

# **THE SITTINGBOURNE TEAM MINISTRY:**



**The Churches of St Mary, St Michael,  
Holy Trinity and Bobbing**



## **Infant Baptism**



**We're delighted that you're thinking of having your child baptised.**

**Your child is precious to you and precious to God.**

**At baptism, you will promise to raise your child to know that God loves them and to help them to follow Jesus as a member of his church.**

**We're looking forward to meeting up with you and your family!**

## **What is Baptism?**

Baptism is a sacrament, a visible sign of a new beginning, where we thank God for his gift of life and publicly acknowledge his love.

In the Church of England, it's common to baptise young children as well as adults. Baptism is sometimes known as christening. Jesus himself was baptised in the river Jordan and asked his followers to continue this tradition.

## **What happens during the service?**

Your child's baptism will take place during the Sunday service. This is so that your child can be welcomed into the family of the church by all its members (see the back page for service times). We'll make sure you know where to sit and what to do. Some parts of the service are for the whole congregation to join in, some parts are just for you and the Godparents.

For the baptism itself, parents and Godparents are usually asked to gather around the font (a large basin on a pedestal, which contains the water for baptism).

We'll then ask the parents and Godparents to make declarations on behalf of the child.

## **Making decisions and promises**

When you bring your child for baptism, you'll be asked to declare publicly, on behalf of your child, that you believe in God and will bring your child up to follow Jesus.

You'll be asked to answer, on your child's behalf, that you have decided to live according to God's ways. We'll meet up with you a few times before the baptism, to talk with you about what this means, and so that we can get to know you better.

These declarations are made by you and the child's Godparents in front of the church congregation. The local Christian community will then promise to support you and pray for you and your child.

## **Symbols and actions used during the service**

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

**The sign of the cross** - we'll 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 should not be ashamed to stand up for their faith in him.

We'll say:

- Christ claims you for his own.
- Receive the sign of his cross.
- Do not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified.

**Water** - we'll 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, it's as though our old life is buried in the waters and we begin a 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.

**Candle** - Jesus is the Light of the World. You'll be given a candle at the end of the service as a reminder of the light which has come into your child's life. It's up to you as the parents, the child's Godparents and the church community to help your child reject the ways of darkness and follow a way of life that reflects goodness and light and shares this light with others.

### **The Role of Godparents**

Godparents make the same promises as the parents, on behalf of the child being baptised. Godparents promise to pray for and support the child and help the parents bring them up in the Christian faith. It is an important and responsible role. You should have at least three Godparents (normally two of the same sex as the child and one of the opposite sex). The Godparents need to have been baptised themselves, and ideally confirmed as well. There are more details about the role of Godparents in the form enclosed with this leaflet.

### **Thanksgiving Service**

You may wish to have a service of Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child, rather than a baptism. In this service, you thank God for the gift of your child, and the child is blessed. You do not make the same promises as in the Baptism service and a Thanksgiving can be held outside of the usual Sunday service times. If you choose to have a Thanksgiving, but at a later date decide that you would like to have your child baptised, we can arrange to do that for you as well.

### **What happens now?**

Please fill in the enclosed form and bring it along to the church service that you think might be most suitable for you and your child. The service details and worship styles are outlined on the back of this leaflet to give you some help in deciding. If you're at all unsure, please contact the church office and a member of the team will be happy to help you.

Speak to a member of the clergy after the service to arrange the first of three visits that will be made in preparation for the baptism. We'll talk through the meaning of baptism with you and the Christian faith and chat so we can make the service feel personal to you and answer any questions you might have. We look forward to seeing you!

**Holy Trinity, Dover Street, Sittingbourne**

**9am every Sunday:**

Holy Communion with common worship, liturgy and organ.

**10.45am every Sunday:**

An informal, contemporary style of service with a worship band and separate activity groups for children.

(Includes Holy Communion on the 2nd & 4th Sundays)

(Baptisms are available on the 1st & 3rd Sundays)

**St Bartholomew's, Sheppey Way, Bobbing**

**11am every Sunday:**

An informal, contemporary, all-age style of service with a worship group.

(Includes Holy Communion on the 3rd Sunday)

(Baptisms are available on the 2nd & 4th Sunday)

**St Michael's, High Street, Sittingbourne**

**10am every Sunday:**

Holy Communion with common worship, liturgy and organ.

(Baptisms are available on the 2nd & 4th Sundays)