

## **The Baptism and Blessing of children Banff & King Edward Parish Churches**



We are delighted you are thinking of asking to have your child baptised, and offer you this introductory leaflet. It tries to explain baptism and answer some of the questions you may have.

The minister, Rev David Locke, will be happy to arrange a meeting with you to discuss the baptism and explain it further. Please speak to him after any of the Sunday services or call him on 01261 812107.

Meanwhile, we hope you will feel welcome to come and join us for worship any Sunday. If you do not live in the Banff and King Edward Parishes, you might wish to contact the minister in the area where you live.

## WHAT IS BAPTISM?

We can look at baptism in different ways:

### Baptism is a Celebration

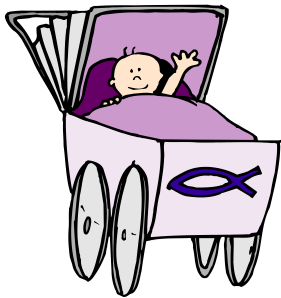
Many see it as a way to celebrate the birth of their child by saying 'thank-you' to God for his wonderful gift of a son or a daughter. And where better than before God, the force of goodness in the world, in God's house where people gather regularly to celebrate, and surrounded by people who seek to welcome others into God's family?



As a congregation we would be delighted to share this celebration with you, your family and friends.

### Baptism is a Sign

But there is a deeper meaning to baptism. The church calls it a sacrament, that is a special sign which Jesus first initiated. Signs are very useful - they tell us what direction we should go in, and guide us about dangers or difficulties ahead. In the Bible, baptism is a 'sign of the Gospel of Jesus'. The word Gospel simply means 'Good News', and baptism is a sign that through Jesus, God will show His welcome and love to your child.



When we look at the TV or the newspapers, they are often full of bad news! They tell us of the sad things that people get up to and all the problems there are in the world. But in the Christian Gospel, we read that God still loves this world of ours—He even sent his

Son to live in it and bring His goodness to all people, and 'save' us from the effects of sin.

For we want your child to know that the Church is not closing their doors against any child: all children, baptised or not, are welcome at the Sunday Club, or Sunday School, Boys Brigade, Guides, High Street Gang, Family Services, Choirs and Coffee n Crèche. Nor is there any doubt about God's love for your child: Jesus welcomed all children. Baptism is not a magic spell that separates the loved from the unloved.



Rather we believe that through baptism, your child is especially welcomed and started on his or her way in life. By being welcomed into the Church community, the child can grow to know more year by year of God: His help, His love, His forgiveness, His guidance, His strength, if parents wish this to happen.

**The Apostles' Creed:** is one of the oldest agreed statement of belief by the Christian church, accepted by both Roman Catholic and protestant churches together.

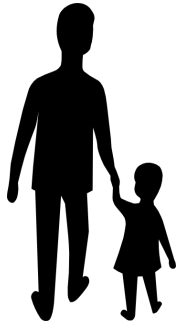
*I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; He descended to the dead. On the third day, he rose again;*

*He ascended into heaven. He is seated at the right hand of the Father and He will come to judge the living and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic (universal) Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen*





Baptism is only the beginning. As parents, your faith in God and your desire to live as a Christian will set an example for your child to follow, pointing him/her in the right direction until the time they can make their own choices about faith. By bringing your child to church, we can support your role as parents by offering opportunities for Christian growth like Sunday Club or Sunday School, Boys Brigade, Guides, High Street Gang, Family Services, Choirs and Coffee n Crèche.

#### WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? One of two things.

If you feel you want to say 'Yes' to seeking God's blessing on your child, through the sacrament of Baptism, and want your child to know His love and help through the church, then the Minister will be delighted to discuss arrangements. Normally at least one of the parents should already have been baptised and attend church as a sign of good faith.

You may feel very hesitant about all that is involved, or the questions that are to be answered, but fear not: for in approaching God, none of us knows for sure all the answers: we approach with even a little faith and openness, and believe God responds in love. If you are willing to so respond, even hesitatingly, it will be good to meet with the Minister and discuss things more fully. This will be a chance for you to raise any questions you may have and talk about dates etc.

But if you do not feel able to take such vows, we would still want your child to know God's love and blessing. You may feel unwilling just now to make promises about bringing your child up in the life and worship of the church: in all honesty, you weren't expecting to come back to the church after the baptism! You do, however, want to celebrate your child's birth in Church and ask God's blessing on him/her. In this case, the minister would be happy to discuss with you how else we can help.

How did Jesus Christ 'save the world'? People have different opinions, and how Jesus helps each of us may be different, and open to discussion, but in general Christians believe that central to the good news of Jesus for you, me and your child is that:

- Jesus shows us what God is really like by the things He did and said: revealing the **God of love and life.**
- he came as a baby also, showing that God is alive in little ones like your child; whoever comes openly to Him, even ever so hesitantly will not be rejected.
- He taught us how we can live our lives to the full, for Jesus said he is **the way, the truth and the life.**
- He died on the cross for us to show that in God all our sins and mistakes can be forgiven; we can move on in love and hope, and with God's help our damaged lives can be healed.
- He rose again from the dead on Easter Day, to leave his special Spirit working in the world today, alive in people who seek to follow Him, giving them an internal strength and direction to face life, as he helps us to know and love God and our neighbours, in serving our community.



## **Baptism is a prayerful Blessing**

As well as a celebration, and a sign of hope, baptism is an opportunity to ask God to bless our children. In the service we remember the story in the Gospel when “some people brought their children to Jesus to pray for them, and the disciples tried to stop them. But Jesus said “Let the children come to me because the Kingdom belongs to such as them”. Then he took the children in His arms, placed his hands on each one, and blessed them.”



In baptism (which some people informally call ‘Christening’), we do the very same, and seek to show that God welcomes and loves your child, only now it is the minister or a church member who takes the children in his arms in the place of Jesus. Under the guidance of Jesus we pray for your child and ask God to bless him or her. And as a congregation, we all join together in this, praying for the children and seeking their blessing.

That’s the Good News which the sign of baptism points us towards. Good News for your child, if you want it. But the Gospel doesn’t only tell us what Jesus has done for us. It challenges us to believe in Him and to follow Him. After all, a sign is no use unless we move in the direction it points us in! This is what the Bible calls faith.

### **So baptism is an introduction and a new beginning:**



depending on how you respond, baptism acts as the start of a powerful means of helping your child in life. Through baptism, your child comes into contact with God’s church, where members will seek to help and nurture your child to grow in goodness, knowing the guidance of God in his or her life.

## **THE CEREMONY OF BAPTISM**

1. In baptism, water is poured or sprinkled on to a child’s (or an adult’s) head. Why? - Every day, we use water to wash our clothes, our dishes and ourselves. In the Gospel, Jesus “washes away our sins” and gives us a “clean sheet” with God to help us live a clean life.

We drink water, for without it we would die. God’s love and grace are as necessary for our souls as water is for our bodies.

So the water of baptism is a sign that God is willing to accept, forgive and love us; and to help us and our children each day to try to live a new life, becoming better than we were, through living with faith.

2. The minister sometimes takes the child in his arms for the baptism, and the congregation sing a blessing for the child. This is a sign that God wants to welcome and receive your child into the life of His family, the Church. Every young child needs a family to take care of him or her and help them grow—and we need the church to help us if we are going to live and grow as Christians.

This is why the church asks parents (or one of them at least) to answer the following three questions as part of the baptism service:

***Do you present your child for baptism, desiring that he/she may be joined to Christ as a member of His church?***

***Do you receive the teaching of the Christian faith which we confess in the ‘Apostle’s Creed’ (see next page).***

***Do you promise, depending on God’s help, to teach your child the truths and duties of the Christian faith; and by prayer and example, to bring him/her up in the life and worship of the Church?***