

Births, marriages and deaths are significant moments in the lives of families. They are all occasions marked by ceremonies in which the Christian church has something to say about God, His love for individuals and His concern for strong and well ordered families.

For many people the local Baptist Church is in effect their "Parish Church". When a baby is born it is often natural that the parents ask to come to the church to give thanks to God for the birth of their child.

People are often surprised to learn that the Baptists (of all people) do not baptise infants! This inevitably leads to questions as to whether their child would be accepted by God were it to die in infancy and whether or not the child is a Christian. Sometimes parents may feel at they are letting down their child if they do not have it Christened. When the Bible's teaching on baptism is explained, most people are happy to wait until the child has grown up. Then people can take their own decision whether or not the Christian faith is a way of life they feel called to pursue.

Becoming a Christian follows individual repentance and personal faith in Jesus Christ. Only a person of mature years is able to reach such a momentous decision. Baptism is therefore delayed until the one being baptised comes to such faith. Parents cannot make promises of faith on behalf of a baby any more than they can make a promise of future marriage. Infants are outside the realm of personal responsibility. If a child dies in infancy without being "Christened" or "Baptised" that child will go to be with God. It will die in the salvation Jesus won for the whole worlds.

For these reasons we do not baptise children using water. Baptism by complete immersion is given to those who are old enough to decide for themselves that they want to become practising Christians.

We rejoice in the birth of children and have a special ceremony "The Dedication of parents and the Blessing of infants" which marks the occasion. This takes place in the context of the regular Sunday worship of the church. Relatives often attend and sit together near the front where they can feel part of what is happening. Some families enjoy the traditional trappings of a long white shawl and a cake afterwards. It is after all the child's first important engagement with God's church and the occasion is worthy of marking. It is our hope and prayer that each child thus brought will one day respond to the call of God and follow in the Christian way.

At an appropriate time in the service the parents will be invited to come and stand at the front, the mother holding the child. They will then be asked if they give thanks to Almighty God for the birth of their child. Parents who themselves are practising Christians will be asked if they will, with God's help and the prayers of the church do all they can to bring the child up to a point where it comes to believe in Jesus and is later baptised as a Christian. Parents who cannot make the second promise are not precluded from asking for a service to mark the birth of their child but such service is known as a "Thanksgiving Service" as the parents could not in all conscience dedicate themselves to bringing Christian instruction and teaching at home. In both ceremonies the infant is then held by the minister and prayed for. God's blessing is sought on the life which has just begun. Prayer is offered that the child may grow to maturity and respond to the claims of Jesus in personal faith and baptism.

Some infants do not have a resident father at home. God's church is welcoming to all. Children of lone parent families are just as welcome to come and be prayed for.

Sometimes when children are born, parents alter their wills to include guardians in the event of the parents' early death. If such guardians are to be included in the service it is helpful to mention this to the minister when the arrangements are made.

Children are always welcome at the worship meetings of this Church. On Sunday mornings a crèche is provided for babies and toddlers where even the youngest can be sung over and cared for in a positive way. We also have groups for those aged 2 and upwards - where the promises made by the parents at the dedication service can begin to be worked out. Children learn about God in a way that is enjoyable and which they can understand. Participation in music, prayer and singing is encouraged in the children attending this church. During school terms "Caterpillar Club" provides a meeting place for parents, babies & toddlers as well. There is also a registered pre-school playgroup.

Parents are encouraged to train their children in good habits by being an example to them at home. We ask parents to spend time at home helping their children understand Bible stories and teaching them to pray.

If you would like to know more, have questions or would like to enquire about having a service arranged for your family and child, please contact:

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