

Biggar and Black Mount Churches

Thank you for asking about a christening or baptism for your child! We hope that you find this information leaflet helpful.

Children Are Welcome Here!

The first thing to say is that everyone is welcome in our church and especially children! Our aim is to attract more families to our church and to faith in Jesus Christ and so we want to make our services accessible and relevant to young people as well as older people.

The first part of our Sunday morning service is designed to be for everyone. After half an hour, the children go to the church hall for their own activities.

Roughly once a month, we have an all-age service (Café Church) at 11:15 am

in St Mary's Hall where we have coffee and baking together around tables and when we worship and learn together as a church family. In addition, there are monthly Sunday evening all-age gatherings where we eat together and worship from 5 pm.



Many people ask for a christening and find it confusing when a minister starts talking to them about baptism! Technically, there's no such thing as 'christening' in the Church of Scotland although this word is often used to describe either an infant baptism or a service of thanksgiving and blessing.

Why Are You Asking?

It might seem like a silly question but there are lots of different reasons why people may want to have their child christened or baptised. You might find it helpful to ask yourself why you are asking.

Here are some of the reasons parents have given me:

- It's just what you do when you have a baby isn't it?
- We are Christians and we want to bring our children up as Christians.
- We would like to have a service to celebrate the birth of our child.
- My mum/gran keeps telling us that we must have our baby christened.
- We've organised a christening party and want to have a service first.
- I want to make sure that if anything happens my baby will go to Heaven.
- We want to thank God for our precious child.

Two Options

In the Church of Scotland, we offer two different options, depending on your circumstances.

Thanksgiving and Blessing

We offer a service of thanksgiving and blessing to parents who would like to have a church ceremony to mark the birth of their child; to give thanks for his/her life; and to make public promises to be the best parents they can be. In this service, the minister will not baptise the child with water but will pray God's blessing on the child and the whole family.

This option is for anyone, whether you have a personal faith in God or not. It is particularly appropriate if, in all honesty, you don't intend to come to church regularly or if you're not yet ready to make a commitment. It is also a popular option for those who enjoy worshipping in the Church of Scotland but aren't sure if they agree with the practice of infant baptism.

A service of thanksgiving and blessing can be held during a Sunday morning service but if you prefer, it can take place in the church at another time as a private ceremony for you and your family.

Baptism

We offer a service of infant baptism to parents who are members of the Church or who have a personal faith in Jesus as their Saviour and Lord and are open to exploring membership.

In a baptismal service, parents are asked to profess their faith in Christ and to promise to bring their child up in the Christian faith and in the life of the Church. The minister will baptise the child by sprinkling water on his/her head. This is significant in marking out the child as belonging within the Church community and as a sign of God's grace. However, baptism by itself does not make anyone a Christian and it will be for that child as they grow up to make their own decision whether to accept Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

An infant baptism is always held during a Sunday morning service as it is an essential part of the service that the child is welcomed by the congregation into the community of faith.

The Vows

The difference between the two services is clear when you compare the promises that parents are asked to take:

Thanksgiving and Blessing

Do you receive [child's name] as a gift from God; and in welcoming him/her into your family, do you promise to love him/her, care for him/her, and provide for him/her as best you can?

Baptism

1. Do you believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and do you confess Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord?
2. Do you present [child's name] to be baptised, earnestly desiring that he/she may be grafted into Christ as a member of His body, the Church?
3. Do you promise, depending on the grace of God, to teach [child's name] the truths and duties of the Christian faith; and by prayer and

example to bring him/her up in the love, discipline and instruction of the Lord?

One parent said: "I'm so glad I waited until I really understood what it means to be a Christian before I joined the church and had my baby baptised. She'd grown out of the baptismal gown by then but it was so much more special taking the vows really meaning what I was saying."

In both services, the members of the congregation are also asked to take an appropriate vow. In addition, you are welcome to invite a friend or family member to act as a godparent. This is entirely optional but has become increasingly popular in recent years. If godparents are present at the service, they would be asked to make a promise to support you in keeping your vows.

What happens next?

It would be good to arrange to meet with the minister to discuss this further. Mike our minister can be contacted on 01899229291 or MFucella@churchofscotland.org.uk.

As a church, it is our responsibility to ensure that we do not ask anyone to take promises before God that they do not understand or do not mean. Ultimately it is up to the minister and the Kirk Session to decide if we can proceed with a baptism or a thanksgiving and blessing.

Please don't make any other arrangements until the date has been agreed with the minister. He will then discuss the details of the service with you. It is usually possible for parents to choose an appropriate hymn and for a friend or relative to read from the Bible to help make it a happy family occasion.

If you're not sure what you believe, you might be interested in coming to a short course of introduction to Christian beliefs. This is for anyone who wants to discuss the key points of the Christian faith and to think through the claims of Jesus and their relevance today. The course lasts six weeks and we meet for a couple of hours each week. If you want to know more, just ask Mike.