

## *sponsors*

You can see that choosing baptism is really an adult act. But the church has always baptised infants and children on the basis of the parents' and sponsors' faith. Your child will need the witness of the community of faith, the church. Your child will also need to witness your own faith, in much the same way as your child needs to witness your commitment to the values you espouse, actually put into practice. At the baptism you will be asked to declare your own faith. Now is the time to consider how you are going to support your child's faith journey, after the day of baptism.

You will need to consider Sponsors (Godparents) for your child. Parents are the primary sponsors of any child who is baptised, since it is in the child's home that the primary care and growth take place, physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual.

But it is both wise and customary to choose others to assist you with the task of encouraging your child to grow in the life of faith. They are helpful reminders that faith is not an individual matter, rather a sharing in the community of Christ. It is best to avoid making this simply a matter of honouring a particular friend or family member. Choose sponsors who will take an active interest in the spiritual development of your child.

## *what next?*

Your child needs to be connected to a community of faith. You are welcome to join us for worship: **Sundays 10am**. Ask questions. Feel free to speak with one of us. Consider how you will encourage your child in the life of faith after the baptism. The parish is here to help in that. We offer to you our prayers that God's gift of new life in your child may be a great blessing to you.

## *want to know more?*

If you would like to discuss baptism for your child, or yourself, please feel free to contact us:

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## *a prayer for your child*

*Christ our Lover,  
We thank you for the miracle of new life,  
for this child of yours and ours;  
keep us close to you,  
a part of your life,  
and help us to grow in love together,  
that we may help our child to know you.  
Amen.*

April 2014

# BAPTISM OF INFANTS



*st john's*  
*camberwell*

## *new life*

We are delighted that you want to have your child baptised, and look forward to sharing this new phase of your life with you.

You have experienced the miracle of a birth in your family, and have marvelled at the new life that has burst forth from the womb. Already you know that this new life is utterly remarkable. The most modern scientific explanations somehow seem quite inadequate as you gaze at this little person.

Your child is a gift to the world of your love for each other, freely given, and expectant with hope and possibility. You are co-creators with the Life-Giver in the making of the new creation. As God has loved you, so you are able to love each other and to be truly creative in your loving.

This miraculous little bundle of joy will also stretch your capacities to the limit. You will have already grown tremendously, and there will be plenty more to come!

All this creativity and growth happens not in isolation but in community - in the community of your family; in the community of society; in the community of the church. Our lives are always mysteriously joined with the lives of others; physically, emotionally and spiritually. Baptism is by definition, therefore, a communal event.



## *what is baptism?*

Baptism is, like life itself, neither a possession nor a thing to be counted or 'achieved'. You cannot 'earn' baptism, you can only desire it. It is not a certificate or a day, special though those things are. Baptism is not 'fire insurance' to appease an angry god. Baptism is a gift, freely given by the Giving God, through the agency of the church.

Baptism has been practised by the church from its earliest days, as a sign of new life in Jesus Christ. In this new life all people are joined as one, since we are not baptised into the Anglican church, but into Christ's Church, the One, holy, catholic and apostolic church, as we say in the Creed.

Baptism is entering the story of this community called church. All communities, right down to the smallest community - the family - tell stories. Stories about who they are, where they have come from, what they stand for, what's important, and where they are going. The church's special collection of stories is the Bible.

Baptism gathers together many of the great Bible stories and themes. It reminds us of the creative and redemptive work of God; in Creation, overcoming the waters of chaos;<sup>1</sup> in liberation of the Jewish people from bondage in Egypt parting the waters of the Red Sea;<sup>2</sup> in empowering Jesus with God's Holy Spirit at his baptism, standing in the waters of the Jordan;<sup>3</sup> in Jesus' overcoming of death and sin in his crucifixion and resurrection.<sup>4</sup>



## *baptismal life*

These are but some of the great stories of the Christian community. You can find them in any Bible. (You might like to read them, and you will find the references noted at left.) But baptism is more than just old stories being re-told again and again by those with faulty memories!

Those who are baptised participate in Christ's dying and rising. This happens by their public vows, by the pouring of water and marking in oil with the Sign of the cross, the sign of Christ, by receiving the Easter light. Baptism is for a purpose. Baptism is both a promise and a desire to Walk in the faith of Christ... to shine with the light of Christ. Baptism initiates a life-long desire to seek God and to know God, and God's loving purpose for each one of us. This means that baptism is never finished, it is not 'done' once the priest has said the blessing and the cake has been cut.

Rather, baptism initiates us into eucharistic life – eucharist is from the Greek word which means 'thanksgiving'. In the weekly eucharist our personal story and the story of the whole people of faith meet. In the eucharistic action we come to express, little-by-little, week-by-week, that hope-filled dying and rising promised in baptism.

<sup>1</sup> Genesis chapter 1

<sup>2</sup> Exodus chapter 14

<sup>3</sup> Mark chapter 1, verses 9-13

<sup>4</sup> Luke chapter 24, verses 13-32