

Parish of Nursling with Rownhams: Baptisms (Christenings)

At St. John's and St. Boniface we are always glad when people ask about baptism.

You are never too old to be baptised, in fact we have baptised some quite mature people over the years! Just contact the vicar and we will take it from there.

This article (except the last part) deals with what to do if you are a parent wanting a new arrival christened.

Unless there's some really good reason why you cannot, we expect you to come as a first step to a Sunday service (10am at St. John's, with optional crèche, is probably best for most people) after which we'll be happy to take details and discuss next steps.

Basically, the vicar will baptise

- (1) people who are coming to church here (regardless of where you live);
- (2) people who live in the parish;
- (3) people who don't come into either of those categories but who do have, e.g., a grandparent who comes to church here. (Not simply one who lives in the parish.)

Also, when it's 'first time around', the parents and vicar do a five-session course about God and some of the basics of Christianity. People usually seem to find it very helpful. We also do this if, for some reason, there wasn't much preparation leading up to the previous children's baptisms. Obviously, this means you need to allow a bit more run-up time before the christening.

Obviously, if you are not in the parish (or don't qualify under (3)), you will need to attend church reasonably regularly for a while before we arrange the preparation and the christening. We always welcome new people, and please don't worry about the reception your child will get. We know it's not easy bringing a young child to church, at first anyway, and we do our best to make it as easy as possible for parents. But whether in the parish or not, we ask all those considering a baptism for your child(ren) to consider carefully the promises you will be making. We don't believe God discriminates against unbaptised children; we do believe He expects us to keep all our freely given promises. In the case of a baptism, we promise to give our children a Christian upbringing "in public worship and private prayer" among other things.

If the above makes you unsure, did you know the Church of England offers a service of 'Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child', suitable for a new baby or a newly adopted child? It doesn't involve making promises as baptism does, and therefore doesn't require a preparation course either: just a single visit for a chat should be sufficient. The vicar or Parish Office can supply copies of this service.

Note about 're-baptism'

The Church of England, like most churches, believes that one Christian baptism is the right and Biblical number. Furthermore, we believe that childhood baptisms (even ones that ought really have been left until later) 'count', or we wouldn't perform them. That's why we at Nursling & Rownhams take them seriously, and try to encourage parents to do the same. This means we do not perform or encourage 're-baptism' though we do fully accept that Christian consciences differ on this. However...

If you were baptised as a child and have now come alive in your faith and want a way of publicly declaring that, there are a variety of ways you can do this: testimony in a church service, Renewal of Baptismal Vows, Confirmation (if you haven't done this one already), possibly other things too. We think some sort of public witness to your new-found faith is very important for you, and very encouraging for others. We just don't think it's the main point of baptism.

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