

## Preparing for your Child's

# Baptism or Christening

The words 'baptism' and 'christening' both describe the same event. It doesn't matter which word you use. All that matters is that you want to bring your child to the beginning of the journey of Christian faith. Congratulations!

## Planning the Service

### Settling on a Date

We'll work with you to find the best possible date for your child's baptism – but we are limited in the dates we're able to offer, so work with us too. Let us know your preference and we'll go from there.

### Choosing Godparents

Godparents are people who will pray for your child, and who will share their faith with them as they grow. Godparents need to have been baptised themselves – a sign that they are on that same journey of faith. It's worth considering: what do you hope for in your child's godparents – on the day of the baptism? in a year's time? in ten years' time?

## The Service Itself

There are three main symbols in the baptism service. There is the water of baptism. Before the water, the child is marked on their forehead with a cross drawn in holy oil. At the end of the service, they are given a candle.

### Oil

The cross drawn in oil marks your child with the sign of God's love. You can practice this at home by drawing a cross with olive oil on the back of their hand. As your child grows, they can learn to trace the cross on their forehead whenever they are faced with hard choices.

### Water

When you do bath-time together, think about how lovely water is. Getting out of the bath, we feel so fresh and renewed. God is the God of new beginnings, always giving us the new start and fresh energy to be the person God made us to be, and not the person we got distracted into becoming.

### Candle

Every year on Easter Sunday, we light a new candle. This is the candle from which your child's baptism candle is lit. It is a reminder that your child's life is part of God's big story. Keep your child's candle safe, and light it with them on the anniversary of their baptism. (We can provide replacement candles if you burn yours down!)



# Exploring Faith with your Child

As parents and godparents, you promise at a baptism to bring your child up to know God. This is a serious promise, but learning and growing in faith can be lots of fun, as well as a way for you and your child to share experiences that are deep, meaningful and full of love.



Whether your child is a tiny newborn, a toddler, pre-schooler or school-age, here are five simple things that you can do together:

## 1. Become part of the church community.

Our church loves little ones. You'll make friends, and your child will enjoy belonging to a community of different ages. Plus, there's always cake. Life might feel full-on with a small person in tow, but it is easier if the routine is set sooner rather than later. Coming regularly is the only way for your child (and possibly you, for that matter), to feel really at home in the church.

## 2. Pray with bubbles.

Imagine the bubbles are your prayers, floating away and disappearing, but known to God. You can think of someone or something that you'd like to pray for, and then blow a stream of bubbles, holding that prayer in your heart. You don't always need words to pray. Just watch the bubbles go, and give the prayer to God.

## 3. Massage.

Rub child-friendly skin cream onto your child's skin; with toddlers and older, let them do the same to you. It's a chance to be present to your love for your child. Think about people you know who might need special care at the moment, and talk about whether there's something you can do to help look after those people.



## 4. Choose "your" song.

Singing can sometimes help us feel closer to God than anything else. Babies love being sung to, and children often like learning new songs or dancing to music. You may have a favourite hymn from your own childhood. Otherwise, some suggestions to look up on YouTube:

- "For God so Loved the World" by John Hardwick, or "Wide, Wide as the Ocean"  
(these songs are gentle, like lullabies, and tell us about God's love)
- "I Danced in the Morning (Lord of the Dance)"  
(this is livelier! it tells the whole story of Jesus, and how he's still with us)

Choose one that you like, and sing it together often!

## 5. Create a prayer corner in your home.

It doesn't have to take up a lot of room. You might want a small shelf or child-size table, and put on it things that help you to know God being with you: maybe a child-safe LED candle or fairy lights (make sure the battery compartment can be screwed shut), a cross, a Bible storybook, a picture of Jesus, a small plant, photos of people you love. Make it cosy, a safe place for your child to spend time and talk to God.

