

St. Luke's Church Maidenhead

Baptism Policy and Procedure

Policy

- The community of St. Luke's church is delighted to welcome anyone to baptism into the family of God, the church.
- We believe that baptism is a once in a lifetime sacrament (Eph. 4.5), which is an outward sign of a new relationship with God. We therefore believe that 'baptism marks the beginning of a journey with God which continues for the rest of our lives, the first step in response to God's love'. (Common Worship, Initiation Services, p. 62, see appendix). We are all members of the community of the baptised.
- Baptism should be open to anyone, regardless of their age, ability, or spirituality. However, it is a sacrament and so should not be entered into lightly. Those seeking baptism for themselves, or their child are warmly encouraged to attend church and make themselves at home with other members of the Christian family.
- All those seeking baptism should be prepared in the most appropriate way in order that they may begin to grasp the commitment that they are undertaking, and the love that God has for them. Preparation may be of the baptismal candidate themselves, or his / her parents and / or godparents on his / her behalf.
- Godparents should themselves be baptised, in order to properly fulfil their role as guides and supports in the faith journey of the newly baptised. However, unbaptised godparents may act as sponsors.
- We encourage all those who are baptised to seek confirmation at an age when they are able to understand and make their baptismal promises for themselves. For some people baptism and confirmation may take place in the same service.
- St. Luke's church family undertakes to support all those who come for baptism, and their families, by regular prayer. We will also ensure that every baptised person is linked to a church contactor who will provide individual support and friendship. An annual celebration of baptism will be held, to which all those recently baptised, and their families, will be invited.
- There is no charge for baptisms, but families are invited to donate (gift aided, if appropriate) to the work of the church.

The baptism procedure should be open and clear, transparent and supportive, whilst allowing for pastoral flexibility under the discretion of the incumbent. Therefore:

- baptisms take place
 - EITHER during the main Sunday service of Parish Communion, in order that the whole community might welcome the new members;
 - OR at midday on an agreed Sunday, with the parents bringing the child to a main service on any other Sunday beforehand for a short act of welcome by the whole congregation.
- there will be a maximum of two families at any baptism service.
- candidates from outside the parish, who do not regularly attend St. Luke's and seek baptism here must provide written permission from their parish priest or agree to the incumbent contacting him / her to gain permission.

Procedure

- Initial baptism enquiry is received, usually by the church office.
- The administrator passes details to the vicar (candidate's name and DOB, parents names – where applicable – address and telephone and email).
- The vicar contacts the family and discusses the possible baptism.
- [If it is not appropriate to baptise in this parish the vicar attempts to make a link with the parish of residence].
- The vicar pencils the date in the baptism file and arranges to visit the family, taking a baptism pack (application form; information about children in church, baptism, St. Luke's Toddler Group; Messy Church, church flyer; contact details, gift aid envelope).
- The vicar receives the completed form, firms up the baptism in the file and enters it in the parish diary.
- The vicar invites both families and contactors to come along to Play and Stay (Baptism preparation morning session).
- At Play and Stay parents can explore the meaning of baptism through a variety of informal activities over coffee. Godparents and other family members are welcome to attend the preparation meeting
- The parish office will prepare the baptism candles, cards and books, and complete the register after the baptism.
- The parish administrator will send cards until the fifth anniversary.

Appendix:

Holy Baptism, Pastoral Introduction

This may be read by those present before the service begins.

Baptism marks the beginning of a journey with God which continues for the rest of our lives, the first step in response to God's love. For all involved, particularly the candidates but also parents, godparents and sponsors, it is a joyful moment when we rejoice in what God has done for us in Christ, making serious promises and declaring the faith. The wider community of the local church and friends welcome the new Christian, promising support and prayer for the future. Hearing and doing these things provides an opportunity to remember our own baptism and reflect on the progress made on that journey, which is now to be shared with this new member of the Church.

The service paints many vivid pictures of what happens on the Christian way. There is the sign of the cross, the badge of faith in the Christian journey, which reminds us of Christ's death for us. Our 'drowning' in the water of baptism, where we believe we die to sin and are raised to new life, unites us to Christ's dying and rising, a picture that can be brought home vividly by the way the baptism is administered. Water is also a sign of new life, as we are born again by water and the Spirit. This reminds us of Jesus' baptism. And as a sign of that new life, there may be a lighted candle, a picture of the light of Christ conquering the darkness of evil. Everyone who is baptized walks in that light for the rest of their lives.

As you pray for the candidates, picture them with yourself and the whole Church throughout the ages, journeying into the fullness of God's love.

Jesus said, 'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.'

John 10.10b

From: Common Worship, Initiation Services, Archbishop's Council, 2006)

Last review: 7th March 2023 **This review:** 12th March 2024

Next review: March 2026

By St. Luke's PCC