

Baptism (aka christening) or Blessing?

Below is a comparison of the two kinds of special services we offer to celebrate, pray for and welcome babies and infants. If you have any questions after reading this information, please chat with us. You can contact us at: Office@stmnewark.org or on 01636 706473

	Blessing	Christening (aka Baptism)
An ancient church tradition	yes	yes
A service in church	yes	yes
Timing	Flexible	During a Sunday service
What elements are used	Child is anointed with Holy oil	Child is sprinkled with Holy water
Requirements	Parents may choose sponsors who are supporting friends.	Three Godparents are needed, who are baptised and confirmed (requirement for confirmation can be waived if Godparents regularly attend a church)
Coming to church	No need to come to church beforehand, although you're welcome to do so	Need to have come to church a number of times before baptism can be booked
Do the parents need to be Christians?	no	Yes - as do the godparents
Is it a naming ceremony?	Yes	No
What promises are made?	Friends commit to helping the parents bring up the child.	Parents and Godparents promise to pray for the child and help them to become followers of Jesus
Does it make them a Christian?	No. But part of the service involves praying that they might become one in future.	No. Baptism on its own does not make someone a Christian if they don't choose to follow Jesus for themselves.
Will they be welcome in church when they are older?	Yes, of course - they are completely welcome now!	

An anointing is a great introduction to church. If you would like a special and traditional service to celebrate and pray for your child, and to express your hopes for them as they grow older, then it's a great option for you. Part of the service expresses a hope that they might choose to follow Christ and be baptised themselves one day.

Baptism is also a great celebration. During the service the parents and godparents express their own Christian faith, and promise to help the child to grow up following Jesus Christ. Some questions for parents and godparents considering Christening (baptism) for their children are:

1. Do you believe that God created the universe; Jesus died and rose again to save the world; God lives in your heart by the Holy Spirit? Yes / No / don't know
2. Do you want to follow Jesus' example and teaching in your life? Yes / No / don't know
3. Do you talk to God regularly? Do you pray for this child? Yes / No
4. Are you connected to a local church, where you feel at home, are making friends, and are learning about and worshipping Jesus? Yes / No
5. Do you intend to bring your child up so that they will also say yes to all of the questions above? Yes / No

If you answered yes to all of the above questions, then you are ready to have your child baptised. If you answered no to any of them, then we'd love you to come and find out more about Jesus, who he was, and the amazing difference he makes in people's lives today. You and your children are very welcome at any of our services - we'd love to get to know you, even if you don't feel very familiar with Christian worship. If you did say no though, anointing is the service that's right for your baby at this point. Baptism is always open to you in the future, when you are ready.

Some myths about baptism:

- If a baby dies without being baptised then it will go to hell.

No. unbaptised babies don't automatically go to hell.

- If parents die, then godparents take responsibility for the children

No. Being a godparent through baptism doesn't mean you automatically get guardianship of children when the parents die. If you want to say who will look after your children when you die, then this needs to be written into your will.

- Baptism makes someone a Christian

No. Loving and following Jesus along with other Christians makes someone a Christian. Baptism is a kind of powerful symbol which tells us that God chooses us, and that we intend to choose him, but it doesn't work without active faith. It's similar to signing a contract to play for a football team: a contract doesn't turn you into a football player if you don't get on the pitch and play.