

Presenting your child for baptism

in Greyfriars Parish Church, Lanark

Thinking about presenting your child for baptism?

When a new baby comes it can bring a lot of happiness and joy into an already happy family. It can also make you more aware of the wonder of God and his love for us. In the Church we are happy to share in this with you. We hope that this leaflet will help you understand the meaning of Christian Baptism. You should also find practical information. If, after reading it, you have further questions, the minister will be happy to discuss them with you.

The service

The celebration of baptism is an important event for the child, the parents and the Church family. Baptism always takes place within a service of worship in a church (unless there are very exceptional circumstances). It is important that baptism is seen as part of the life of the church, and the promises you make as parents are made before a church congregation who promise to support you and your children. Because baptism is part of the church's life, 'Private Baptisms' outwith church or outwith a normal Sunday service are not offered.

Before the service starts, the parents and godparents will be shown to their seats at the front of the church. The Baptismal hymn will be sung towards the start of the service. At this point, the 'godmother' should be carrying the baby.

The meaning of baptism

Baptism is an outward sign of a spiritual reality. That sounds complicated, but it just means that as we baptise the child with water, we are celebrating God's goodness to the child. Baptism speaks of what God does for us – through the death and resurrection of Jesus. God offers us salvation and eternal life in Jesus. As the Church is the Family of Christ, the gift of baptism is open to believers and to their children. (Acts 2:39 *"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"*).

Baptism is not just a nice ceremony, an insurance policy for the future or a 'Lucky Charm'. There is nothing magical about baptism.

Baptism is a sign of entry into the Church, and a sign that God takes us just as we are, even if we are very young, and challenges us to follow Him and become Christians. Children who have been baptised must complete and fulfil their baptism when they are old enough to decide for themselves whether or not to commit their lives to Jesus. Many people are baptised into the Church then subsequently choose to reject Jesus and His Salvation. Baptism is fulfilled when we give our lives to Jesus once we are old enough to make our own decision. Baptism does, however, stress God's love for and acceptance of little children, even before they can properly understand, and by baptism children are welcomed into the Church of 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 happened in our family'. Baptism is a sacrament of the church and should not be undertaken lightly. The promises you make as parents are made before God, in church.

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.

The first question asks, *“Do you wish your child to be baptised and do you acknowledge that you are in agreement with the teachings of the Christian Faith?”* 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.

The second 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.

Parents will be asked to stand, and should respond by saying *“I do”* at the end of each of the promises.

The Minister will explain the format of the service on the day.

After the baptismal ceremony is completed a hymn will be sung. After this hymn the Sunday School will leave the church. We hope that the child will stay in church during the rest of the service but if you feel that you need to leave then one parent and/or godparent should go to the Sunday School or crèche. Once the child is settled you can come back into the church. Remember, you are more aware of your child crying than those around you!

It is not acceptable for the Baptismal Party and guests to leave

the church after the Baptism is over. Everyone should stay in church for the rest of the service.

Cradle roll

After baptism, we hope that you will feel at home in our church. Someone from the church should make contact with you during the months that follow. Your child should also receive a birthday card from us and an invitation to join the Sunday School when they are old enough.

Guests

You are warmly encouraged to invite your families 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 the Office Bearers who are on door duty, they will be seated where they can best see the baptism. During church services an offering is taken to help fund the work and witness of the church. This usually takes place before the final prayer and hymn.

Photographs and video recording

NO photography or video recording is allowed during the service under any circumstances. You are however welcome to come back into the Church after the service for photographs.

We also offer as part of our Greyfriars On Demand service DVD video recordings of the service, and we are able to make these available to the baptismal party on request. Please contact our AV team to arrange this. The service can also be seen online live at www.lanarkgreyfriars.com/ondemand, and so if you have guests who cannot make it, they can join us there for our live broadcast, or later using our 'Watch again' facility.

Eligibility for baptism

Baptism is offered to the children of communicant 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 – obviously there would be no point in saying you would like to become involved in the Church if you subsequently find out that you are not happy here, or that the style of service does not suit you.

If neither parent is a member of the Church we will also expect one, but preferably both, parents to take part in the next series of Enquirers classes which are held for those thinking about what it means to be a Christian and about Church membership.

Those who live outside the Parish and who are not members, and have no connection with our church will be asked in the first instance to approach their local Parish Church.

Baptism is not a right, it is a privilege, and it is up to parents to enable the Church to baptise. The Minister and the Kirk Session have the right to refuse to baptise a child where the parents have no actual or potential link with the Church. Indeed, parents in that situation might well ask themselves why they wish baptism for their child.

Further questions

If you have any further questions, please contact our minister, the Rev. Bryan Kerr, or the church office, who will be able to assist you further. You can contact the office by telephone on (01555) 661510, or alternatively you can contact Bryan by email to bryan@lanarkgreyfriars.com.

We look forward to welcoming your child into our church family.

Details of your child's baptism

The baptism of

will take place on

Sunday _____

at the 11am service

in Greyfriars Parish Church, Bloomgate, Lanark, ML11 9ET.

You are asked to be at the church, and make your way to the minister's vestry **NO LATER** than 15 minutes before the start of the service.

The Birth Certificate **MUST** be given to the minister on the day of the Baptism. This will be signed by the minister after the service.

Greyfriars Parish Church

Bloomgate, Lanark, ML11 9ET

Tel: (01555) 661510 | Email: office@lanarkgreyfriars.com

Greyfriars Parish Church, Lanark is a congregation of the Church of Scotland and a registered Scottish Charity, SC016504.