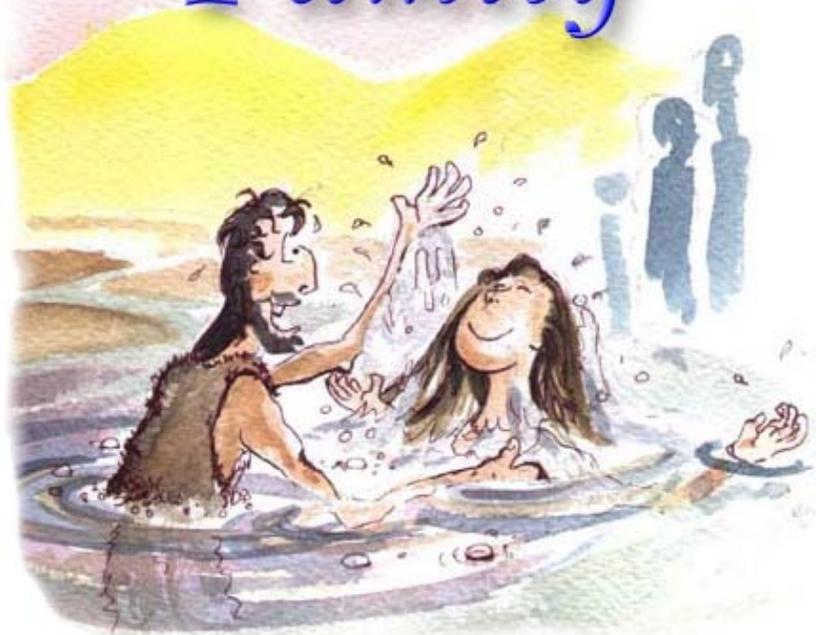

Baptism into God's Family



Presenting yourself or
your child for Baptism

Christian Baptism

*“Go therefore to all nations and make them my disciples;
baptise them in the name of the Father
and the Son and the Holy Spirit...”*

Matthew 28: 19

Baptism Arrangements for Children

When a new baby comes it can bring a lot of happiness and joy into an already happy family. It can also make you more aware of the wonder of God and his love for us. In the Church we are happy to share in this with you. I hope that this leaflet will help you understand the meaning of Christian Baptism. You will also find practical information. If, after reading it, you have further questions, then please contact me and I will be happy to discuss these with you.

Peter Johnston
Minister

A Celebration for God's Family

The celebration of baptism is an important event for you if you are coming to be baptised yourself. At an infant baptism it is an important event for your child, for parents and the Church family.

Baptism always takes place within a service of worship in the church (unless there are exceptional circumstances). It is important that baptism is seen as part of the life of the church. The promises you make as an adult coming to be baptised or as parents bringing your child are made before a church congregation who promise to support you, and your child. Because baptism is part of the church's life, *Private Baptisms* outside the church or outwith a normal Sunday service are not available.

Godparents

While in the Church of Scotland there is no 'official' role for godparents, we recognise the symbolic importance of godparents to many families and invite the godparents to come forward to be with the family during the baptism.

The Meaning of Baptism

Baptism is an outward sign of a spiritual reality. That sounds complicated! It just means that as we are baptised or as our child is baptised with water, we are celebrating God's love and goodness to us or to our child. Baptism speaks of what God does for us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. God offers his gracious love to us to make us new and we recognise that he does that with the symbol of baptism. It is also a sign of welcome into the Family of God (see page 7 for more details).



As the Church is the Family of God, the gift of baptism is open to all who believe that Jesus is Lord and to their children.

*“For the promise is to you and to your children
and to all that are far off,
everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.”*

Acts 2: 39

Baptism is not just a nice ceremony and excuse for a party, an insurance policy for the future, or a ‘Lucky Charm’! Neither is there anything magical about baptism.

Baptism is a sign of entry into the Church, and a sign that God takes us just as we are, whether we are old or young, and it challenges us to follow Jesus and become Christians.

Adults coming to baptism will be doing so as a result of their personal decision to follow Jesus. Children being baptised will still need to make that commitment in the future when they are old enough to decide themselves whether to commit their lives to Jesus. Sadly, some who are baptised as children choose to reject Jesus when they are older. That does not mean that their baptism was without meaning. God still loves those who reject him, though he is heartbroken at their decision.

Baptism is not something that should be sought by parents ‘just to keep the grandparents happy’, nor ‘because it is tradition and that is what has always happened in our family’. Baptism is a holy Sacrament of the

Church and should not be undertaken lightly. The promises you make as parent bringing your child, or coming yourself to be baptised, are made before God in Church.

At a child's baptism what promises do I make as a parent?

You are asked the following two questions which must be answered with sincerity, please think about the questions and answer carefully.

1. Do you confess your faith in God as your Creator and Father, in Jesus Christ as your Lord, and in the Holy Spirit as your guide and helper? *I do.*
2. Do you promise, with God's help, to teach your child the truths and duties of the Christian faith and to encourage *him* as *he* grows in the life and worship of the Church? *I do.*

The following question is then put to the entire congregation of St Andrew's Parish Church:

3. Do you, the representatives here of Christ's Church, welcome *your child* into the family of the Church and promise them your friendship, support and prayers? *We do.*

The promises you make at your child's baptism should be sincere or they are meaningless. These promises are to encourage you to make a commitment to your child and to Jesus that we pray will blossom into a full commitment to Jesus' Church. By making these promises you are committing yourselves not to *sending* your child to Church, but to *bring your child with you to Church*.

What if I am not ready to make these promises?

If you are not ready to make these promises it is better to wait until a time when you are ready (and we can help you find out more about the Christian faith).

If neither parent is baptised and do not wish to be then it would be more appropriate to leave baptism for a later time when you as a family are ready to make a commitment to Jesus. Anyone can be baptised at any age into the life of the church.

We would still like to celebrate the birth of your child and would be more than happy to thank God for your child and ask for God's blessing upon him/her during a Sunday service. If at a later date you are ready to

make the commitment to Jesus and your child that are contained in the promises above then it would be an excellent idea to seek baptism for your child and yourselves if you have not already been baptised.

What promises do adults make when they are baptised?

Before the baptism you are asked:

Do you, in the presence of this congregation, turn away from sin and ask for God's forgiveness; seeking a deepening faith in which you will honour God and love other people as yourself? *I do.*

After the baptism you are asked:

Do you promise, with God's help, to serve the Lord and continue to be a part of the family of the Church for the rest of your life? *I do.*

Eligibility

Baptism is offered to adults who accept the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and to children of Church members and to those who, although not full members, have shown that they wish to be actively involved in the life of the Church.

We will expect you to attend Church services regularly before the baptism. Obviously there would be no point in saying you would like to become involved in the Church if you subsequently find out that you are not happy here, or that the style of service does not suit you.

If neither parent is a member of the Church we will also encourage one, and preferably both, parents to take part in the next series of *Discovering Church Membership* which are held for those thinking about what it means to be a Christian and to be a part of God's Family.

If you do not live in the parish of St Andrew's and are not members we would ask you to first contact your local parish Church.

Please remember that baptism is not a right, it is a privilege, and it is up to parents to enable the Church to baptise. The minister and Kirk Session want to help you as much as we can, but where there is no connection to the church and no desire for such a connection the Kirk Session and minister have the right to decline to baptise a child. This is something we would rarely do, because we want to build a connection to you and your family, but we need you to work to build such a connection too.

Some Practical Details

At the Service

Before the service starts we ask you as a family to meet with the minister in the vestry. You will be shown to your seats at the front of the church for the start of the service.

If bringing your child to be baptised we encourage you to stay with your child for the rest of the service, but if for some reason you need to leave then one parent or godparent should go to the Sunday Funday Club or Crèche. However, remember that you are far more aware of the noise your child is making than anyone else!



Belonging to God's Church Family

Baptism marks the beginning of a new family for you or your child. We hope that you and your family will always feel welcome at St Andrew's and will become fully involved in all the activities in due course, for children that includes the Sunday Funday Club and many other activities.

Guests

You are encouraged to invite family and friends to come and share in worship on this special occasion. They can be assured of a warm welcome and if they make themselves known to those welcoming them at the door will be shown to a seat near the rest of your family and friends.

Photographs

We ask that **NO** photographs be taken during the actual service. However, once the service is over you are welcome to come forward again to take photos at the front of the church.

A video of the baptism may be recorded from a fixed position.

The Meaning of Baptism 2

Baptism is usually the first Sacrament people experience in church (the other being Holy Communion). It is the way people are introduced and welcomed into a Christian church family. In the Church of Scotland and many other churches, e.g. Church of England or Roman Catholic church, infant baptism (baptising babies) has been the tradition; some Christians however argue that baptism makes more sense if a person is baptised when he or she is old enough to say themselves that they believe in Jesus, and in churches such as the Baptist Church only adults are baptised.

Baptism started off as a Jewish practice, but it is clear that the practise of immersing in water or being sprinkled with water soon became the recognised way of symbolising entry to the Christian church family.

What does it mean?

The symbol of water can be used to describe different things:

- **Cleansing:** Water cleanses, so baptism is seen as a way to make someone clean and pure in body and spirit. It signified refreshing, and newness of life. So it is an opportunity to renounce past bad things in life and take on the new challenge to become a disciple of Christ.
- **Participation:** We are participating in something that Jesus did himself (Mark 1: 9). But the church has also seen baptism as a time when we share in Jesus' death and resurrection: we are 'drowned' and then 'raised up from the water'. This makes more sense when baptism is by full immersion (e.g., in a river). The idea of new life, and new beginnings is important.
- **Gift of the Holy Spirit:** From early on (Acts 8: 14-25) the Holy Spirit was closely associated with baptism, bringing new light into the life of the baptised person.
- **Welcoming:** In baptism, using the outward symbol of water, we are shown that a person belongs to God. It is the way for the church family to welcome a new member into their company. It is not an end in itself, it is just a symbol, but it should only be done once as God's welcome need only be marked once.

The Details of the Baptism

The Baptism of

will take place on

Sunday _____ at _____

Please make sure you are at St Andrew's no later than 15 minutes before the start of the service.

If you would like the Birth Certificate of your child signed, then please bring it with you on the day of the baptism. This will be signed by the minister after the service.

If you have any further questions then please contact the minister:

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