

Baptism

What is baptism?

Baptism is an opportunity for a family to gather to celebrate and thank God for the new life which He has given.

It is a time when we remember that, as well as being a member of a human family, your baby is a part of God's family too, the family of the church. In baptism your child is beginning their personal journey of faith, a journey shared by other members of the church.

It is one of the Church's 'sacraments', which means it is an outward and visible sign of God's love.

It is also a reminder that we all need to turn away from the darkness of evil and make a new start with God.

Jesus began his ministry in the River Jordan when he was baptised. At this point he understood that God was his Father, and through his baptism he received the presence of God's power and love in the Holy Spirit. After his death on Good Friday and resurrection on Easter Day, Jesus commanded his followers to make new disciples and baptise them too. This is what happens to your child through their baptism.

Who do I need to talk to about getting my baby baptised?

Our Rector, Steve Short, will be pleased to discuss all the arrangements with you. You can contact him through the Parish Office (call 01332 862153 or email melbourneparishchurch@gmail.com).

Can my baby be christened at the Parish Church?

Melbourne Parish Church has an 'open' baptism policy, which means we do not like to say no! However, if you live outside the parish boundary of Melbourne, you are asked as a matter of courtesy to contact your local vicar or rector to inform them of your child's baptism taking place at this parish church.

Ideally, every baptism would take place within a person's local parish church, thereby allowing a relationship to grow. However, it is recognised that we live in an era of increased mobility and choice and we welcome every opportunity to build a relationship through the contacts made with us. We would ask though, that when a baptism has been conducted at Melbourne, you would consider this as your parish church.

Should it be up to my child to make the decision?

Nobody should want to impose his or her will on others. However, a parent has to make decisions quite early on that affect their child's well-being and development. These choices are made in love. A child needs milk for their nourishment until they are old enough, so why not also support their spiritual nourishment and teach them about the love of God from an early age?

When they are old enough there is the opportunity for a person to choose for themselves whether they would like to understand more about the Christian faith and make an adult affirmation of faith at a Confirmation Service.

Jesus told his disciples to baptise people who wanted to become Christians and join the church. Baptism is not like an insurance policy, which you take out to make sure that your baby goes to heaven; God loves your child just as much now as after the baptism service.

Part of the baptism service is the promise of the Christian community around you to support you in the bringing up of your child to know God's love and presence within their lives. This affirms that you are not on your own, and that everyone is on a journey of discovery and understanding, whether they have been recently baptised, or are a bit further along the road.

What if the parents are not baptised?

A person is never too old to be baptised, and if you are an adult who was not baptised as a child then we hope that baptism may be something which you would like to consider for yourself. Parents and godparents will be making declarations on behalf of a child, and therefore it is very

important that these declarations can be made confidently and with a commitment to fulfil them.

How do we choose the godparents?

You will need to consider who you want to have as godparents. It is strongly recommended that they have been baptised, so that they are able to make the baptism promises confidently and with the full awareness of the commitments they are making. Being asked to be a godparent is always a real privilege and shows that you have a special place in the family, but there are expectations and responsibilities too. You are asked to promise that you will love and encourage the child in the Christian faith by prayer, example and teaching. Parents should not feel pressurised to choose the wrong people but try to find people who can make the promises and mean them. There is no right or wrong number of godparents - the minimum is one godmother and one godfather.

What promises will I have to make?

During the baptism service everyone in the congregation promises you and your child that they will support and pray for you and provide facilities for your child's Christian upbringing - usually through Junior Church and other organisations.

There are then some questions about the way you intend to live your life. Parents and godparents make the promises for themselves and also for the child. These promises apply to their own lives and are also made on behalf of the children for whom they will be responsible. Here are the **questions** and *answers* with a short explanation:

Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God?

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.

I am sorry about the past and I know that I am accountable to God for my actions and thoughts. I can never be perfect but as I admit what is wrong, he forgives and accepts me.

I know that I sometimes have to make choices between good and evil. I want to set the evil behind me and from now on I will always try to choose the good.

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.

I want to change direction. I accept that my life is not totally my own. I acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and I will try to follow his teaching and his guidance for my life day by day.

The parents and godparents will be asked, together with the whole congregation, to declare their own Christian faith in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. During the declarations made on behalf of a child being baptised, parents and godparents will affirm their belief in God the Father who made the world; in Jesus Christ whose death on the cross has brought humanity life, and in God's Holy Spirit who gives life to the people of God.

What does the Sign of the Cross in the service mean?

The minister will make the sign of the cross on the forehead of the child. This is a sign to remind us of how Christ died for each one of us on the cross. As Christ died for us so we are now signed with the cross - the badge of our faith - to remind us that we must not be ashamed to profess our faith and fight against all that is evil.

What are the font and the water used for?

Baptism is a sign of entering the Church and traditionally the font which holds the water was placed near the main door of the church as a sign that we become a member of God's family when we pass through the waters of baptism.

The water used in baptism is a sign of cleansing and also an important sign of life. Water symbolises how we are all washed clean by God and forgiven and accepted by him. As we cannot live without water so this sign reminds us that we also need the cleansing and renewing presence of God in our lives. The water is blessed, signifying the living presence of God working through it.

You will be asked what name(s) you have chosen for your child. The minister takes the child and says: 'N, I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit', pouring water three times over your child's forehead as this is said. We answer at the end: 'Amen'.

What happens at the end of the baptism?

After the baptism the congregation welcomes the newly baptised into the family of God - both the local Christian community and the Church of God across the world. It has become customary to acknowledge this with applause!

And in the weeks, months and years after the service we hope to see you and your family again. We know that it is not easy sometimes bringing a young family to church but we hope that you will feel that the effort is rewarded when you do come. Every parent wants the very best for their child in terms of happiness and personal fulfilment. Included in this must be the desire for a child to learn about God and what it means to know and love him. The Christian faith offers everyone the opportunity to root and ground their life in God, discovering our gifts, and finding happiness and a sense of belonging within God's family.

Everyone involved in the ministry of Melbourne Parish Church will do all that they can to welcome and support you during and after the service.

What if my baby starts crying?

It was once thought good for a baby to cry at baptism because it was a sign of the devil leaving their soul. In fact, people went to some lengths to make sure that they did cry! Thankfully those days have gone. It is important that you relax and enjoy the service and please don't worry if your child becomes restless, or if you need to feed, change or walk about!

What does it cost?

There is no charge for a baptism service. During the service a collection will be taken to receive any donation you wish to make towards the continuing work of the church. Completed yellow Gift Aid envelopes, if you pay tax, would enable the church to reclaim tax at no extra cost to you.