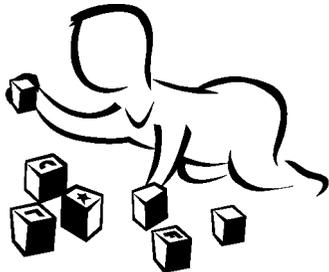


Baptism at St Michaels Braintree

Thank you for asking about baptism. We rejoice with you in God's gift of a child.

These notes set out briefly how we understand and practise baptism in the parish of St Michaels Braintree; this policy has been discussed and agreed by the Parochial Church Council. It will underline what is generally explained by one of the clergy who visits you in your home, whenever an enquiry is made about baptism.

We see your baby's welcome into the Christian community in two stages.



Stage One – A service of Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child

'Common Worship', the modern Church of England service book, states that the service of Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child is designed as a preliminary to baptism as well as for parents who do not want their children to be baptized for the time being, or who have no current plans for baptism.

We therefore encourage all parents to have this service first of all, as it provides an

opportunity publicly to thank God for the gift of your child and for prayer to be made on his or her behalf.

A copy of the service of Thanksgiving will be given to you at the home visit, or can be supplied by the clergy on request. Unlike baptism, this service involves no promises being made by the parents, nor does it require them to state publicly their own Christian profession. It is therefore a service which is relevant for those who may not be ready for the commitments required in the baptism service, as well as for those who can make them. The service of Thanksgiving is normally available within a fairly short time, following the first visit by one of the clergy to your home.



Stage Two – Baptism

The correct name for what some people call 'Christening' is Baptism. Baptism is concerned with both believing and belonging. The baptism service includes statements about believing in Jesus, accepting him as Saviour and Lord, discovering him as a friend and following him as teacher and guide. By asking for baptism you are indicating that you want your child to be a member of the Christian family – the Church. Just as there is no point in joining a sports club or a secular organisation if you rarely or never take part in their activities, so too there is no point in asking for membership of a Christian

Church if you have no intention of joining in.

The baptism service states that the Church as a whole, and especially the parents and godparents, have a responsibility to ensure that the child is helped and encouraged to grow as a Christian. Specifically, parents and godparents promise to:

- 1) pray for the child;**
- 2) draw them by example into the community of faith;**
- 3) walk with them in the way of Christ.**

We therefore expect parents to establish real links with the Church before the baptism takes place, if these do not already exist.

St Michaels can help parents with young children to establish these links in the following ways:

- 1) We provide a crèche at the 10am service on Sundays when babies and children too young for our Junior Church (Sunday school) are cared for, so enabling parents to attend the morning service.
- 2) Church Family Worship (an all-age service) is held at 10am on the first Sunday of each month, when babies and children can join their parents, or use the crèche.
- 3) During term time there is a weekly group 'Tiddlywinks' for pre-schoolers, their parents and carers in Church House (in St Michaels Lane, across the road from St Michaels Church) on Tuesdays at 1.15pm (see separate Tiddlywinks leaflet for more details).

The period between the service of Thanksgiving and the baptism will also give

time for the parents to consider the promises involved in baptism and the commitment to Jesus Christ that the service expects.

Here is an extract from the service itself which speaks of this commitment:

Minister: *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?

Parents & godparents:

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.

These are very specific statements which require a personal commitment to Christ. Integrity demands that no parents or godparents should make these responses on behalf of a child if they have not already made them for themselves.

Following the service of Thanksgiving and when real links have been established with the Church, further consideration will be given to the matter of baptism through baptism preparation classes, in your own home or elsewhere.

Godparents

The norm is to have two godparents of the same sex as the child, and one of the opposite, but you can have more. It is also permissible to have just one of each. Godparents must themselves be baptized persons.

When choosing godparents, you should aim to find people whose interest and concern for your child will be Christian and prayerful, not just family or social.

Times of Services

Services of Thanksgiving and Baptism take place in the context of public worship and normally at Church Family Worship, the all-age service on the first Sunday of the month.



**The Parish Church of
St Michael, Braintree**

Your Child's Baptism

