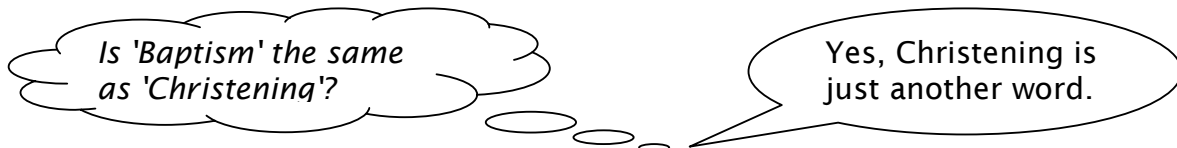


# Hexham Abbey

## BAPTISM

### A brief guide for parents thinking about baptism



Thank you for contacting us about the **baptism** of your child!

Here is a prayer you might like to say:

*Great God, we thank you from our hearts for \_\_\_\_\_ (name).  
We thank you for this precious gift and for the love and wonder s/he has already brought  
into our world. Give us your love and strength to be the best parents we can be, and  
please bless our child, now and always, through Jesus Christ. Amen.*

### Baptism and your Baby

In this leaflet we want to tell you what baptism means and involves - and how it involves you.

Before we go on, let us say clearly:

**The decision whether you have your child baptised (or not) is yours.**

We do not decide for you, nor ever refuse to baptise a baby.

What we *do* ask is that you think about what baptism involves - *before* making a final decision and *before* planning the date for the baptism service.

Perhaps this is a time at which lots of different expectations are on you and difficult decisions are asked of you.

You might like to use this prayer (if you prefer, replace *us* with *me*):

*Loving God,  
help us to decide how to mark the birth of \_\_\_\_\_ (name).  
Help us to know what to do about baptism.  
Please give us your wisdom to deal with difficult decisions and the expectations of others.  
Give us good friends and be yourself a friend to us/me,  
in Jesus Christ our Brother and Lord. Amen.*

## How did baptism start?

When people first believed in Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago, they were baptised. Jesus had said that they should be. People were baptised because they believed

- that Jesus shows us what God is like
- that Jesus died and was raised to life again to break the powers of darkness and death
- that Jesus calls us to be his friends and to follow him in this life and through death into eternal life.

## Why baptise children?



### How can they decide what they believe?



The first Christians made the choice themselves, as adults, to be baptised. Then, as they had families, they baptised their children because they knew they were bringing them up to share this faith and belong to the church - the community of believers in Jesus.

Later on, it became obvious that children needed to decide at some stage for themselves whether they wanted to believe in Jesus. Therefore we have **Confirmation** for teenagers and adults who were baptised as babies.

*I'm not confirmed ! - ?*

You don't have to be confirmed to have your baby baptised - but if you're beginning to think about all this, you might like to consider it.

So, baptising children who cannot speak for themselves makes sense when parents belong to the church.

That's why the baptism part of the service begins like this:

*The minister addresses the whole congregation:*

Faith is the gift of God to his people.

In baptism the Lord is adding to our number those whom he is calling.

People of God, will you welcome *these children* and uphold *them* in *their* new life in Christ?

**With the help of God, we will.**

*The minister then says to the parents and godparents*

Parents and godparents, the Church receives *these children* with joy. Today we are trusting God for *their* growth in faith. Will you pray for *them*, draw *them* by your example into the community of faith and walk with *them* in the way of Christ?

**With the help of God, we will.**

In baptism *these children* begin *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.**

*I'm really not sure about this at all ...*

Don't worry. Just say what you're not happy with. And ask for other options!

## You and the Church - in it together!

Baptism is about **belonging**: belonging to God and to the church community.

Baptism means that you and the church take on **responsibilities** for your child.

This is what it says in the service:

We have brought *these children* to baptism knowing that Jesus died and rose again for *them* and trusting in the promise that God hears and answers our prayer. We have prayed that in Jesus Christ *they* will know the forgiveness of *their* sins and the new life of the Spirit.

As *they* grow up, *they* will need **the help and encouragement of the Christian community**, so that *they* may learn to know God in public worship and private prayer, follow Jesus Christ in the life of faith, serve *their* neighbour after the example of Christ and in due course come to confirmation.

As part of the Church of Christ, we all have a duty to support *them* by prayer, example and teaching. As *their* **parents and godparents**, **you have the prime responsibility** for guiding and helping *them* in their early years. This is a demanding task for which you will need the help and grace of God.

## What about godparents in all this?

### What do they have to do?

The role of a godparent is to help your child grow into Christian faith and life, through their prayers, example, teaching, and encouragement (for example, by giving gifts that will help your child pray and understand more about Jesus).

### Who to choose ...

The godparents are your choice. It is important to make sure that godparents understand what they are being asked to do and that they are comfortable with it.

- You might have really good friends or people in your family who you hope will become good friends to your child but they may not share Christian beliefs. They might be put into a difficult position if you ask them to become godparents. So you'd do them a favour by thinking about this before you ask them to be a godparent.



### Quick checklist







- godparents do have to be baptised themselves
- there should be between two and four godparents
- having the right sort of person is more important than whether they are male or female
- being a godparent is not the same thing as being a legal guardian (though some people may be both)

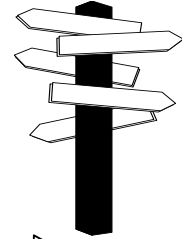
### Info for godparents

Look out for the green leaflet which we give out at baptism preparation meetings. These are for the godparents and give them some information and ideas.

## On a spiritual journey?

Everyone is on a spiritual journey in their lives. During this journey, all sorts of things can happen. For instance:

-  sometimes you can feel very close to God
-  sometimes you wonder where on earth God is in all this
-  sometimes you really grow in your understanding of God
-  sometimes you forget about God completely.



Baptism is not the destination but the beginning of a spiritual journey.

In the baptism service, you promise to put up plenty of signposts in your child's life so that on her/his journey she or he can learn about God in Jesus.

How do you expect me to do that?

There are good and fun books for children about Jesus. We can recommend some.

## So what does it all mean in practice?

### Do I have to come to church every Sunday?

No, you don't have to **every** Sunday - but the promises you say do include that you will draw your child by your example into the community of faith. How do you plan to do this? Coming to church helps you get to know the people there better. After all, baptism is about belonging to the church. You'll find all different sorts of people there. So we recommend that you come to services. You might like the more informal all-age ones we have about once a month.

### Can we have a baptism service but leave out some of the promises?

Sorry - not if it is still supposed to be a baptism service!

**But** there is an alternative: We also offer a **Service of Thanksgiving and Blessing of a Child**. This can take place in church or at home. In it, we give thanks to God for the child and pray for God's help as we bring him or her up. You don't have to say the involved promises. The service can be a first step on the road to baptism or stand alone for now.

### What is there for children at Hexham Abbey?

You'll see (during school term-time) the Sunday School & Club at the beginning of the 10am service. For the younger ones, we run a creche. We have a girls' and a boys' choir and there are youth groups run by the Abbey and together with the other churches in Hexham. Please ask if you are interested.

### Is there a way of finding out more about the Christian faith without people being pushy?

Yes, please have a word with one of the team (clergy or lay) at the Baptism Preparation Meeting. Or contact us (see below). And do come along to our services.

**The Parish Centre** on 602031 or e-mail [admin@hexhamabbey.org.uk](mailto:admin@hexhamabbey.org.uk)