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'YOUR CHILD'S CHRISTENING AT ST JOHN'S'

Congratulations! You are going to have your child baptized at a christening. That is just so exciting. It's exciting because you are going to have an amazing day with family and friends. It will probably involve a party, presents and new clothes, as well as a really special time in church. What's not to like? But what's really exciting is that when the Christening day is over, the real amazing journey is only just beginning.

The point is that a christening is not just an event or a special day – rather it's the beginning of a whole lifetime of discovering what it means to be loved by God and to share that love with others. When the **water** is poured on your child's head, they become part of the Christian family all over the world. When the **candle** is given, they take on the challenge of shining as a light that makes a difference to other people. When the **prayers** are said and the **promises** are made, you, the godparents, and everyone present at the service says they will help your child – and you – along this amazing journey.

As a vicar, I have baptized many babies and children. Sometimes there have been just a handful of family present, at other times, there are hundreds of guests. There have been silent wide-eyed children and loud crying babies. There have been lots of memorable moments – including baby who fell asleep as she was being baptized and the toddler who was sick – several times – just before he was to be baptized – I baptized him anyway!! But each one has been special – special to their family and friends, and special to God.

One of my most enjoyable moments is when I meet children and their families' months or even years later. I bump into them in the shop or at the school gate, or I see them at our church holiday club – the 'Smelly Yellow Welly Club' if you didn't know - or a Christingle service. I love to see them growing up, and I love to see them discovering the amazing reality of God's love for them as they learn more about the promises made when they were baptized all that time ago.

Life takes lots of twists and turns. Some things turn out well, some less so. We learn a lot along the way. We change a lot too. But we don't make the amazing journey of Christian faith alone. We do it with God's love all around us and God's people to be with us. **Enjoy the journey** with your child – on the high days and holidays, work days and home days, in the noise and in the stillness. Enjoy – and discover all that being baptized at a christening means.

PRACTICAL DETAILS

We want to do all we can to make the occasion as happy and memorable as possible. In order to guide you through what needs to happen, please read the following information:

Step 1 – make contact with the church. This can be done in one of two ways:

- Phone the church office tel 01423 565129. Office hours - Monday to Friday 9am - 12.30pm.
- Come to St John's for what we call our 'Surgery time.' This takes place on Thursday evenings between 6.30pm and 7.15pm – just turn up – no appointment needed.

When you make contact, you will be booked in to a Baptism Information Session (see step 2 below). Unfortunately we cannot give you a date for your child's baptism until you have attended one of these sessions.

NB if you have already been to one of these sessions with respect to an older child, you do not need to attend again – rather you can book a date for the christening service with the office.

Step 2 – Attend a Baptism information session – these are usually on the 1st Monday of the month at 7.30pm – they last no more than an hour and there will usually be several other parents also attending. The session aims to:

- help you look at what baptism/christening means
- help you look at whether you wish to have a Service of Baptism or a Service of Thanksgiving for your child (most people opt for baptism)
- discuss any practical questions you may have

We strongly encourage **both** parents to attend the Baptism Information Session because there will be times in the session when you will be asked to discuss things as couples. Therefore if only one of you can make it, we suggest you invite another adult – perhaps a godparent – to accompany you. We also encourage you to find babysitters for your child/children wherever possible to make it easier for you to engage with the session.

Step 3 - Booking in of baptism/thanksgiving date – this can be done by coming to the church office after you have attended the information session. You will need to complete an **application form** (available at the information session or from the office) with all the necessary details. On this form you will need to provide various details including names and contact details of the godparents so that we can send them a great card about being a godparent.

NB 1 for someone to be a godparent, it is a legal requirement that they need to have been baptised themselves – **please check** this is the case.

NB 2 This form will also ask for your consent for us to contact you about follow up events.

Step 4 - Home Visit from one of our clergy – this will generally be arranged in the month before the date you have chosen for the christening service. The purpose of this is to allow you to talk through any questions you may still have prior to service, to discuss in a more informal way what baptism is all about, and to get to know the person who will be conducting your child's christening service.

Step 5 - The Christening Service – these generally take place at St John's at 12.15pm on the 2nd Sunday of the month. It is likely there will be two other families sharing the service with you. It lasts for about 30 minutes. Afterwards you are welcome to use the church as a backdrop for any photos you might want to take.

Step 6 - Attendance at the following Sunday's service – one of the key aspects of baptism is that the newly baptised become members of the church family. Attendance at the service on the following Sunday (10am at St John's) allows the rest of this church family to welcome these new members – so please come along if you possibly can!

Extra information – the Church of England has a fantastic Christening webpage which we really recommend you visit - <https://churchofenglandchristenings.org/>

After the Christening

The party is over, the balloons are down and the outfit is packed away. But the amazing journey of faith continues. Here are some simple ideas to help as life settles down and your child begins to grow up

Praying: There are some great books on prayer for children – here are two examples - and there are some great tips for how to pray for and with your children on the Christenings website

<https://churchofenglandchristenings.org/after-a-christening/prayer/>



First Prayers
First Prayers at Bedtime

Format: Hardback - 48 pages
ISBN: 9780745962887
Published: 23 Mar 2012



First Prayers
First Prayers with Jesus

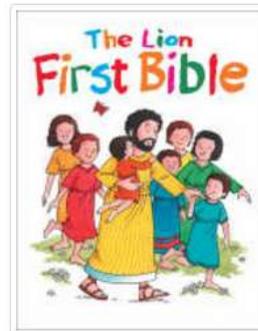
Format: Hardback - 48 pages
ISBN: 9780745962870
Published: 23 Mar 2012

Discovering the Bible: There are lots of ways to introduce a growing child to the Bible. These are just a few websites which have plenty of suggestions you could try over the years:

<http://godventure.co.uk/category/bible-activities/>

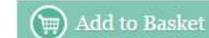
<http://www.faithinhomes.org.uk/tag/Bible+stories/>

And here is an example of a book you might want to think about buying



The Lion First Bible
Pat Alexander, Leon Baxter

Price: £9.99



ISBN: 9780745961033
Published: 22 Feb 2008
Format: Hardback
Dimensions: 480 pages: 150 x 190 mm

Recording your child's amazing journey

There will be lots of special moments as your child discovers more about their Christian journey. If you haven't done so already, why not put together a photo album or a scrap book about the christening. Looking at it together will help you all remember what a wonderful day it was for everyone and will be a precious keepsake for the future. Here are some ideas for some milestones to record in the first few months and years after the baptism:

- I was baptized at my christening on... remember the time and place
- My godparents are... include their names, photos and something about how they are part of your family's story
- My special gifts were... don't forget the candle you were given at the baptism!
- The first time we prayed together was... it might be from a special book or simply time together at the end of the day
- My first visit to church was... you might have photos from a toddler group, Messy Church or a nativity play
- When my godparents came to visit we... whatever you did, whether it was playing at home or a great day out, record the moment
- My first question about God was... wondering about God and asking questions is great
- My first Bible story was... add a drawing of your own to help you remember

There will be lots more to record on your amazing journey of faith.

These ideas have been borrowed from the church of England's Christening website, and it contains lots more suggestions – why not visit it yourself?! <https://churchofenglandchristenings.org/after-a-christening/>