

## Thanksgiving and Baptism Services

Thank you for contacting St Martins about having a service for your child.



Children are a blessing from God and at St Martins we want to celebrate and join with you in asking God to bless them as they grow.

We also know that at times it can be a bit daunting being a parent, and we want to ask God to help us and give us wisdom as we raise our children.

As a church we offer two different services for families who regularly worship at St Martins or live in the Parish, these are Thanksgiving and Baptism (Christening) They are both special, but also different.

Both take place in our morning service which is at 10.30 am on the last Sunday of the Month. Both have a limit of 50 guests including children.

### Thanksgiving Services *(sometimes known as a 'Blessing')*.

This is a very special service, and we recommend families who don't regularly attend worship at St Martins or another congregation to consider this option.

In this service we give thanks for the gift of your child, and we ask God to bless and protect them.

As parents you make promises to raise them with the help of God. You can have sponsors (like God parents) who will also make a promise, that with God's help, they will support you and your child as they grow.

Your guests and family can also make a promise to support you and your child.

We anoint your child with special oil and pray a blessing on them, asking God to be with them, to guide them, help and protect them.

Your child will also receive a personalised certificate of blessing that they can keep.



More and more parents are choosing Thanksgiving as it is a lovely service, but it also allows for your child decide for themselves if they wish to identify as a Christian when they are older.

## What do I need to do next?

Before making a final decision about what kind of service you would like, and before we look at dates, you do need to come to a service at the church. There are several services throughout the week, but the best service to attend is our Sunday morning Celebration at 10.30. This enable you so see what our services are like and how we do things. Please let us know you are coming, preferably by email, so we can look out for you.

Once you have visited, we will arrange a time to have a follow-up chat with you about your choice of service. This can take about 30 minutes depending on your questions. We can do this at your home, by Zoom, is at this point that we talk about possible dates. If both parents are to be involved in the service, we would like to be able to speak with both parents at this meeting.

We would encourage you to start to come to church regularly before the date of the service, and we would need to see you (or both parents if they are involved in the service) at least 6 Sundays before the Thanksgiving.

About 2 weeks before the planned date we meet with you, and your Sponsors to go through the service and help you to be fully prepared. This can take about an hour and can be done at your home or on Zoom.

## Baptism Services *(sometimes known as a Christening)*



Baptism or Christening is the other type of service held at the church. This is a very important service in someone's life and is when a person publicly declares that they are choosing to follow Christ and be counted as a committed follower of Jesus and become a regular worshipper and member of their local church.

You can have your children baptised into your faith and be counted through your commitment to Christ as a member of the church, until they are old enough to

decide for themselves. When this happens, they then go to a confirmation service with one of the local Bishops

As part of the baptism service both you and your child's Godparents answer questions about what you believe and make clear statements about your Christian faith. The promises you will be making are in many ways bigger than the vows you take at a wedding.

A key part of your vows is that you will be asked the following questions and you will need to reply with the words in Bold

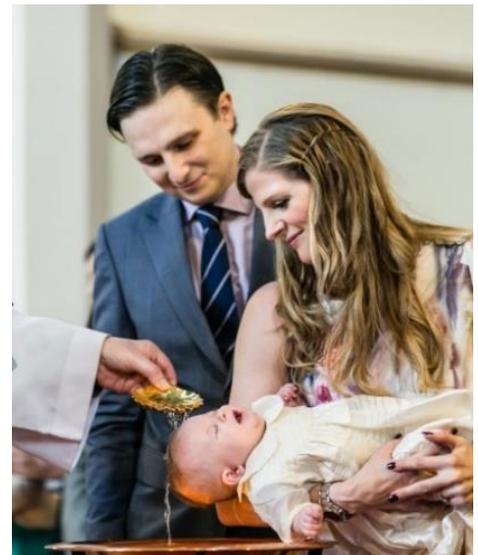
- Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God? **I reject them**
- Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil? **I renounce them**
- Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour? **I repent of them**
- Do you turn to Christ? **I Turn to Christ**
- Do you submit to Christ as Lord? **I submit to Christ**
- Do you come to Christ, the way, the truth, and the life? **I come to Christ**

You also promise to pray for your child and '*draw them by your example into the community of faith and walk with him in the way of Christ*', and to help them '*take their place within the life and worship of Christ's Church*'. This means teaching about Jesus and helping them to follow him as the central part of their lives.

To this you will teach them to pray, helping them to learn to love reading the Bible and helping them to become a regular part of our worshipping community.

Water is then poured over your child's head as a sign of their sins being washed away and that they now follow Christ Jesus.

Your family and guests are asked to make a promise, together with the whole of the church, to pray for you and to help you as you raise your child as part of the church.



## What do I need to do next?

If you are not already a regular worshipper at St Martins, before making a final decision about what kind of service you would like, and before we look at dates, you do need to come to a service at the church.

There are several services throughout the week, but the best service to attend is our Sunday morning Celebration at 10.30. This enables you so see what our services are

like and how we do things. Please let us know you are coming, preferably by email, so we can look out for you.

Once you have visited, we will arrange a time to have a follow-up chat with you to talk about where you are in your own journey of faith and to look at the different services and which one would be right for you. This can take about 45 minutes depending on your questions. We can do this at your home, by Zoom, is at this point that we talk about possible dates. If both parents are to be involved in the service, we would have to be able to speak with both parents at this meeting.

If you are not already a regular worshipper at St Martins to help you understand the commitment you will be making and to help your child become a regular worshipper at Church you, or both parents if they are to be involved in the service, would need too-

- Commit to come to church at least 2 times per month until the date of the Baptism service This is for you to strengthen and renew your own faith and enable you to start a new pattern of how you spend family time on a Sunday.
- We also ask you to attend a 6 week 'Start Course' which is great way to explore faith. These are often run on Zoom. You can see a taster here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v6tzErlZbxQ> .
- Then usually about 2 weeks before the planned date we meet with you, and your Sponsors to go through the service and help you to be fully prepared. This can take about an hour and can be done at your home or on Zoom.

**If you are not a regular worshiper at St Martins and don't live in the Parish, and don't have a strong family connection, we ask you talk to the Vicar of your local church first. If after this, you still wish to have a baptism at St Martins we ask that you create a 'worshipping connection' where your family would attend worship at least three times a month for a minimum of 6 months as well as attend the 'Start Course'.**

# Commonly asked questions about Baptism

## **Is there a cost?**

Thanksgivings and Baptisms are free. If you can make a donation to the life of the church this can be done through the offering plate at the back of church or by scanning the QR code on your phone and would be very much appreciated.

## **Can anyone be Baptised at St Martins?**

If you regularly worship at St Martins, live in the Parish, or have a strong family connection to the church, (i.e., were married here or Parents attend,) you can be Baptised at the church following a time of preparation.

If you don't live in the Parish, and don't have a strong family connection, we ask you talk to the Vicar of your local church first. If after this, you still wish to have a baptism at St Martins we ask that you create a 'worshipping connection' where your family would attend worship at least twice a month for 6 months.

## **Can we have a baptism at short notice?**

It is possible to carry out a Baptism more quickly or outside of a main service under special circumstances, i.e., if your child, or a close family member is extremely ill, or one of the parents is going on overseas military deployment.

## **Can we have a private Baptism Service?**

Baptisms take place during the 10.30 Sunday service so that the whole congregation can offer a warm welcome to you and your family, as you are making a promise for your child to join the church.

If however your child is extremely ill, we can carry out a Baptism anywhere and anytime, including in Hospital. Once they have recovered, we would invite you to come to church for a public service.

## **Do both parents need to be involved in the coming to church and preparation?**

Sometimes it is only one parent who will be bringing the child for Baptism and making the promise for their child to be raised as a believing Christian and counted as a member of the church under their faith. In this case it is ok for only one parent to attend the services and preparation.

If both parents are going to be making the vows, then both parents will need to attend both the services and preparation session.

## **I would like my child Baptised, but the other parent does not agree. Can it still happen?**

Under the UK law, both parents with parental responsibility must agree to your child being baptised, but only one parent can be at the baptism and make the promises. If this may cause a problem, please talk to us.

### **What happens if we don't complete the preparation and come to the services?**

In Baptism you are asking your child to be identified through your faith as a Christian and you are making a commitment to raise your child as a committed part of the church. If you don't feel able to attend church for at least the required time it might be good to think if you can meaningfully make the promises that you will be saying in the Baptism service. We understand that with some parents shift work patterns this can be difficult, if this is the case, please talk to us.

### **Can anyone be a Godparent?**

Godparents are important people at a christening. They will make some big promises in church to support their godchild in their Christian faith for a lifetime.

For this reason, a godparent must be a baptized Christian themselves and ideally confirmed too. They must be mature enough to understand the lifelong commitment and responsibility of the promises they are making.

### **Is there a minimum age for someone to be a Godparent?**

There is no minimum age for godparents, but the chosen person must be mature enough to understand the lifelong commitment and responsibility they are taking on.

If you are thinking of asking a person who is under 18 to be a godparent, first talk to one of the Clergy who will be taking the service. You will be able to talk together about whether this is the right decision, both for your child and for the young godparent.