

# The Baptism Guide



**St Mary the Virgin  
Whickham**

Updated June 2024

### What do we have to do now?

To book the service phone the parish office. Whether it be baptism or a service of thanksgiving you're interested in, we will be happy to show you around and answer your questions.

### What next?

Well, we firmly believe that the very best way to bring up children in God's family and nurture the promises made at baptism is to come to church, and from an early age. All are welcome.

We have Play and Praise every Thursday during term time for pre-schoolers and their families.

Please remember we will continue to pray for you all and keep in touch with you over the next few years.



### I need more information, who can I contact?

Parish Office: 0191 488 1553, [stmaryswhickham@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:stmaryswhickham@hotmail.co.uk)  
[www.stmaryswhickham.com](http://www.stmaryswhickham.com)

**Can my friend, who is of another faith, to be involved?**

Yes they will be most welcome. We are happy for your friend to be a sponsor and pleased they feel able to support your child.

**How many people can we invite to the church service?**

In most cases we have three baptisms at a service. Space is limited, and to accommodate all people comfortably we recommend you invite around thirty guests. This will ensure a more meaningful experience for all.

**Can we take photos or make a film of the service?**

Baptism is worship, and to maintain the focus and dignity of the occasion we would ask your guests not to film or photograph the ceremony. After the service we are happy to provide as much time as is needed to take photos and make videos.

**How much does baptism cost?**

There is no charge. God gives his gifts freely. However, we would ask you to consider making a donation for the work of the church of about £25.

**Can you help with our reception?**

Yes. We have good facilities in the nearby St Mary's Centre and are able to put you in contact with local caterers. Please speak to our Parish Office, on 0191 488 1553. They will be able to give you all the information you need.

**Congratulations!**

Baptism is an important step and we are thrilled you wish to find out more about it. Baptism happens only once in a lifetime and is an important step in coming closer to God. This booklet seeks to help you answer often asked questions. It is also designed to guide in making the right decision for yourself, or your child.

**Is Baptism right for me, or my child?**

Baptism is a gift of God. A visible sign of his love and grace which he promises to all members of the Church. By seeking Baptism for yourself you are professing faith in Christ and a commitment to follow him. As a parent, you are bringing your child to share in the faith you already hold. Being baptised means you, or your child, becomes a member of the world wide Christian family.

We know that young children can't decide for themselves, so baptismal promises are made on their behalf by parents and godparents. Children are baptised on the understanding that they will receive a Christian upbringing within the family of Christ's Church. Without this understanding, the baptism of children makes little sense. Baptism is the start of a journey in faith; a journey that needs parental companionship, encouragement and commitment! And we will be here to help too!

**We're not ready for Baptism, is there an alternative?**

Yes! We at St Mary's understand the need to be certain that the time is right; and know that sometimes parents want to celebrate the birth of their child, without the commitment needed in baptism. We are happy to offer a service of thanksgiving and blessing for the birth of your baby.

## What happens in the Baptism service?

When you make a booking you will be invited to a session of preparation in which is included a rehearsal. You will be there with other parents/candidates. On this occasion you can ask questions around baptism and become familiar with the service.

There are three main symbols used in the baptism. They represent outward expressions of God's grace given in baptism.

- ***The sign of the cross will be made upon the foreheads of those to be baptised.***

The cross, on which Jesus died, is the symbol for all Christians.

The signing of the cross is made with special oil blessed by the Bishop of Durham. Anointing with oil is traditional within the Church. It marks people as important to God and as recipients of his love and grace.

- ***Holy water is poured three times over the candidate's head in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the Baptism.***

Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan by John the Baptist. Baptism is the gift accepted by Jesus and is one in which we can share. Water is a sign of cleansing away our sins... that is, removing those things which separate us from God and one another. Water is also a sign of new life. Through the waters of baptism we are born into new life with Christ, becoming part of his family, the world wide Church.

- ***A lighted candle is given the newly baptised.***

This is lit from the Easter candle which represents Christ as the Light of the World. In baptism there is a movement from darkness to the light. The candle reminds us of this spiritual insight and encourages us all to follow the way illuminated by Jesus Christ.

## Who can be godparents?

Godparents need to be baptised and over sixteen. Choosing godparents is very important. It is more than honouring family friends, it is a role with substantial duties attached! The newly baptised child will need their godparents to:

- teach them about God and faith
- bring them to church
- help them to pray
- support them by prayer and example, and
- in time, encourage them to consider confirmation.

Parents and godparents will be asked to publicly declare their faith during the service.

## How many godparents can we have?

As few or as many as you like! Traditionally three godparents are chosen. If a boy, two men and a woman; if a girl, two women and a man. However please remember that one godparent willing to take the task seriously is worth several that won't. If one of the godparents can't attend the baptism you can arrange for someone to stand as a proxy.