



**Baptism  
In the  
Parish of St Laurence,  
Middleton St George**



## Words from the Gospel of St Mark

<sup>13</sup> People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. <sup>14</sup> But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. <sup>15</sup> Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' <sup>16</sup> And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

## INTRODUCTION

From the beginnings of its history, the Christian Church has offered baptism (which lots of people call "christening") as the way by which a person is incorporated into its life and worship. In other words, baptism is the way in which your child/ren becomes a member of the church and begins, with your help, their journey of faith. It is never a private or personal event; but one in which an individual becomes part of the world-wide Christian community. This is why we prefer baptisms to take place when the church community gathers for Sunday worship.

Jesus instructed his disciples (followers) to *"make disciples... baptising them into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit"*. Following Jesus goes hand in hand with being baptised.

Baptism is the badge of those who believe in Jesus as the Son of God – the one who died and rose again in order that those who believe might be put right with God.

Baptism is a sign of God's love. It shows us that God gives us life – without water we cannot live. Baptism is also an invitation to respond to God's love, which is freely poured out upon us.

Baptism invites us to take our place in God's people, the church. We would be delighted to welcome you and your baby/child into the community of St Laurence's church.



Therefore, the church doesn't take baptism lightly and we would like you to be clear about your reasons for seeking baptism for your children.

### **Is it because you think that's when children get their names?**

Although we use your child's name in the baptism service you actually made your choice when you registered your child's birth.

### **Is it because you think it is safer and your child will be protected?**

We would not want to encourage you to have superstitious ideas about your child being physically safer after baptism, or somehow more acceptable to God if he or she died young: neither is true.

### **Is it because it is a tradition in your family?**

Traditions are very worthwhile and can be something which are valuable in a family. But, if they are empty of meaning then they don't mean very much. The clergy and baptism visitor will help you to be clear about what baptism means.

### **Is it because you want to give your child a good start?**

We are with you all the way and would do everything we can to help you to give your child a good start. However, the baptism ceremony itself will not do this; there has to be the provision of a home where faith has meaning and where Jesus is important.

### **Is it because you believe without baptism there can be no marriage or funeral in church in the years ahead?**

We would be delighted to be part of the continuing story of your family through various life events. Baptism doesn't qualify your children to be married in church or be buried in consecrated ground. Every member of the parish is entitled to be married from or buried in their local parish church (St George's in the case of this parish).

### **Is it because you want your child to attend St George's C of E Academy when the time comes?**

St Laurence's church is proud to be involved with the Academy and over 50% of the school's governing body are active members of the church. The school's admissions criteria states that children should be "regular worshippers". We understand that life can be hectic for families but attending the All Age Service each month would fulfil the criteria.

## **SO, WHO IS BAPTISM FOR?**

**Baptism is for adults** who have decided to follow Jesus and to put their faith and trust in him. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, we all have the opportunity to have our sins forgiven and to have a fresh start in life. The water of baptism is a sign that God has washed us clean from the past and all wrong-doing, and accepted us into his family.

**Baptism is for children** whose parents and Godparents are serious about Christian faith and have put their faith and trust in Jesus. Children learn from their parents and Christian faith is no exception to that. There are some serious promises made by parents and Godparents in the baptism service. among them a commitment to pray for the child, to draw them by example into the community of faith (the church) and to walk with them in the way of Christ.

### **Promises by Parents and Godparents**

During the baptism service parents and Godparents will be asked several things:

- Do you turn away from evil and all that denies God?
- Do you turn to God, trusting in Jesus as Lord and Saviour?
- Will you pray for the child?
- Will you draw them, by your example, into the community of faith (the church)?
- Will you walk with them in the way of Christ?

Obviously, it is important that parents and Godparents are baptised. Unless you have begun the Christian journey yourself you cannot help someone else to do the same. We will be encouraging you to take new steps of faith yourself. It is also important to think carefully about your choice of Godparents – it would be unfortunate (as has happened before) for prospective Godparents to decline your request once they understand what is being asked of them.

## **AN IMPORTANT STEP**

The baptism service makes it clear that the church has a great responsibility in helping the process of learning go beyond the baptism event. When we visit you we will help you to think through the baptism service and talk about what Christianity means. We will also discuss opportunities to learn a little bit more about our faith and how to help your child become part of the church.

## **SOME FREQUENT QUESTIONS**

### **How many Godparents?**

The custom is to have a maximum of four, however you may request to have none or more. The only guidance would be that too many can mean that everyone thinks someone else is taking responsibility to fulfil the promises made in the service! As stated before, your Godparents need to be baptised and to understand the commitment they are taking on.

### **How much does it cost?**

Baptism is like the love of God - completely free! There is no formal charge for baptism. However, parents and/or Godparents often want to give a gift to the church in thanksgiving for their child and the hospitality of God's family.

### **When do baptisms take place?**



Baptisms take place in the main worship service on the church on the third Sunday of each month. The service starts at 10.45am and you and your family and guests will be made very welcome. St Laurence's church meets in St George's Academy, Neasham Road, Middleton St George.

During summer months it is possible to use the ancient church of St George's Low Middleton. Dates and times of services are arranged after consultation with clergy. If the service does take place at St George's you will be invited to the next All Age Worship service at St Laurence's to receive your Baptism Candle, your Certificate of Baptism and your official Welcome from the church community.

## Can we take photographs during the service?

Baptism is an act of worship, and we ask that no photographs are taken *during the service*. Flash photography can be very distracting and intrusive. However, you are very welcome to stay and take photographs after the service. Clergy officiating at your child/ren's baptism will be happy to 'pose' at the font, if requested.

The service may be video recorded after prior agreement by a single stationary video operator. Please ensure that the video operator makes him/herself known to the officiating priest in good time before the start of the service.

## Do we need to attend church every week?

During the baptism service you and your Godparents will promise to bring your child to church: "to draw them by your example into the community of faith". In order to become part of the community of St Laurence's it will be easier for you to make friends if you attend regularly. We understand that attending church with babies and small children can be stressful and so on the third Sunday of each month there is an All Age Service which is more relaxed, interactive and hopes to engage all the family. We aim for this service to last approx. 50 mins. On other Sundays there is a crèche area for the younger children and children's church for school age and above. Children's church leaders are warm and welcoming and take great care of our little 'treasures'.



We also have various special services throughout the year: Christingle and Carol Services, Christmas Day, Mothering Sunday, Easter Day, Father's Day, Harvest etc. All of these services are designed with families in mind.

You are welcome to attend any service throughout the year and would be assured of a warm welcome. We don't mind if your children make a noise, in fact we prefer it if they do!

We hope that the information you need is contained in this short booklet but please do not hesitate to contact Revd Sue Bruce (281567) Mrs Ruth Sansom (401850) or Mrs Hazel Bullock in the church office (332017) if you have any other questions.

If after reading this booklet you would like to proceed with a baptism for your child then please contact Revd Sue Bruce for an application form. Once it is returned someone will contact you to arrange to visit you at home to discuss baptism and organise a date. Please try not to book your venue for the celebration party until you have arranged a firm date with a member of the clergy.

We would very much like to welcome you to be part of the church at St Laurence's and look forward to getting to know you a bit better. The church receives your child with joy and we are privileged to be able to journey with you as you and your child grow in faith.



