



## ***Christian Baptism***

*at*

*Blackhall St. Columba's Church of Scotland, Edinburgh*



*In Presenting Yourself  
Or your Child for Baptism*

# Congratulations!



The birth of a baby is the happiest of events in any family. The celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism is a happy occasion shared by all of us in the wider family of the Church.

We are delighted to know you are interested in having your child baptised at Blackhall St. Columba's Church of Scotland, Edinburgh. We are a warm, loving Church that will welcome and support you, wherever you may be in your Christian growth.

As the parent(s) of the child to be presented for baptism, your interest shows that you value your child's relationship with God and the Church. Before you begin to make specific plans about dates or other details, please read this booklet to gain a better understanding of what Christian baptism means, how it is practiced in the Church of Scotland, and what commitments are involved. It will help you know the general approach we take to baptising children at Blackhall St. Columba's Church. Our official policy for infant baptism may be found in the Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland.

Ordinarily, the first step in your child's baptism is for you to establish a regular pattern of family worship at Blackhall St. Columba's Church, and for one or both parents to be committed to following Jesus Christ as active members of this congregation. In our Presbyterian understanding, the whole congregation makes a commitment to your family; to support you and your child as together we experience and grow in God's grace. This extended Church family is a wonderful support system for you and your child.

As you become firmly associated to our Church family, you are warmly encouraged to begin the process of arranging the baptism with me as the Minister. I will be delighted to meet with you and talk about your faith as a parent, the meaning of Christian baptism, and your family's relationship with the Church.

**Rev Gordon Farquharson**  
Minister

## Christian Baptism



The celebration of baptism is an important event for you if you are coming to be baptised yourself. At an infant baptism it is an important event for your child, for parents and the Church family.

Baptism always takes place within a service of worship in the Church (unless there are exceptional circumstances). It is important that baptism is seen as part of the life of the Church. The promises you make as an adult coming to be baptised or as parents bringing your child are made before a Church congregation who promise to support you, and your child.

Because baptism is part of the Church's life, *private baptisms* outside the Church or out with a normal Sunday service are not available.

### The Meaning of Baptism

Baptism is an outward sign of a spiritual reality. That sounds complicated! It just means that as we are baptised or as our child is baptised with water, we are celebrating God's love and goodness to us or to our child. Baptism speaks of what God does for us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. God offers His gracious love to us to make us new and we recognise that He does that with the symbol of baptism. It is also a sign of welcome into the Family of God.

As the Church is the Family of God, the gift of baptism is open to all who believe that Jesus is Lord and to their children.

*"For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off,  
everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him."*

Acts 2: 39

Baptism is not just a nice ceremony and excuse for a party, an insurance policy for the future, or a 'lucky charm'! Neither is there anything magical about baptism.

Baptism is a sign of entry into the Church, and a sign that God takes us just as we are, whether we are old or young, and it challenges us to follow Jesus and become Christians.

Adults coming to baptism will be doing so as a result of their personal decision to follow Jesus. Children being baptised will still need to make that commitment in the future when they are old enough to decide themselves whether to commit their lives to Jesus.



Baptism is not something that should be sought by parents 'just to keep the grandparents happy', nor 'because it is tradition and that is what has always happened in our family'. Baptism is a Holy Sacrament of the Church and should not be undertaken lightly. The promises you make as parent bringing your child, or coming yourself to be baptised, are made before God in Church.

At Blackhall St. Columba's Church, we are serious about the responsibility of helping adults and children to come to know, love, obey, and serve Jesus Christ. The covenant of baptism is an important step in that process.



## Why We Baptise?

The primary reason for baptising adults and children are:

Jesus was baptised by John in the River Jordan prior His ministry. He was not baptised because He was sinful and in need of cleansing, but rather to show solidarity with humankind.

In His baptism and by His death on the Cross, Jesus took upon himself the sins of the world. By this one sacrificial act our sins are forgiven. By Christ's rising again He assures us of newness of life.

We baptise as a response to Jesus' command in Matthew 28:18-20:

*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.  
Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations,  
**baptising them** in the name of the Father and of the Son  
and of the Holy Spirit,  
and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you  
always, even to the end of the age.*

### **The Promises of baptism**

The promises/questions are made by the parents/guardians at baptism. These are very important and you should think very carefully before answering.

You are asked the following three questions which must be answered with sincerity, please think about the questions and answer carefully and in the affirmative ('**I do**').

1. *Do you present your child for baptism, desiring that s/he may be grafted into Christ as a member of his body and family, the Church?  
**I do.***
2. *Do you believe in God, – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and do you confess Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord? **I do.***

It is important that you wish your child to be baptised. You are not having your child baptised because everyone else thinks it is a good idea. It must be real for you and your family.

3. *Do you promise, depending on the grace of God, 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?  
**I do.***

The third promise asks you to bring up your child in that faith, and by the EXAMPLE of your lives, to bring your child up in the life and worship of the Church. This is important, and if you are not prepared to keep it then do not say it.

These promises are only meaningful if you mean what you are saying. By making these promises, you are committing yourselves not to sending your child to Church, but to bringing your child with you to Church.

The congregation is then asked to stand to acknowledge their commitment to the Christian upbringing of the child. The Minister will then invite the whole congregation to say the Apostle's Creed. This is a statement of belief that has been used by many different Church denominations for well over 1000 years.

*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 Church,<sup>1</sup> the communion of saints, the forgiveness of  
sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. **Amen.***

<p><sup>1</sup> catholic (with a small 'c') means universal. The 'catholic church' refers to the whole church around the world, not just the Roman Catholic (with a big 'c') church.</p>
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The promises you make at your child's baptism should be sincere or they are meaningless. These promises are to encourage you to make a commitment to your child and to Jesus that we pray will blossom into a full commitment to Jesus' Church. By making these promises you are committing yourselves not to *sending* your child to Church, but to *bring your child with you to Church*.

## **What if I am not ready to make these promises?**

Baptism is a sign of God's grace. But God's grace places an obligation on us. We are to keep His covenant, not in order to earn His love, but to show our gratitude and to find His will. Baptism is a sacrament and privilege for those who are part of the Christian family. That is why parents who request baptism for their child must trust in Christ for themselves and accept the privileges and responsibilities of Church membership.

If you are not ready to make these promises it is better to wait until a time when you are ready (and we can help you find out more about the Christian faith).

If neither parent is baptised and do not wish to be then it would be more appropriate to leave baptism for a later time when you as a family are ready to make a commitment to Jesus. Anyone can be baptised at any age into the life of the Church.

We would still like to celebrate the birth of your child and would be more than happy to thank God for your child and ask for God's blessing upon him/her during a Sunday service (see 'The Church and the Blessing of Children'). If at a later date you are ready to make the commitment to Jesus and your child that are contained in the promises above, then it would be an excellent idea to seek baptism for your child and yourselves if you have not already been baptised.

## **What promises do adults make when they are baptised?**

Before the baptism you are asked:

Do you, in the presence of this congregation, turn away from sin and ask for God's forgiveness; seeking a deepening faith in which you will honour God and love other people as yourself? **I do.**

After the baptism you are asked:

Do you promise, with God's help, to serve the Lord and continue to be a part of the family of the Church for the rest of your life? **I do.**

## **Eligibility for Baptism**

Baptism is offered to adults who accept the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and to children of Church members and to those who, although not full members, have shown that they wish to be actively involved in the life of the Church. We will expect you to attend Church services regularly before the baptism.

Please remember that baptism is not a right, it is a privilege, and it is up to parents to enable the Church to baptise. The Minister and Kirk Session want to help you as much as we can, but where there is no connection to the Church and no desire for such a connection the Kirk Session and Minister have the right to decline to baptise a child.

## **Practical Points**

Baptisms are arranged for Sunday morning at 11.00 am.

If you have not already done so you should contact the Minister in good time in order to arrange the Baptism service. He can be contacted through the Church Office (Telephone number 0131 332 4431).

On the day of the baptism you should come to the Church no later than 10.45 am.

It is usual to have the child's birth certificate signed and endorsed on the back with the words "baptised by me the Rev. Benjamin JA Abeledo at Blackhall St. Columba Church of Scotland, Edinburgh on .....(date)". This is not compulsory of course but if you wish this to be done it would be best, if possible, to give the birth certificate to the Minister some time before the day of the baptism. This has the added advantage of confirming the name thus reducing the likelihood of any mix up. The birth certificate would be returned shortly after the baptism.

The baptism will usually take place early in the service.



## **The Service**

Before the service starts we ask you as a family to meet with the Minister in the Church Office. You will be shown to your seats at the front of the Church for the start of the service.

The father, mother and one of the godparents/sponsors (who carries the baby into church) will proceed into the church, usually accompanied by the Cradle Roll Convener and Elder.



The Minister will read from the Bible and give an explanation of the sacrament of baptism. The parents will make a statement of their personal faith and by answering the questions put before them by the Minister and making their promises in response. The congregation is then asked to stand to acknowledge their commitment to the Christian upbringing of the child.

The Minister would normally receive the child from the father. The father should therefore ensure that he takes the child some time during the hymn if he has not done so earlier. The Minister will ask the child's name. The Minister takes the child and baptises it. The congregation sing "The Lord bless thee and keep thee" The congregation (but not the parents) sit. A prayer is said. The Minister hands the child back to the mother. A gift is handed to one of the parents with the Baptism Certificate.

The Minister afterwards will address the godparents/sponsors and remind them of their obligation of support to the child and to you as parents. The Minister will give them a card which reminds them of those responsibilities.

While parents may feel free to remain with the child in the service (mood and temperament permitting) it is appreciated that one parent may require to leave with the child. In this case you are welcome to wait in the crèche until the service finishes. It is expected that the rest of your family and friends will remain for the whole service.

## **Guests**

You are encouraged to invite family and friends to come and share in worship on this special occasion. They can be assured of a warm welcome and if they make themselves known to those welcoming them at the door will be shown to a seat near the rest of your family and friends.

## Photographs

We ask that **NO** photographs be taken during the actual service. However, once the service is over you are welcome to come forward again to take photos at the front of the Church.

## People you will meet

On the day of the Baptism the Cradle Roll Convenor, *Kirsty Cassidy*, and your district Elder, who should already be known to you, will meet you in the vestry and accompany you to the front of the Church. The Elder, who is there to offer support, will continue to make regular contact and visits to your home.

It is the Cradle Roll Convenor who arranges for the gifts for your baby. She will arrange 'get *togethers*' when you can meet other parents from the Church. She is also the person who sends a birthday card to your child until he/she is old enough to join the Sunday School (Challengers).

## The Church and The Blessing of Children

Infant baptism is normally given only where at least one parent of the child is a Church member. A baptism may take place where a parent has been regularly attending the Church, is an active follower of Jesus Christ and is seeking Church membership.



Another option is for a close family member who is a committed Church member to take the vows.

Where parents are not ready yet to take vows of baptism, another option is a "*Service of Blessing and Thanksgiving*" to give thanks for the child and pray for him/her and the family.

The Service of Blessing is a very similar service to baptism. This increasingly popular service leaves both parents and children free of the vows required in baptism. We recognize that many children will make their own choices about faith later in life. During this service you would be asked to affirm your love for them – and your commitment to guide and nurture them as they grow up.

Please contact the Minister to discuss.

## Thinking it through...

- How have you been aware of God's presence at this time?
- Why do you wish your child to be baptised?
- What questions do you have about baptism?
- Are you ready for your baptism or the baptism of your child?
- Are you willing to take your place in the family of faith?
- What do you think it means to 'confess Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord'?
- In what ways will you encourage your child to know Jesus and grow up in the life and worship of the Church?
- Who helped you grow spiritually?
- What do you think it means to commit your life to Jesus Christ?
- How does God challenge you to follow him?
- What part has baptism played in your life?

### **Further questions and Contact details**

We hope that this leaflet has helped you understand the meaning of baptism.

If you have any further questions, please contact the minister, the Rev Gordon Farquharson, or the Church Office, which will be able to assist you further. You can contact the office by telephone on 0131 332 4431.

Blackhall St. Columba's Church of Scotland, Edinburgh  
Church Office: Columba Road, Edinburgh, EH4 3QU Tel: 0131 332 4431  
(Tuesday – Fri 10am – 12:30pm)  
Email: [secretary@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk](mailto:secretary@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk)  
Webpage: [www.blackhallstcolumba.org.uk](http://www.blackhallstcolumba.org.uk)  
Scottish Charity No. SC008756

We look forward to welcoming you and your child into our Church family.