

A Baptism in the Harlaxton Group of Parishes

St Andrew Denton – St Mary & St Peter Harlaxton – All Saints Stroxtton
St James Woolsthorpe by Belvoir – St Catherine Wyville with Hungerton

What is baptism?

In baptism, you as parents are: thanking God for his gift of life, deciding to start your child on the journey of faith and asking for the Church's support.

For your child, baptism marks the start of a journey of faith, turning towards Christ and becoming a member of the local and worldwide Christian family.

Baptism is a 'sacrament': a visible sign of God's love. In baptism, we are thanking God for his gift of life and publicly acknowledging his love. We are acknowledging that we all need to make a new start with God.



Making decisions and promises

When you bring your child for baptism, you will be asked to declare publicly on behalf of your child that you believe in God and that you will bring your child up to follow Jesus. You will be asked to answer, on your child's behalf, that you have decided to turn away from everything which is evil or sinful and to turn instead towards Christ.

The declarations made by you and the child's godparents will be made in front of the church congregation.

The declarations

During the service, you will be asked to make the following declarations:

Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God?

Parents and godparents: I reject them.

Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil?

Parents and godparents: I renounce them.

Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour?

Parents and godparents: I repent of them.

Do you turn to Christ as Saviour?

Parents and godparents: I turn to Christ.

Do you submit to Christ as Lord?

Parents and godparents: I submit to Christ.

Do you come to Christ, the way, the truth and the life?

Parents and godparents: I come to Christ.

Shouldn't our children make their own decisions?

Some people worry that they are imposing views on their children; but from the moment they are born, you make choices on their behalf. You don't wait until they are old enough to ask for milk before you feed them and in the same way

it is right to give them spiritual nourishment and teach them about the love of God from an early age. When they are old enough they may choose to be confirmed and to make an adult affirmation of faith.

What happens in the Baptism service?

Your child's baptism will normally take place in a special service although it may also be part of normal Sunday worship. There may be two or three other families there at the same time.

The priest conducting the service will make sure you know where to sit and when you need to move. Some parts of the service will be for the whole congregation to join in; some will be for you and the godparents.

For the baptism itself, parents and godparents will be asked by the priest to gather around the font. (The font is a large basin on a pedestal, to contain the water for baptism.)

The priest will ask the parents and godparents to make declarations on behalf of the child (see the section 'Making decisions and promises').

Some Important symbols

A number of important symbols will be used during the service itself:

The sign of the cross /Anointing with holy oil

The priest will use a special holy oil to make the sign of the cross on your child's forehead. This is like an invisible badge to show that Christians are united with Christ and must not be ashamed to stand up for their faith in him.

The priest says: 'Christ claims you for his own. Receive the sign of his cross. Do not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified.'



Water

The priest will pour water on your child's head. Water is a sign of washing and cleansing. In baptism it is a sign of being washed free from sin and beginning a new life with God.

Water is a sign of life, but also a symbol of death. When we are baptised our old life is buried in the waters (like drowning) and we are raised to new life with Christ.



The welcome

The church congregation will say some formal words of welcome to acknowledge that your child has joined the Church and to show how pleased they are to have you among them.

Jesus is called the light of the world. A large candle called The Easter Candle will be lit in the church and you will be given a lighted candle as part of the service as a reminder of the light which has come into your child's life. It is up to you, the child's godparents and the church community to help your child reject the world of darkness and follow a way of life that reflects goodness and light, and shares this light with others.





When did baptism start?

Jesus was baptised in the river Jordan. This was a turning point in his life (you can read the story in the Bible: at the beginning of Mark's Gospel in the New Testament). Jesus told his followers to baptise others as a sign that they had turned away from their old life, and begun a new life as Christ's disciples, members of his Body, having been assured of God's forgiveness.

Baptisms often took place in a river: new Christians were dipped under the water, marking their death to an old way of life, and lifted up again as a sign of new birth. Some churches still follow the practice of full immersion in water today.

Some frequently asked questions



Q| What's the difference between a baptism and a christening?

A| None, they are just different words for the same thing. "*Christ-ening*" means being brought into the fellowship of Christ's family, the Church.

Q| What is the right age for baptism?

A| Baptism can happen at any age. What matters is that those concerned believe it is right to ask for baptism.

Baptism is so special it is a once in a lifetime event but there are ways of renewing your commitment publicly as an adult. When your child is old enough, (typically early teens), he or she can confirm for themselves the vows that their parents and Godparents made on their behalf. This *confirmation* is all about mature decision making and a real step forward in Christian commitment culminating in a special service where they receive their first Holy Communion. Remember, it is quite usual that adults too may seek to be baptised and confirmed – they are most welcome to speak to one of the clergy about this.

Q| I'm not a regular churchgoer. Can I still have my child baptised?

A| Yes. The Church believes that God's love is available to all, regardless of their background. One of the clergy can talk you through the options: you may prefer to have a Thanksgiving service first and then consider baptism when you have had time to talk through what is being asked of you.

You may also wish to find out more about the Christian faith and what joining the Church involves before you make a decision about baptism. Again, one of the clergy can give you guidance.

Q| What does it cost?

A| The Baptism service is free. God's love is freely given so we don't charge though you may wish to make a donation at the end of the service as a thanksgiving offering which will be used to help with the upkeep and mission of your church. The true cost comes in taking your vows and promises seriously long after the service has finished.

Godparents

Q| What is a godparent?

A| Godparents make the same promises on behalf of the child being baptised as parents. Godparents promise to pray and support the child and to help the parents to bring up the child in the Christian faith. It is an important and responsible role.

Q| How many godparents should I have?

A| You should have at least three but no more than four: two of the same sex as the child and one of the opposite sex. Parents can also be godparents.

Q| Who should I choose to be a godparent?

A| Godparents can be family members or friends. However, it is important that you choose people who will take an interest in your child's spiritual welfare and who will pray for you and your child. They should be baptised themselves.

What happens after the baptism?

Baptism marks a new start for your child, as a member of the worldwide Christian community. In turn, the Church welcomes you and your child and promises to support you in bringing the child up in the faith. The church actively welcome families with children of all ages and often provides family orientated services as well as more traditional style worship.

Ask your parish priest.

If you have questions yourself about the Christian faith – please speak to a member of the clergy.

We hope your child's baptism will be a wonderful and memorable occasion and that it will mark the beginning of a long and happy association with your church.

The Priest in Charge of Harlaxton Group is

Revd Keith Hanson
The Rectory
6 Rectory Lane
Harlaxton
Grantham
NG32 1HD

Tel 01476 594608
E-Mail revkeef@hotmail.com

