



Deane Parish Church
St. Mary the Virgin

Thank you
for enquiring about
Thanksgiving
or
Baptism
for your child.



We are delighted that you have made contact with the church family at Deane about a special service for your child. We hope and pray that in the months and years ahead both you and your child will explore all the good things that God has in store for you.



Church of England churches offer two services: ***Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child*** and ***Baptism***.

We find at Deane that most people who ask for the baptism of a child (also known as 'Christening') aren't clear about what baptism actually is. If you are in that position, that's OK! We're here to help you. This leaflet will explain thanksgiving and baptism so that you will be in a better position to know which is the right route for you and your child at this time.

A Service of Thanksgiving can be arranged at comparatively short notice and is a step *on the way to* baptism. In many ways it is baptism without the water! It involves special prayers for the child and family and the dedication of him/her to God. It does not involve parents or Godparents making promises (see later). More and more parents these days are opting for this service, for various reasons which may include:

1. Parents want to mark and celebrate in church their child's arrival but don't feel ready yet to make the promises involved with a baptism service.
2. Parents would prefer that their child make up their own mind about baptism when they are older and can make the promises for themselves.
3. One parent or Godparent is not at this time able to make the

promises and therefore it would be hypocritical for them to say words of Christian faith that they don't believe.

4. Parents don't at this time feel able to make the commitment of church involvement that we require at Deane before we arrange a baptism.

If it is that you have not been attending Deane church for long, or at all recently, then a service of thanksgiving is almost certainly the right service for you at this time.

A Service of Baptism is a much bigger step and involves you making a far greater commitment. This is why it is not simply a case of booking in a date for a baptism. For those who have not been previously attending Deane church regularly, it would typically take **six months from first enquiry** before we would think about a date for a baptism service, which will then be sometime later to fit in with our Sunday services programme. At Deane, baptisms are conducted as part of our normal Sunday services, usually at 10.30am.

Firstly let's dispel some popular myths about baptism of babies!

Baptism is not...

- some kind of spiritual insurance policy against evil.*
- a way of giving your child a foothold in the life of the church - that depends on you bringing your child to church.*
- something that should be done for tradition's sake, or to please the grandparents.*
- something to do simply to mark a baby's birth - a service of Thanksgiving would be more appropriate.*
- something to be done just as an excuse for a family get-together.*
- a necessary qualification for your child to be married in church in the future.*
- a way of giving your baby a name.*

It's also important to realise that being baptised does not make you a Christian, which is why at Deane we tend not to talk about it as 'Christening'. The Bible is very clear that salvation comes through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Church of England, babies are baptised in the hope that they will grow up to be believers. A child makes their baptism real by having faith in what the baptism represents as they grow older.

In the Baptism service, the parents and Godparents are asked to make a series of promises. It can be easy to say words in a church service without thinking too deeply about what they mean. At Deane we do not want to put words into anyone's mouth and we certainly don't want anyone to be promising anything they do not fully understand or intend to follow through with.

The Apostle Peter speaking about Jesus Christ and about Christians....

²² He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. ²³ When they hurled insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

(1 Peter 2:22-25)

So, let's unpack a few of the promises that parents and Godparents make before God and the church congregation at a baptism service.

to turn to Christ as Saviour & to come to Christ, the way, the truth and the life



Are you clear about who the Lord Jesus Christ is? Do you understand how he can be a person's Saviour? Do you understand the response a person has to make in order to be a Christian? Have you made that response? If so, when? If you aren't clear about any of this, you are going to struggle to explain it to your child as they grow up. This is why it is important that you attend church. Listen carefully to the talks. Ask questions. Read the Bible... we suggest that you start with Luke's gospel. Do the *Christianity Explored* course (www.christianityexplored.org). THEN, you will be in a much better place to decide if you can make these promises.

The Apostle Paul speaking about Jesus Christ...

¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

(2 Corinthians 5:15)

to pray for your child

Do you pray for and with your child already? Do you know how to pray? Even Jesus' disciples needed to be taught how to pray. On the *Christianity Explored* course and in other ways at Deane, we learn about prayer and how to pray.



to draw your child by your example into the community of faith

&

to help your child to take their place within the life and worship of Christ's Church



This means belonging to a local church (like Deane!), attending a weekly service with your child and, as appropriate, getting involved with the wider life of the church. At Deane we require that you attend church regularly for a number of months before we think about a Baptism service, and to continue attending afterwards. You can only draw your child into the community of faith (God's church) if you yourself

are part of the community of faith!

to walk with your child in the way of Christ

&

to submit to Christ as Lord

This means living according to God's manual for life, the Bible. The way of Christ is the best and most fulfilling way to live life since it is how the Creator designed us to live! However, this way of life is so often very different to the way of British society today. If a parent or Godparent is not even trying to live out and model to their growing child the Christian life, the promises made in the Baptism service are rather hollow.



For instance, the Bible teaches that being in a sexual relationship *outside of marriage* is not what God wants for us, and is therefore not 'walking in the way of Christ' or 'submitting

to Christ as Lord'. This is just one example of the clash between living for God and living by worldly standards.

So in summary, if at this time you cannot, for any reason, make these promises with all sincerity and from your heart then **DON'T DO IT!** Wait until such time as you can. God would much rather you did not make promises that you knew you couldn't keep. A service of thanksgiving, which does not involve parents or Godparents making promises, would be the more appropriate service.

But please hear very clearly two more things:

1. Nobody can live God's way without his help and empowerment. In the baptism service the parents and Godparents respond with the words '***With the help of God, we will.***' None of us live perfect lives and only with God's help can we live the way he wants us to. And even when we get it wrong, we can receive his forgiveness and healing when we put our trust in him.

2. The baptism of a baby is more about the adults making the promises than it is about the child. Babies cannot answer for themselves. So delaying the baptism of a baby (and opting instead for a service of thanksgiving) is not somehow unfair on the baby, it is actually a very good thing and pleasing to God.

If you are serious about baptism then you will be serious about getting to know God better, and baptism is pointless apart from the life of God's church.

So what happens next?

Having read through this leaflet, think it through, perhaps asking God to guide you. Then do please get back in touch with us and one of the clergy will get back to you to discuss things further.

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 THE CHURCH
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