

***INFANT BAPTISM***  
**&**  
***THANKSGIVING***  
***at St Bede's***

St Bede's offers two types of services to parents with children.

A **Thanksgiving Service** is offered to visitors and those who are still exploring the Christian faith.

**Infant Baptism** is offered to parents and godparents who are followers of Jesus and active members of the church.

Both services are held during our normal 10am and 6.30pm Sunday gatherings. There is no charge for the services or the two preparation sessions.

**A Thanksgiving Service**

A Thanksgiving Service is a beautiful celebration of God's gift of a new born child. This service is for parents and godparents

- who occasionally go to church
- who may have a traditional family connection to the church
- who want an opportunity to publicly celebrate a new arrival with family and friends
- who want to give their children an opportunity to explore religious faith for themselves when they get older
- who like the values and moral framework of the Christian faith

There is no water used in the Thanksgiving Service. The parents and godparents do not need to make any declarations or promises.

The features of the Thanksgiving service are:

- We thank God for the birth of this child.
- We pray for the child by name, seeking his blessing on his or her life ahead.
- We pray for parents in their vital role.
- We pray for the child's godparents in their special relationship to the family and the child.
- The child receives a Thanksgiving Certificate and presentation Bible.
- The church puts on a special morning tea or evening supper for the family and their guests.

Two things are required of parents in the lead-up to a Thanksgiving Service

Firstly, we ask that they attend our Sunday services in the month leading up to the Thanksgiving. This gives everyone a chance to get to know you and celebrate all the more on the day.

Secondly, parents (and preferably godparents as well) will need to join us for our 2 part preparation series, *New Life*.

## **Infant Baptism**

Infant Baptism is also a celebration of new life, but it involves a weightier public commitment on the part of parents and godparents. The statements and promises made in this service can only be said out of a clear position of personal faith and an established relationship with the church. For this reason we only offer infant baptism to parents who exhibit such faith as active members of St Bede's. (We recognise that godparents will often come from other churches)

Baptism points to Jesus' saving work in the lives of those who trust in him. As a totally just God, he has every reason to judge us for our sin. He is also deeply merciful and he has sent his only son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve on the cross. When we acknowledge our sin and place our trust in Jesus as our Saviour and Lord he forgives us.

The symbolic act of 'washing' someone in a baptism points to that forgiveness. The

individual is 'clean' or right before God and he or she has entered into a whole new relationship with Him and other believers.

Adults who know God's forgiveness and are actively involved in the church naturally want their kids to know Jesus, his promises and his people as they do. Because infants can't speak for themselves, Christian parents and godparents are asked to speak on the child's behalf before God. They state their personal trust in Jesus as Saviour and Lord. They also make three promises about how they intend to raise the child to know the promises of God within the life of his church.

We sprinkle water on the child's head to symbolize the 'washing' from sin and the gift of new life.

It is vital to state that the act of baptism does not automatically make the child right with God or 'saved'. Rather, it is a public prayer for God's mercy on this child, who has the privilege of growing up in a home that honours the Lord and is committed to his church. We pray that the child will one day claim by faith what the parents and godparents already have: salvation in Christ.

## THE BAPTISM PROMISES

The Infant Baptism service contains 1 statement and 3 promises.

The first promise is a reminder that when God gives us children, he chiefly looks to us to raise them to know Jesus and his Word, the Bible. Sunday school and Scripture teachers are only there to back up mum and dad and the godparents in this vital role.

**Children are baptised on the understanding that they will be brought up as faithful members of the Church, to follow Christ and to fight against evil;...**

**As they grow up they need encouragement, teaching, and the help of a good example, so that they may learn to:**

- **worship God,**
- **pray to him,**
- **put their faith and trust in him,**
- **and take their place in the life of the church.**

**Parents and godparents, *this child* depends chiefly on you for the help and encouragement *he/she* needs. Are you willing to give your child this help and encouragement by every means in your power?**

*The parents and godparents answer*

**I AM WILLING**

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The entire basis for such a promise is clear personal faith and church involvement. This is what is now stated

**Those who bring young children to be baptised must declare their personal faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, and their rejection of all that is evil: the devil, the false values of the world, and the sinful desires of the flesh.**

**Therefore I ask you: are you a follower of Jesus Christ and a member of his Church, sincerely believing the promises of God?**

*The parents and godparents answer*

**I AM**

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The second promise follows on, focusing on the ongoing commitment of faith.

**Will you keep God's holy will and commandments, and serve him faithfully throughout your life?**

*The parents and godparents answer*

**WITH GOD'S HELP I INTEND TO DO SO**

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The third and last promise refocuses attention on the first promise by using the term 'sponsorship'.

**Are you willing to sponsor your child, accepting responsibility for *his/her* Christian upbringing?**

*The parents and godparents answer*

**I am willing.**

This is a public confirmation that parents and godparents will take the primary role in teaching this child about Jesus.

What is meant by ‘sponsorship’? In professional sport, a company agrees to provide money to a team and they wear the company logo on their uniform. The sponsor cannot determine all that happens on the field, but the company’s support is intended to provide a stable framework within which the team can do their best and represent the company well.

In a more profound way, by publicly accepting responsibility for a child’s Christian upbringing, parents and godparents are happy for him or her to bear the marks of their Christian guidance as he or she grows up. They cannot determine all of the child’s decisions or force God to act on his or her behalf, but as a ‘sponsor’ in the faith, they are providing a godly framework within which the child can grow and learn. He or she should be able to look to parents and godparents and learn how to relate to God with confidence and perseverance.

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These statements and promises are profound in their scope and life-long in their commitment. They can only be said out of a clear position of personal faith and an established relationship with the church. For this reason we only offer infant baptism to parents who exhibit such faith as regular attendees of St Bede’s. (We recognise that godparents will often come from other churches)

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If you have any questions about this material or any related matter, please contact the minister, James Macbeth on 9181 1653 or [mjmacbeth@ozemail.com.au](mailto:mjmacbeth@ozemail.com.au)