



# Baptism Policy

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St James' Church Clitheroe

Baptism marks the beginning of a journey with God which continues for the rest of our lives and is often the first public step in response to God's love. For all involved, particularly the candidates if an adult but also parents and Godparents if a child, it is a joyful moment when we rejoice in what God has done for us in Christ, making serious promises and declaring the faith we believe together. 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 Baptism Service paints many vivid pictures of what happens on the Christian journey. There is the sign of the cross, the badge of faith in the Christian life which reminds us of Christ's death for us. Our 'washing' in the water of baptism, where we believe we die to sin and are raised to new life, uniting 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 we continue to be baptised both to mirror his actions but also to follow his command.

Children and infants are most usually baptised at the font and adults are baptised by full emersion either in church in our baptismal pool or, if requested, in the river.

Sometimes people have been baptised as an infant and wish to proclaim their faith for themselves for the first time or afresh after a time away from it. In this instance it can be an equal joy to reaffirm one's baptismal vows, possibly giving a testimony of God's grace at the same time. The rite of Confirmation is the ideal place for this to happen within the Anglican Church and is a service where the candidate renews their baptismal vows and has a Bishop pray that they might receive the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Similarly, not everyone wishes to have their child baptised but does wish to mark their birth with a service of thanksgiving and dedication. These can be real occasions of joy and witness in the church and we commend it as an option.

St James' Church sits within a geographical area called a parish, you can check if you are in our parish by putting your post code into the A Church Near You website. If you are within the parish or regularly attend one of our congregations on a Sunday or Wednesday then we would be delighted to discuss baptism for you or for a child in your care. Equally we can discuss renewal of vows or dedication as you prefer.

If you are new to the church then the first conversation should be after one of our services which are 10:30am on a Wednesday or 9:30am and 11:15am on a Sunday. Please note that during the holidays we often move to having one service on a Sunday at 10:30am and you should check the website or our socials to confirm service times on

any given week. We recommend you try to attend the service where you would be most likely to have the baptism.

When you attend the service please speak to one of the welcome team who will find either the Rector, the Operations Manager or one of the members of staff/leadership team. They will be able to talk you through the process and pass you the necessary forms to fill in.

The Church of England requires “proper preparation” to take place before the baptism. We therefore ask that you attend the chosen service at least one more time (as a family if it is an infant to be baptised) and the Rector, or relevant baptising member of clergy, will meet with you before the service to discuss the vows you will make and ensure you are comfortable with them.

### **If you are not a regular at St James' here are a list of Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **Who can be baptised at St James'?**

Anyone who lives in the Parish of Clitheroe, St James or who regularly attends one of the congregations there is most welcome to come and discuss baptism.

If you don't fit into one of these categories but have a tie to the church which means you would like to discuss baptism at St James' then please do be in touch.

#### **What is required of me before the baptism?**

We ask that the first conversation about baptism happens in person and at one of our services, where you will be made most welcome if you are a visitor. We then ask that you attend the congregation at which you would most like to have the baptism at least once more before the baptism date. There you will receive a simple form to fill in with your details and also a booklet explaining what baptism is and what to expect at the service.

The Rector or other relevant minister will arrange to meet you either at your home or at church to discuss the service.

### **What about afterwards?**

There are no requirements on a candidate or their family after the baptism, however, during the service they will make promises to feature in the worshipping life of a church and the congregation will make a promise to do all they can to support them. The best way this can happen is through regular attendance and if you do not already attend you would be most welcome. As part of the preparation process you will be introduced to our discipleship lead (if you are an adult candidate) or our Children and Families Minister (if you are speaking on behalf of a child) and these will be useful relationships as you become a part of church life.

### **What happens at the meeting with the minister who will be baptising me/my child?**

This is a great opportunity to get to know each other, particularly if you are not a regular at the church. It is also a time to look over the service and discuss practical things as well as the spiritual and theological aspects of the occasion.

Practicalities such as how many guests there will be and preferences within the service will also be discussed.

### **Who can I have as Godparents?**

Traditionally 3 or 4 Godparents are selected and the Canons of the Church of England give us an idea of what we are looking for. As well as being someone who is known to the family and trusted by them they must be, “people who will faithfully fulfil their responsibilities both by their care for the children to be committed into their care and by example of their own godly living”.

No one can be a Godparent who has not themselves been baptised.

Adult candidates tend not to have godparents in the same way as children but should identify people as ‘sponsors’ who will continue to walk with them in their faith and life.

### **What happens if a Godparent cannot be present?**

The Baptism service assumes an interaction between Godparent and congregation and the saying together of various vows and promises. The register of Godparents therefore expects all who wish to fulfil this role to be present.

A family can refer to someone who was not present as a Godparent if they wish but they would not be recorded as such in the legal Baptism Register.

### **What if I am not comfortable saying the vows and making the promises?**

This is quite understandable as the vows ask a lot of us and the promises are appropriately 'big'.

The Church of England (and the PCC of St James') would rather you did not feel you had to lie and will never make anyone say something they do not believe. The Church of England offers another, very similar service called "Dedication of a Child" which allows us to celebrate the gift of a child, and dedicate them into God's care, but does not ask for the same promises to be made. You can ask about this when you meet with the Rector.

### **What if I was Baptised as a child but wish to mark my faith as an adult?**

Right from the formation of the Christian faith and its creeds we have strongly believed that there can only be one baptism so being baptised again is not an option. There are rites within the Church of England which help in this, particularly the service called 'Confirmation'. At this service the candidate renews their Baptismal vows and then a visiting Bishop prays that the Holy Spirit will come upon them. A candidate can renew their baptism vows at any time and this can be discussed with the Rector.

### **At what age can a child start to make the promises for themselves?**

There is no legal answer to this question but it must be discerned by the family and baptising member of clergy as to what is most appropriate. The most relevant question they will be asked in the service is, "Is this your faith". If someone can answer, "this is my faith" with the integrity and understanding needed then the person to be baptised should answer for themselves.

### **How much is the fee for a baptism service?**

There is no fee to pay to be baptised or have a child baptised, we are just delighted to welcome the baptised into the Church of God and mark this stage in their faith journey together.