

Q. Does being a godparent involve being a legal guardian as well?
A. No, the roles are quite separate (although some godparents might be asked to fulfil both roles).

Godparents are people chosen by you, the parents, to pray for your child and set them a good example of Christian living. They can be relatives or friends, but they must be willing to make the declarations set out in the service. The priest may give them a special card to remind them of their promises.

A prayer for parents

O God, you have given us a share in the creation of new life. When things go well, may we be thankful; when we are in despair, comfort us; when we have lost hope, renew our strength; when we are at peace, cherish us. And at all times, O God, fill our hearts with love for our children, each other and for you. Amen. Christopher Herbert

Prayers in thanksgiving for a new-born child

GOD OUR CREATOR, we thank you for the wonder of new life, and for the mystery of human love. We thank you for all whose support and skill surround and sustain the beginning of life. We thank you that we are known to you by name and loved from all eternity. We thank you for Jesus Christ, who has opened to us the way of love. We praise you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Blessed be God forever. Amen.

AS JESUS took children in his arm and blessed them, so we ask God's blessing on [*name of the child*]: Heavenly Father, we praise you for his/her birth, surround him/her with your blessing that he/she may know your love, be protected from evil, and know your goodness all his/her days. May he/she learn to love all that is true, grow in wisdom and strength and, in due time, come through faith and baptism to the fullness of your grace; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Prayers taken from Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England, © The Archbishops' Council of the Church of England, 2000.

What happens next?

Baptism is a significant time for the whole family - it marks the start of an adventure which will continue for the rest of your child's life. Parents may find that their own interest in God is reawakened at this time and your minister will be happy to talk to you about this. In any event, your child needs to worship regularly with the church family in order to develop a sense of belonging and most churches have a variety of events and activities for all ages. Why not ask about our Family Services, Sunday School program, Mothers' Union, Men's Fellowship, Thinking Space; Weliside Kids and even our church primary school – Holy Trinity Tottenham.

Above all, we hope your baby's baptism at Holy Trinity Tottenham, marks a wonderful and memorable start of a journey faith after Christ and His Church.



BAPTISM OF CHILDREN

Who does it involve?

It involves YOU and the GODPARENTS:

- Giving thanks to God for his gift of life
- Deciding to start your child on the journey of faith and asking for the Church's support
- Joining the Church in expressing your belief in God and praying for your child
- Beginning a journey of faith
- Becoming a member of the local and worldwide Christian family
- Sharing in the death and resurrection of Jesus in a symbolic way the Church:
- Promising to welcome, support and pray for you and your child
- Being reminded of the importance of this baptism for every Christian
- Providing a worshipping community where everyone can grow in faith

BAPTISM – A Sacrament

Christians describe baptism as a sacrament - a visible sign of God's love. We believe that God loves people of every race, creed or colour. At baptism we are thanking God for the gift of life and acknowledging his love. We are turning away from evil, sin and darkness and turning towards Christ.

Questions and Answers

Q. What's the difference between a baptism and a christening?
A. None. They are different names for the same thing.

Q. What if a teenager or adult wants to be baptized?
A. This is perfectly normal practice. Talk to your minister about baptism combined with confirmation. It's never too late.

Q. I'd like to be baptized again because I don't remember anything about my baptism as a baby.

A. You can only be baptized once – but there are other ways, including special services, of renewing your commitment to Christ publicly. Ask your minister about these.

Q. How much does it cost?
A. Baptism is free, although there may be a small charge for a baptism certificate. Some parents like to make a donation to the Church and there may be a small administration fee.

What will happen in the service?

Your baby's baptism will normally take place during the main Sunday service. It is a public celebration with the Church and not just a private ceremony. The minister may ask you to come to church with other baptism families for a rehearsal. Some churches will also hold a series of classes or meetings for parents and godparents to explain the meaning of baptism. During the service the minister will show you what to do and explain when to stand up or sit down. When it is time for the baptism itself, the parents and godparents will be asked to stand to make the following six declarations:

Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God?
I reject them.

Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil?
I renounce them.

Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour?
I repent of them.

Do you turn to Christ as Saviour?
I turn to Christ.

Do you submit to Christ as Lord?
I submit to Christ.

Do you come to Christ, the way, the truth and the life?
I come to Christ.

When did Christian Baptism start?

When Jesus was baptized in the River Jordan 2000 years ago, he became aware of God as his Father and felt the special presence and power of the Holy Spirit. This was a turning point in his life. You can find the story at the beginning of Mark's Gospel in the New Testament. Later, after his death and resurrection, Jesus told his followers to make new disciples and baptize them, too. This has been done ever since in Christian churches throughout the world.

Important Symbols

The sign of the cross: The minister will make the sign of the cross on your child's forehead. This is like an invisible badge to show that Christians are united with Christ and must not be ashamed to stand up for their faith in him. You may also be invited to make the sign of the cross on your child.

Water: The minister blesses the water which will be used to baptize your baby. Water is an important sign of life. In the same way that our bodies need water to

drink, our spiritual lives need the cleansing and refreshing love of God. This is symbolized in the water of baptism poured on your child's head in the name of God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Baptism means accepting Jesus who died and rose again for us, and making this a pattern for our life. It's a vivid way of saying that we are accepting his help to live a generous life and not a self-interested one.

The Welcome: The congregation will say some formal words of welcome to acknowledge that your child has joined the church and to show how pleased they are to have you among them.

Candles: Light is an important symbol. Jesus is called the light of the world because he represents all that is good. A large candle may be lit in church during the service and you may be given a smaller lighted candle to keep as a reminder of the light that has come into your child's life. It's up to you to help your child reject the world of darkness and follow a way of life that reflects goodness and light.

Making Decisions

A baptism is a very important occasion involving serious decisions. You have to say that you will help your child 'walk in the way of Christ' and 'take their place within the life and worship of Christ's church'. You will have to answer questions on your child's behalf, stating that you have decided to turn away from everything that is evil or sinful and turn instead towards Christ. The minister will explain the words of the declarations in greater detail beforehand.

How do we know we have enough Faith?

You do not have to be a perfect Christian or want to follow Christ and it would be surprising if you never had any doubts or questions in your mind. The declarations show that you intend to do your best. You and your godparents must make the declarations yourselves, although the whole Church will support you with these.

Shouldn't our children make their own decisions?

Some people worry that they are imposing views on their children but from the moment they are born, you make choices on their behalf. You don't wait until they are old enough to ask for milk before you feed them and in the same way it is right to give them spiritual nourishment and teach them about the love of God from an early age. When they are old enough they may choose to be confirmed and make an adult affirmation of faith.

Godparents Q&A

Q. Can anybody be a godparent?

A. Yes - so long as they have been baptized and confirmed and are mature enough to act as a godparent.

Q. How many can I have?

A. There should be three or more godparents, (of whom two should be the same sex as the child).