

Baptisms at St Luke's and Christ Church

A child is a blessing

Watching a child sleep peacefully is sheer joy for any parent. The wonder of life is something to be truly thankful for and should be celebrated.

But, while a child is a miracle, the responsibility can be scary. Children are an endless source of fascination, concern, delight, anxiety and joy but nobody teaches us how to bring up children.

Parents have to sort out and make the best they can of all the experience, insights and truths available to them. Having a baby makes us acutely aware both of all that is most precious and all that is wrong and frightening in the world. Of course, when children are small we want to protect them but sooner than any of us realise we discover that we have to prepare our children to live in this world. And nothing challenges a sense of who we are and what we believe as much as becoming a parent. Parents quickly find themselves faced with big questions and no easy answers.



Whether or not you were brought up to believe in God or the Christian faith, new parents often find themselves looking at the questions of faith afresh and maybe this is why you are seeking baptism for your child. Maybe you see baptism as a way of introducing your child to the faith you were brought up in, or maybe you feel drawn to exploring a faith you never had, or maybe you simply want to thank God for the gift of a child. Whatever your reasons - baptism is about the beginning of a journey, discovering God and allowing ourselves to be formed according to the teachings and life of our Lord Jesus Christ. In order for your child to be baptised you do not have to know lots of facts about the faith but you do have to feel confident that the Christian journey is something you wish your child to set out on

with yourself as a supportive and encouraging companion. It is an act of trust and commitment - as with any important relationship.

At St Luke's and Christ Church we wish to help you with this journey, and to support you and your child in your journeys of life and faith.

What is baptism?

Jesus told his disciples to become 'fishers of men'. Originally, baptism was for adults who had been 'hooked' by Christ.

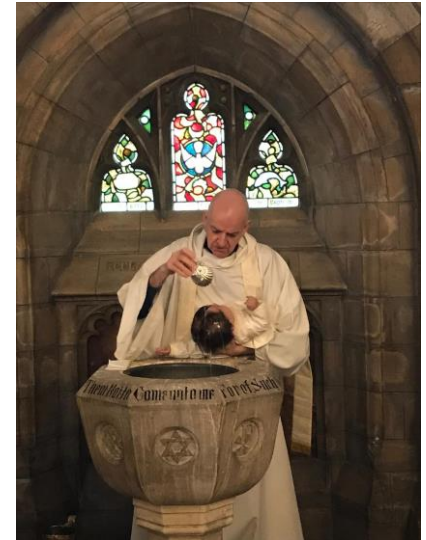
The images of fishing and being 'hooked' are good descriptions of the followers of Jesus. The first disciples were fishermen. Jesus 'fed the 5000' with a miraculous meal of loaves and fishes. The secret sign of the early church was the shape of a fish scratched in the sand outside a house to signify where a gathering of Christians was taking place.



No doubt there was a strong reminder of the imagery of fish when people saw new Christians being baptised and submerged under water and then coming up gasping and spluttering for air. Being submerged was for adults

a new birth, the turning over of a new leaf. Baptism helped lift people's eyes from old, self-centred ways and, instead, focus on Christ and the coming of God's kingdom on earth. The prayers and rites of the baptism service used today have been handed down over 2000 years.

Because baptism is about birth into a new life with God, it became the custom for babies and children to be baptised too. The child is named and so marked by God as water is poured over the head in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. A shell was often used to pour the water as they were used by pilgrims as simple drinking cups. In this way, shells remind us that following Christ is a journey, both the journey of a lifetime and a journey *that lasts* a lifetime - and beyond.



In the modern baptism service, two other symbols highlight important aspects of what it means to be baptised. First, the person to be baptised is anointed with oil as a sign of all the good things that God has given us, and as a reminder of the promise that we will all share in the kingdom of heaven. Second, at the end of the service the newly baptised person is given a lighted candle. Jesus said 'I am the light of the world'; a candle symbolises the light that we have been given, and that lights our way even (or perhaps especially) in the darkest times of our lives.

Practicalities

Who can be baptised at St Luke's and Christ Church?

We are very pleased to baptise your child if you live in our parish or attend worship at one of our churches; or if you were married here, or have a family connection with the parish. If you live in a different parish, we would be glad to meet you and discuss possibilities, but we encourage you to approach your local parish church in the first instance.

What is the Baptism Preparation evening?

All parents and carers with a child to be baptised are invited to a Baptism Preparation evening. Here, over a glass of wine, you will meet other parents and discuss some of the issues that face parents and how the life of the church relates to these. We

When do baptisms take place?

Most baptisms take place after the main Sunday morning service. We take bookings for up to two families per baptism session.

Can a video or photographs be taken during the service?

We ask families to enjoy this sacred and solemn moment, and therefore not to take photos or videos during the service. After the service we will be delighted for you to take photographs of your family and friends around the font. We also feature recent baptisms in our parish magazine each month - please email a photo to the Parish Office so we can feature you.



What happens after the baptism?

Immediately after the baptism we hope you have a jolly good party! You will receive a card on the anniversary of your child's baptism. We suggest you light your child's baptism candle on the anniversary each year and explain the pictures on the candle as a way of teaching them about the special day when they became a member of the church.

How much should be given as a thank offering?

There are no fees for baptisms but you are invited to make a donation.

Some people ask for guidance on how much to give. Of course it should be no more than you can afford but the upkeep of St Luke's and Christ Church is entirely dependent on the generosity and efforts of the congregation - we get no grants. This parish has been looked after by the love and care of the people of Chelsea over many, many years - your child's baptism and his or her future life in this church is an

important part of this ongoing tradition. The cost of clergy salaries, our charitable giving, our outreach work and the administration to support it all properly comes to over £14,000 a week.

But we do not want funds just to maintain buildings and salaries; we also want to do much more in the community, in our church school and for God's mission in the world. For this reason we



divide donations for baptism between our parish and a project overseas supported by Christian Aid. Currently that project that donations for baptisms help to support is one in Afghanistan supporting women and children.

Whatever you give as a thank offering - thank *you* very much! If it applies, please fill in a Gift Aid declaration (included in the baptism Donation Form) so that

we can supplement any donation of yours by reclaiming the tax.

Are there any rules for choosing godparents?

It is a great joy for parents to choose godparents for their child. It is traditional for a child to have three godparents, including two of their own sex. While three is the minimum number of godparents, however, there is no maximum!

The most important thing in choosing godparents is to seek people who in their lives and actions model the kind of 'life to the full' (as Jesus puts it) that you would like your child to grow in. During the baptism service, godparents are asked three questions, as follows, with the responses in bold:

- Do you turn to Christ? **I turn to Christ.**
- Do you repent of your sins? **I repent of my sins.**
- Do you renounce evil? **I renounce evil.**

The vows reflect the distinctive Christian life that your child is being called into in baptism, and it is on this basis that the Church of England expects that godparents will have been baptised, and, if possible, confirmed. In our diverse city many of us have close and trusted friends of another or no faith who would feel uncomfortable making these vows. If so, we would suggest such friends serve as 'sponsors' of the child.

- Sponsors make the following vows: Will you love and care for the child(ren) you are sponsoring today, and will you support (*parents and godparents*) as they walk with (*child's name*) on their journey to faith? **I will.**
- Will you draw (*child's name*) by your example into a life of mercy, peace and justice, and teach them to respect and love their neighbour as themselves? **I will.**
- Will you encourage them to learn about their Christian faith, and support them as they develop lives of prayer and worship, and take their place within the community of the Church? **I will.**

If you have any questions about choosing godparents or sponsors, please speak to one of the clergy.



Children at St Luke's and Christ Church

Baptism is just the start of a long journey of faith, and we want to support you and child along the way with a range of groups and activities. Contact the Parish Office for more information on any of these:

ABC

This group meets every Thursday during term time from 10.00am to 11.30am at Christ Church. Babies and children from 0 to 4 are welcome with their parents and carers - and you don't have to attend our church to come along. Just turn up!



Mini-Sunday School 0-4

A supervised crèche is provided at both churches for children aged 0-4. Take your child to the vestry of either church at any time after the first hymn - the sidespeople handing out hymn books will direct you.

Sunday School for 5-11 year olds

This is for primary school aged children during term time - in the parish hall at St Luke's during the 10:30am service and in rooms at Christ Church school at Christ Church during the 11am service. Children and leaders process out during the first hymn. There is also an 'all age' service twice a term.

'Pew Bags' are available at the back of both churches with books and activities for young children, if you wish to keep them in church during the service.

Junior Choir

Singing is a wonderful way of nurturing spirituality. The junior choir is for children aged six and over who enjoy singing. The group meets every Wednesday in term time from 5-6.30pm in Christ Church, and they sing at the Sunday Services eight times a year.



Confirmation

Every year, we offer a course for those in year 6 and above who are considering getting confirmed, usually followed by a confirmation in late June.

Youth Group

Various activities are organised for children aged 10 and over.

Uniformed organisations

The 10th Chelsea (St Luke's) Group of Rainbows, Brownies, and Guides, and the 9th Chelsea Scout Group (Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers) all meet in St Luke's Hall.



Some Prayers to Pray

Psalm 139

O Lord, you have searched me and know me.
You know my sitting down and my rising up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
You mark out my journeys and my resting places,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
For there is not a word on my tongue,
but you, O Lord, know it altogether.
You encompass me, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
so high that I cannot attain it...
For you yourself created my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I thank you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Marvellous are your works; my soul knows well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
and woven in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my form as yet unfinished;
already in your book were all my members written,
As day by day they were fashioned
when as yet there was none of them.
How deep are your counsels to me, O God!
How great is the sum of them!
If I count them they are more in number than the sand;
and in the end—I am still in your presence.

A Thanksgiving Prayer, *The Baptism Service, 2000*

God our creator,
we thank you for the wonder of new life
and for the mystery of human love.
We give thanks for all whose support and skill
surround and sustain the beginning of life.
As Jesus knew love and discipline
within a human family, may our children
grow in strength and wisdom.
As Mary knew the joys and pains of motherhood,
give us, as parents, your sustaining grace and love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

A Blessing, *The Lion Book of Best-Loved Prayers, 2006*

Wherever you go
May God the Father be with you.
Wherever you go
May God the Son be with you.
Wherever you go
May God the Spirit be with you.
May the road rise to meet you;
May the wind be always at your back;
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
The rains fall soft upon the fields and,
Until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of his hand.
The Lord bless you and keep you, may his face shine upon you
and grant you his peace this day and evermore. Amen.