1¼ hrs) or 12 noon (as a separate service, lasting ½ hr). The Child's Parents and Godparents (who must be present) will take the vows on behalf of the Child and promise to bring them up in the Christian Faith. Adults or older Children for Baptism will take their own vows.

Main features of the service

These typically include:

- **A welcome and introduction** (which includes practicalities such as protocols for the taking of photographs)
- **A reading from the Bible**
- **A short talk about all that baptism means and its significance**
- **The taking of oaths** (making those promises to turn away from sin and turning to Christ)
- **A special prayer over the water**
- **A statement of faith** (I believe...)
- **The baptism** (each candidate is baptised with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit)

- **Signing with the cross** (on the forehead)
- **Presentation of a lighted candle** (a special commemorative baptismal candle is used. This is kept by the candidate or the family of the candidate as a keepsake and may be lit at the anniversary of the baptism)
- **Welcome** (the candidate is formally welcomed in to the church)
- **Prayers** (special prayers are said for the candidate, the parents and the godparents or sponsors)
- **Blessing** (the family is blessed)

The Welcome and the Blessing are often done in a main Sunday All Age Service after the baptism. This is also when parents are able to collect the baptism certificate for their child along with the certificates for the Godparents.

What happens then?

Baptism is that very first step on the journey of Christian faith and is part of initiation into the membership of the Church, the Body of Christ. If you are not a regular churchgoer, we would hope that you and your family will take part in the Church activities and come and join us.

What if I feel uncomfortable taking the oaths?

The oaths taken in baptism by the candidates or on behalf of the candidates by the parents and godparents are serious oaths.

If in good conscience you feel uncomfortable taking these oaths, it is possible for you to have a special service of Thanksgiving in which you recognize that in the birth of your child something has happened for which you wish to give thanks to God.

The Thanksgiving service may therefore be a public or private celebration of the birth of a child.

Does the Church of England baptise adults?

Some people think that the Church of England only baptises infants. In reality, people of all ages can be baptised in the Church of England.

How can we find out more about the Christian Faith?

We offer some excellent and accessible informal courses about the Christian Faith, including the Start! Course or the Alpha Course. If you would like to sign up, simply contact your minister on the number below.

For further information or to arrange a baptism visit please contact:

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