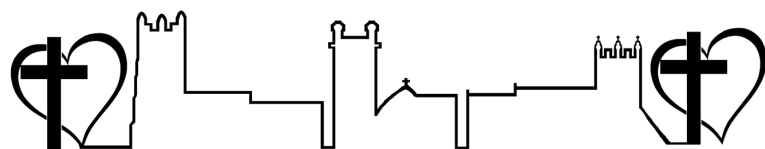


St Mary the Virgin, Shawbury
St Bartholomew's, Moreton Corbet
St Andrew's, Stanton upon Hine Heath



Baptism

A guide to some of the most frequently asked questions and their answers

You've probably received this leaflet because you've asked about having your child christened. If so, we're delighted to hear that you're interested in helping them to take the first steps on a lifelong journey of faith.

This guide is a helpful starting point for you. Some of the information has been taken from the Church of England's own website about christenings (which you can find at churchofenglandchristenings.org), but other details are specific to our three churches.

What is baptism?

Baptism, sometimes called Christening, is a specifically Christian "rite of initiation". In other words, through our baptism we receive God's blessing and are welcomed into the world-wide family of God's Church, onto a life-long journey of faith, commitment and loving relationship; and that is what we celebrate during the service.

Baptism is the first step of faith – a response to God's love, marking the beginning of a journey with God that continues for the rest of our lives.

Baptism is a sign, first of all, of God's love and commitment to his people. The Bible teaches that, despite our rejection of God, God still loves us. He's sent his son Jesus into the world to be our Saviour, and longs to bring his life and healing to every single person.

Baptism is also a sign of our commitment to God. In the service we declare that we turn to Christ - an indication that we are willing to centre our lives on Jesus, following his teaching and example.

Bringing a child for baptism therefore represents a definite commitment to Christ and to the local church. We believe that these promises should not be made lightly, and although we want to encourage people to be baptised, we want to make sure that parents and Godparents understand

If you choose to have your child baptised at one of our churches, we'll spend more time explaining this during preparation for the big day.

Can I have my child baptised at this church?

If the church you've selected is your local church (that is, you live within the parish), you are entitled to have a baptism there. For our three churches, we also recognise that there may be historic connections to the parish and we will usually be able to agree to your request.



Either way, you will be expected to attend a preparation session before we agree to book your baptism. We also strongly recommend that you join us for a few services before the baptism. After all, if you were joining a new club or being welcomed into a family (through marriage, for example), it would be normal to want to meet people before committing yourself - we think the same is true for joining God's family!

Do I have to be baptised before my child can be baptised?

No, there is no rule against this. However, as a parent, you will have to make certain promises during the baptism ceremony. These include promising to raise your child in the Christian faith and walking with them on their journey with God. It seems a bit strange for parents to make promises on behalf of their child when they have not made them for themselves first!

If you're not baptised, but you think it's a good idea for your child, we'd love to help you consider whether it might be right for you too.

What about godparents? Do they have to be baptised?

Godparents are really important. Choosing them is one of the biggest decisions you will make. Here are some things to consider.

- Godparents will be people who'll be in touch with your family for many years to come. They may be relatives or friends of the family.
- They'll be people who you know you can trust and who'll be there for your child to talk about the bigger questions in life; questions about faith, hope and love.
- They should feel ready to make some big promises about faith for your child in church – we'll talk about that with you at the preparation session.
- Three godparents is the norm (usually two of the same sex and at least one of the opposite sex to your child). There is no official maximum number of godparents but if you want more than three, we may ask for a donation to cover the cost of additional certificates.
- Because of the very special role they have in supporting your child's faith journey, godparents must be baptised themselves. Ideally they should be confirmed too, but we are prepared to be flexible on this point.
- Parents can be godparents to their own child, subject to the point above about being baptised themselves.
- If you're thinking about asking someone who is under 18 to be a godparent, please talk to us first. There's no minimum age for godparents, but they must be mature enough to understand the responsibilities they're taking on; your vicar can help you decide if this is the right choice for your child and the young godparent.

If you have someone in mind that you'd very much like to be a godparent but they are not yet baptised, it may be possible for them to be baptised during the service too. However, this would require additional preparation time for that person, so it might affect how soon your baptism can be.

What if we're not married?

We don't refuse applications for baptism from unmarried parents. However, Christian teaching is clear that marriage the best environment for bringing up children. There is a real inconsistency in making the public declaration of Christian faith in baptism, yet being unwilling to live by the clear teaching of the Bible in these important matters.

We would strongly encourage any unmarried couples to consider marriage - both for your own security and for your children's well-being. This step, we believe, will be far more significant to your children than a baptism.

When can we have our baptism?

Baptisms at our three churches take place within the main Sunday services. This is because baptism is the way in which a person formally becomes a member of the Christian church, so the church family is there to welcome them.



Our vicar, Reverend Rich Cresswell, has responsibility for all three churches in our benefice, so he may not be able to agree to your preferred date.

Some Sundays become unavailable due to special events (such as Remembrance Sunday or Harvest Festivals) but, as a basic rule, you can expect to be offered a date within the following options:

St Mary's, Shawbury:	11am on the 1st or 3rd Sundays of the month.
St Bartholomew's, Moreton Corbet:	9:30am on the 3rd Sunday of the month.
St Andrew's, Stanton:	9:30am on the 2nd or 4th Sunday of the month

In the past, families have booked a baptism date then failed to attend preparation, which means we've had no choice but to put them in the embarrassing position of having to send out cancellations to all their invited guests. Therefore, please note that no discussion over dates will be offered until after the preparation session has taken place.

How much does a baptism cost?

The Church of England does not charge for baptisms. There will be a collection at the service, to support the work of the church, but how much you give is at your discretion.

I'm a single parent – why have you asked for a second signature on the application form?

Churches are expected, by law, to gain consent for baptism. Where parents have separated, we are required to check who has parental rights over the child and gain consent from all parties. If you have sole parental responsibility for your child (from a legal point of view), you will be expected to prove this.

Is there an alternative to baptism?

Yes there is! We know that many people would like some kind of service in church to say "thank you" to God for their child, with family and friends present, but without having to make promises or declare a personal commitment to the Christian faith. The Thanksgiving service (see below) provides for just this need, and we would be very happy to explain more about how this works if you're interested.

The Service of *Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child* offers you, your family and friends an opportunity to give thanks for the birth (or adoption) of a child and to join together to celebrate and pray for family life. We offer this service to everyone who asks as an expression of God's unconditional love for you and your child. You don't have to say anything about what you believe; you don't have to promise anything; this service is about thanksgiving and celebration.

This service also enables you to recognise the role of friends in your child's life and for them to stand at the front of church with you as Supporting Friends. It doesn't have to be part of the main Sunday service and it doesn't stop you or your child from opting to have a baptism at a later stage.

How do we proceed?

If you'd like to proceed with a baptism for your child, the next stage is to fill out an application form and return it to us. Once you've done that, we'll be in contact to book a preparation session.

If you think you'd rather consider a thanksgiving, or you have further questions, please contact our vicar:



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