



ST JUDES

PLYMOUTH

Baptism and Thanksgivings

at

St Jude's Church

Baptism only really makes sense if you are connected by faith into the family of Jesus Christ, known worldwide as the Church.

The Church is represented in so many different ways by so many different denominations. But in all cases, it is made up of local congregations who want to follow Jesus Christ. Local churches are just small family units of the same worldwide family. Therefore, if you are looking at this information without being a regular part of a church family, joining one is probably the best thing you can do. Once you are happy with the community you want to become a part of, if you or your children aren't yet baptised, then you will know if you want to take the first steps in this commitment to follow Jesus for the rest of your life, supported by the community you would then feel at home in.

(If as you read below, you feel that Baptism (otherwise known as Christening) isn't quite for you yet, we do also offer a Thanksgiving Service that wouldn't need to be in one of our main gatherings, when we can help you name your child, give thanks to God for them and ask for God's blessing on them. Do ask us about this option if you would like to consider it.)

At St Jude's, you will always be made very welcome, as will your children for whom we have lots of opportunities as they grow. We have our main gathering on Sunday mornings at 10.30am and our kids gathering, "Jude's Club". If you have questions on your faith or baptism (some people call it christening, but it is not really the right word) then do come and join us. Spend some time with us and get to know us.

More importantly however, get to know if you believe that Jesus is real. That He came to earth, lived as a human, died on a cross so our sin can be dealt with, enabled us to know forgiveness, that He rose again so we can have hope in this life and the next, and that He now reigns in heaven as God in Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and that HE wants a living, loving, relationship with you.

Once you know the truth of this, your (or your child's) baptism becomes so very real and meaningful. A baptism grounded in a relationship with Jesus is one of the most moving and emotional things possible for the person being baptised. But it can only happen once in a lifetime, so we want to help you be sure it is right.

If you are reading this because you want to consider baptism for your child, the above is still crucial. Why?

There are two facets that need exploring about baptism. For an adult wanting to be baptised, it is a response by them discovering a relationship with God through Jesus and then wanting to acknowledge that publicly. We do that by obeying Jesus' request that we repent (turn away from the things that hurt others and God – also known as sin) and be baptised as His follower. In this case it is you saying at the start of your journey of faith that Jesus has become real and special to you and you want to begin something new with Him. Baptism signifies that you are joining with the community of believers known as the Church, His Church. The use of water at baptism is symbolic of dying, dying to our old life and then rising to a new one with Jesus. (The word "baptism" comes from the same Greek word in Jesus' day that was used when a ship sank!)

Patently, children cannot take these decisions in the same way as they are still young, but baptism is made available for both adults and children, so we need to look at the baptism of children from a

slightly different perspective. Infant baptism happened in the Bible, but only in the context of a family of believers, not as individual children.

Therefore this second perspective of baptism is about children being welcomed into the same community that their parents (and godparents somewhere in a faith community) are already a part of, the community they want to acknowledge as being important for the child, the community who acknowledge Jesus as the saviour of their lives and the world, His local and worldwide Church. This is why we don't have baptisms at special services.

They are always among the church family at our Sunday morning gathering where you (or your child) can be welcomed by the church family, your new family, locally and on behalf of the worldwide church. Because, whether the baptism is for an adult or a child, the faith of the adult must always have a foundation based in Jesus' community for it to mean anything.

At either an adult's baptism or at a child's, versions of the following Baptism Service Extract are used to acknowledge what is happening. The promises being made can only be said honestly when a relationship with Jesus has started and when the adults involved are part of a church community. Your answers, when given honestly in faith, are a wonderful witness to how you have discovered a real relationship with Jesus Christ. If you decided to go ahead without faith it would mean nothing and you or your Godparents would just be embarrassed. We never want anyone to feel that way. We want to make Baptism a really special moment for you.

So, please do read the following questions and promises from a Baptism Service carefully and think through them, as they are a privilege to be able to say, but they are also said publicly in front of the church community. Therefore, you will also need to feel comfortable and confident in your answers. If you don't yet feel that you can affirm these things in your life, don't worry. We would want to help you discover the joy and freedom that comes through this faith that gives purpose and hope. So if you don't yet understand, we will be very happy to explain and give you space and time to explore. Baptism isn't an "inoculation" for heaven, so there is no rush!

BAPTISM SERVICE EXTRACT

You would say the parts in bold

Parents and godparents, the Church receives *N* with joy. Today we are trusting God for his/her growth in faith. Will you pray for him/her, draw him/her by your example into the community of faith and walk with him/her in the way of Christ? **With the help of God, we will.**

In baptism *N* begins his/her journey in faith. You speak for him/her today. Will you care for him/her, and help him/her to take his/her place within the life and worship of Christ's Church? **With the help of God, we will.**

In baptism, God calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light. To follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with him. Therefore I ask: 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.

WHAT IS NEXT?

If you are thinking about making similar promises for yourself, or as above on behalf of your child, to bring them up to follow Jesus and be part of His church with you, come along a few times initially just to see if it is what you expect.

Once you feel confident this could be your church, stay and make it your church.

Baptism can only happen once in a lifetime. We want to help you make it the most important moment in your life, or your child's. And if you think about it, when the last three questions of the Baptism Service ask about our relationship with Jesus Christ, and the first for a child that we'll encourage them in the church community, if we don't attend a church somewhere it is a bit difficult to see how we can affirm these things if we aren't part of His church somewhere.

So before you ask for a baptism, please do join us for a variety of our services to find out what we are like. Then you can make a good decision in time as to whether or not you feel your faith is real and that you would want to commit to this church and know we are committed to you. If we're not quite right for you, then you will discover that too and won't waste the one off opportunity of a baptism. Please don't rush and waste this great moment.

REAFFIRMATION OF CHILDHOOD BAPTISM VOWS AND CONFIRMATION

We also offer the opportunity to our own Church members to re-affirm their childhood baptism vows. Some adults may want to publicly affirm the promises made on their behalf by their own parents. You cannot be baptised twice – you are accepted into the worldwide church once only – but for some that doesn't 'feel' enough. Therefore, on a few occasions, when we are considering some full immersion baptisms, re-affirmation in the water is always a possibility.

Within the Church of England, we also have a special occasional service, overseen by a Bishop, called Confirmation. This again is a public affirmation of your faith, particularly important if you were baptised as a child. Reaffirming your baptism vows in water is lovely and meaningful, but isn't recorded in any way. Any Confirmation is registered within the Church of England within its records.

BAPTISM APPLICATION

Therefore, once you have been attending the church for a while regularly to make sure you are confident we are where you want to grow as a follower of Jesus (and bring your children up to know Him more) then please just ask the Vicar for a Baptism Application Form or chat with us about a Thanksgiving Service..