



## **Baptism and Thanksgiving Services – Rotherham and Dearne Valley Circuit**

*“Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always...Amen.” (Jesus of Nazareth).*

This booklet covers the following Methodist Churches: -

Clifton, Broom, Whiston, Wickersley, Central (Aston), Rawmarsh, St John’s (Swinton), Piccadilly, Wath & West Melton, Furlong Road.

It’s great that you are considering baptism (christening) or thanksgiving for your child or yourself.

We hope that this leaflet will help to explain what is involved and the kind of commitment you will be making. Baptism is a ‘sacrament’. We only have two in the Methodist Church - Baptism and Holy Communion. A sacrament is an ‘outward sign’ of an ‘inner grace’ (a freely given gift from God Himself). In other words, God works within us beautifully to enrich, cleanse and refresh our soul. We might not understand it – but we trust God is working deep within us. We baptise babies in the Methodist Church (as well as adults) as we believe in ‘prevenient grace’ – that God works in and through us before we know anything of it. That is why parents make the promises for a baby, as the baby cannot do this for themselves. Once a child is of speaking and understanding age, the child makes their own promises with the support of the parents.

### **How we do baptism in Rotherham**

We would love to meet you, so please come and join us at church! Bring your little one too - Don’t worry about baby noises – they’re always good to hear.

You are also encouraged to meet the Methodist family at **FAMILY FUN CHURCH** at **Broom Methodist Church (Stag Close/Broom Lane)** on the **first Sunday at 11.30** and at **Central Methodist Church (Lodge Lane, Aston)** on the **third Friday at 6pm**. Please note, all our families, children and young people attend these services at Broom and Central, even though they might not be their ‘local’ or ‘home’ church. We see ourselves as ONE Methodist family worshipping in a number of locations. There are other services available and your minister will talk through these with you.

When we've got to know you (your little one) and your family (this does take time, so we like to meet with you at church prior to the baptism taking place on at least 3 occasions), then we can arrange to come and see you to talk to about baptism and thanksgiving – we'll talk about what the sacrament of baptism means and then we can talk dates. We want to get to know you before we set a date.

## **The importance of Baptism**

Baptisms and Christenings are the same thing! Baptism is mentioned in the Bible, the word 'christening is not' – it became a later was to describe a baptism. We use the words interchangeably.

The Bible tells us that Jesus was baptised by his cousin John in the river Jordan, an event that started his ministry. And the Gospel writers tell us that God spoke to Jesus, saying "This is my son with whom I am well pleased".

There are people in our church congregation that can talk to you about what baptism means to them too, so please do ask them as you join us on Sundays, or at our weekday services.

Baptism isn't where you find Jesus, it is what you do once you have found Him. That's a really exciting prospect! Being a Christian isn't a 'tag' or a 'description'. It is not 'what you do', it is 'who you are'. It is a way of life. A Christian life is DIFFERENT to a life that does not acknowledge as Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Our lives are not perfect, we are utterly flawed – but we are also utterly loved by God who 'mends us' and puts our broken bits back together again.

With Jesus we have 'life in all its fullness'. An assurance that we are 'saved'.

## **What does Baptism mean?**

Baptism is a ceremony in which you are welcomed as a new member of the Christian church and it marks the start of a lifetime journey of faith. A life of faith that brings forgiveness for the bad stuff in our lives, healing and restoration and an opportunity to grow in knowledge and love of God to help us live a life of peace and joy. Baptism is about starting this journey of discovery with God, and being in church with other Christians to give us support along the way.

## **What happens at the service?**

Our baptisms take place after the morning service. Families and friends usually sit near the front so that they can see clearly. During the service we do the following things:

- Give thanks to God for the gift of life
- Make declarations, turning away from a life of sin and turning to faith in God

- Make promises to walk the journey of faith
- Commit to those being baptised, helping them to discover what it means to live a Christian life.
- Then we baptise them with water (generously!) and make the sign of the cross on the forehead
- Ask for support from the congregation as they promise to care for you as you grow in faith
- Give certificate of baptism.

### **The Service and the Promises**

Today we give thanks for the life of this child.

Each child is special to God; They are God's gift to us.

For the parents who have brought them, they are a special part of their family.

In the 'Baptismal Service' we are saying "Thank You" to God and declaring that we want this child to be part of the Church family. That this child will be brought up in the faith, to follow Jesus and to live for God.

Promises will be made by the parents, in response the Church family makes serious promises of its own – promising to encourage, support and pray for the children within the Church community, and to help them understand what it means to live as a follower of Jesus Christ, our Lord and what it means to live in The Way of God.

Realising the seriousness of these promises let's pray.

**All – Creator God, we come to you on this special day and give thanks for the life of this child. As s/he is baptized into your Church, surround him/her with love. Amen.**

Parents and Godparents, the Church receives (*name*) with joy. Today we are trusting God for their growth in faith.

To follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with him. Therefore, I ask:

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 as Saviour? **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 need to be clear in your own mind that you can truthfully make these promises.

As yet this child cannot speak for himself/herself; his/her parents will therefore promise that from today, he/she will be given every encouragement to fulfill his/her Baptism and ultimately be confirmed into the Church of Christ.

**All – As the Church we will be faithful to the promises we make. As parents we may realize the seriousness and depth of the promises made on our child's behalf. And may this child, brought for Baptism, one day choose for him/herself to follow Christ and serve Him as a member of the Church. Amen.**

**Minister –** Today you have brought your son/daughter to be baptised. Do you promise to the Lord your God to bring this child up in the community of faith?

**Parents –** With the help of God we will. We promise before God and this congregation to do all we can to bring ..... up as a practicing Christian. To pray for ....., and to encourage ..... by our lives and example. To live for God and to belong to the Church of Christ in this our church community.

**Minister –** *(To the congregation)*

Will you offer this child your support and encouragement and help... to find faith in Christ?

**Congregation –** With the help of God we will

**Minister –** *(To the Godparents)*

Will you offer to both the parents and your Godchild, your support, friendship, love and prayers?

**Godparents –** With the help of God, I will

**Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.  
Thy Kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory.

**For ever and ever. Amen**

**Minister** – *Prayer over water.*

Pour out your Holy Spirit that the one baptized in this water may be renewed and cleansed, that they may be raised with Christ and be born to new life in the family of your Church. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

I baptise..... in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. I sign you with the cross of Christ – may you know that he lives so that you too may live, and have life in all its fullness.

*Parents to be presented with a certificate of baptism for the child and the scallop shell.*

**Final Prayers** – Loving Lord, we thank you that you took children on your knee. You laughed with them and loved them, caring for them and praying for them.

Let us follow your example and accept this child, who has been received in your name. Give to his/her family the love to keep the promises they have made. And may ..... have the opportunity to grow in the Christian faith and in love. Amen.

## **Blessing**

In baptism (name) begins their journey in faith. You speak for them today. Will you care for them and help them to take their place within the life and worship of Christ's Church? **With the help of God, we will.**

## **Other promises**

These will be discussed when you meet the minister/pastor.

## **Confirming baptism promises**

When a baby is baptised the promises are made on their behalf by the parents and Godparents. The child then has the opportunity to confirm these promises when they choose to follow Jesus Christ themselves, when they are older. This is done at a Confirmation service (entry into Membership of the Methodist Church).

## **Just a naming ceremony?**

Many people consider baptism to be just a naming ceremony, and a chance to gather family and friends together to celebrate this new life. It certainly is a time when these things happen, but it is so much more and it is important that we take the commitment to God seriously and assess our own faith journey.

## **Part of the worldwide church**

Baptism also welcomes the person into the community of faith – part of worldwide church. We are always excited and pleased to welcome a new member, and offer support to young families and mature Christians through home groups, the Little Boat Club, children's groups and youth groups as well as our Sunday and weekday services.

### **What to think about**

If you are bringing a child to baptism – as a Parent or Godparent - you will be making promises about your own faith and making Christian promises on behalf of the child. You might want to reflect on this, talk to others, read, or find out more as you come along to church. It is entirely between you and God, you just need to be happy to make the promises with integrity.

You are also committing to bringing the child up within the church family, which means coming to church regularly in the future. If you do not wish to do this, then we are more than happy to offer you a Thanksgiving or a Naming Service where such promises are not made.

If you have had a previous child baptised and we have not seen you in our churches, then unfortunately we will only be able to offer you a thanksgiving/naming service. This is to prevent the sacramental promises (promises to God) being made only to be broken. We do ask that families are honest about their future intentions. Life is busy, it can be hard to juggle work, home life, children's activities and church, this is why we have dedicated family activities in the Circuit (the collection of Methodist churches in Rotherham) so that there are a number of options.

If you have attended a different denomination, then we politely request you have your child baptised at the church you are currently attending.

### **Thanksgiving service**

We recognise that not everyone is prepared or ready to make such statements about faith or wants to commit to coming to church. There is a service of thanksgiving and blessing during which your child is named, given a special blessing, and a gift of the Bible. It is not a lesser service – in fact, many committed Christians prefer to do this, so that their child can choose baptism for themselves later in life.

### **Godparents**

Parents and Godparents make declarations about their faith and promises. We suggest you chose your Godparents carefully, as it makes little sense to choose nice friends or family who have no Christian faith or no intention of supporting you and your child on the journey of faith. Godparents should be baptised and preferably a practicing Christian. They are usually at least 16 years old and above. Perhaps they could come with you to church in the weeks leading up to the baptism service, to reflect on their duties and the promises they will be making. The number of Godparents is up to you.

If you opt for a Thanksgiving, then you can choose other adults to encourage you, as you would Godparents, only in this option, they are called Supporters. Similarly, if you have someone who would like to be a Godparent in the baptism, but has not been baptised themselves, then they can stand up with you and the other Godparents, but not actually participate in the promises. In this instance, they too are called Supporters.

We baptise with a scallop shell which is an ancient symbol of pilgrimage and journey....



The shell then becomes yours, to remind you of the journey of faith and life-long commitment to our Father God.

### **A few other things....**

- Baptism is a sacred moment, so we politely ask to save the photos until the end of the service when you can happily pose for as many pictures as you need.
- The service is free of charge, though you are welcome to give a gift to the church if you would like to.
- We make a big effort with baptisms and like to include siblings who can 'help' if they want to. Our baptism services are all family orientated and last about 20 minutes.
- If you are considering sending your child to a Christian School, they will need to see your baptism certificate – so keep it safe. Please also note that schools often ask for a reference from your minister to evidence church attendance. For many Christian Schools, much more is required than a certificate of baptism.
- We baptise any child, upon the fulfilment of family church/church attendance. We baptise the children of parents who are not married, and parents who are in same sex relationships.
- If you and the other parent are separated and that parent does not wish to be at the baptism and does not wish for the baptism to go ahead, we will need to have a conversation.

### **What next?**

Please join us at church so that we can get to know you before we arrange a date to meet you

After about 3 meetings in a worship environment, we'll arrange to come and see you. We'll go through a book together and chat about what you would like to do – choosing either baptism or thanksgiving.

**We can only book a date when we visit** - We look forward to meeting you and your family!

## PRAYERS

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day, our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power  
and the glory, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

### **The night before a christening**

Dear God,  
Be with my friends tomorrow – may they know joy.  
Be with my family tomorrow – may they know love.  
Be with me tomorrow – may I know peace.  
Be with my child – may s/he know your light  
As s/he begins his/her amazing journey of faith.  
Lead him/her in the right path,  
Keep him/her safe  
And help us all to know you are with us,  
Now and always.  
Amen

### **At bedtime**

Loving God,  
As the light shines in his/her room,  
May your light shine always for my little one.  
May he/she go safely through life,  
Knowing your love and goodness.  
May he/she be like a light for others,  
Bringing hope and joy to friend and stranger.  
May he/she know you are always there  
To guide, to lead and to protect.

### **After a difficult day**

Dear God,  
Sometimes life is good and sometimes it's not.  
Help us to know that you are with us in all of it.  
Where we have done wrong today, forgive us;  
when we have felt sad, comfort us;  
where we have been afraid, strengthen us;  
When we feel we've had enough  
Give us strength to try again.  
For we are on an amazing journey of faith,  
and we know that you never leave us.  
Bless this home tonight  
And let your peace be known.  
In Jesus name, we pray

### **For where we live**

Lord Jesus,  
You lived in a family and played in a village.  
Look after our family and the place where we live.

### **To pray together with a child**

*[You might like to draw imaginary decreasing circles for each group of people]*

Dear God,  
Thank you for your wonderful world.  
Be close to all the people who need help.  
Thank you for my lovely friends and family  
Help us to be kind to each other all the time.  
Thank you for me.  
Keep me safe, and let me grow well in every way.  
Thank you for Jesus.  
Be very close to me always.

### **A prayer of thanks and praise**

For children who are a gift from you, Loving God,  
We thank you and we praise you.  
For the laughter and smiles of your children,  
We thank you and we praise you.  
For the sleepless nights and endless washing,  
We thank you and we praise you.  
For the tearful nights and morning hugs,  
We thank you and we praise you.

For all the love your children show us,  
We thank you and we praise you.

### **A prayer for parents to say**

Bless us parents as we celebrate the christening of our child.  
Watch over us that we may be examples of your love, peace and joy to our children, friends  
and all who come into contact with us.

Bless our child's Godparents, as they commit to support our newly baptized child. Guide  
them as they offer help and support to us and our children, now and throughout their  
amazing journey of life. Bless our child's grandparents, as they see their family growing.

Encourage them to pass on their wisdom with gentleness and truth, offering love and joy to  
us and our children. Bless our friends, as our lives change and move on.

Inspire them to be a listening presence, a calming influence and a source of joy, as we share  
new experiences together. Bless our family and friends, Loving God, watch over and protect  
us all.

### **A prayer for all children**

Loving God,  
We pray for all children.  
We pray that they know and feel the security that is their right.  
We pray that they know and feel the love that is theirs through you.  
Guide all who are a voice for children and young people to speak loudly and clearly  
so that security and safety, love and hope might be the experience of all your children.