



Having a Child Baptised



**in the
Parish of Cranleigh**

Introduction



Many Congratulations!

We are delighted that you're considering having your child baptised at St Nicolas Church. Baptism is a key moment in the life of a child, their parents and godparents.

The birth or adoption of a child is a cause for celebration and many people feel the need to mark the occasion with a special church service.

At St Nicolas, we want to give you a warm welcome and to do all we can to make the occasion enjoyable and meaningful for you and your family.

This booklet is our guide to what's involved in planning a baptism service.

If you have any additional questions please do call or email the parish office and we will be pleased to help you.

Roy Woodhams

Roy Woodhams

Rector of St Nicolas, Cranleigh

Frequently Asked Questions

What services does St Nicolas offer?

St Nicolas offers two kinds of services to people who wish to mark the birth of a child. Which one you choose will largely depend on your own Christian faith and what you are prepared to declare and promise publicly.

A “thanksgiving for the gift of a child” service provides an opportunity for parents, friends and families to give thanks to God for the birth or adoption of a child. People gather to support the parents in their new responsibilities with prayer and love and to ask God’s blessing for the future. You won’t need to make public promises, have godparents or attend preparation.

A “baptism” or “christening” service is a service to welcome someone into the Church and to mark the start of his or her Christian journey. A baptism service normally occurs after the child’s birth but can happen at any point in a person’s life. Godparents will need to be chosen and you’ll need to attend a preparation event.

It is possible to have both a thanksgiving and a baptism service for your child. If you choose to have a thanksgiving service now you may also have a baptism service at a later date.

What happens during the services?

Our ‘Thanksgiving’ and ‘Holy Baptism’ services normally follow the approved format and liturgy of the Church of England’s ‘Common Worship’ material.

A ‘Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child’ service normally adopts the following format:

- Introduction
- Reading(s) and Sermon
- Thanksgiving and Blessing
- Giving of the Gospel
- Prayers
- Ending

A 'Holy Baptism' service normally adopts the following format:

- The Greeting
- Introduction
- The Collect Prayer
- Bible Readings and Sermon
- Presentation of the Candidate(s)
- The Decision
- Signing with the Cross
- Prayer over the Water
- Profession of Faith
- Baptism
- Commission
- Prayers of Intercession
- The Welcome and Peace
- The Blessing
- Giving of a Lighted Candle
- The Dismissal

Can I have my child baptised at St Nicolas?

The basic rule in the Church of England is that if you want to be baptised yourself or to have your child baptised, the right place to do it is in your local parish church. This means that if you don't live in the parish, we won't normally baptise your child at St Nicolas Church unless you have been coming to services here regularly over a period of time. Otherwise you should approach the local parish church where you live.

If you do live in the parish, we will be delighted to baptise you or your child here. All we ask is that you:

- Take part in baptism preparation
- Meet the requirements about godparents and sponsors (which are explained later).

What preparation will there be?

To prepare for any baptism, the clergy will need to meet you to discuss what will happen in the service and what it means. This meeting usually takes no more than an hour. It can happen in your home, but we recommend it takes place in the church, as this makes preparation easier for everybody.

For the christening of a baby or young child this meeting is the only preparation you will need. For adults, and some older children, who are candidates for baptism, it is also helpful to explore whether it would be right for them to be confirmed as well as being baptised.

What are the rules about godparents and sponsors?

Children who are baptised in the Church of England traditionally have at least three godparents, at least two of whom should be the same sex as the child—there is no maximum number of godparents. However, the rules do say that ‘when three cannot conveniently be had’, one godfather and one godmother will do. Godparents are usually family members or friends, but parents can be godparents too. Godparents have an important role in helping the baptised child to grow into a loving relationship with God and should therefore be someone that the child looks up to. Because of this, the rules require them to be baptised themselves, and preferably confirmed as well.

Adult baptism candidates have sponsors rather than godparents. Each candidate should have at least two sponsors. Their role in the service is to present the candidate for baptism.

Who will take our service?

There are several clergy who conduct baptisms at St Nicolas. Several weeks before the baptism, the clergy will decide who will be taking your service and will let you know.

Can I ask a priest from another parish to take the service?

Whilst most baptisms are taken by the St Nicolas clergy team, if you would like to ask a priest from another parish, or elsewhere, to take part in the service this is usually not a problem, but please discuss your thoughts with Roy at your first meeting.

What if we don't feel our child is ready for baptism yet?

For people who want a Christian ceremony to celebrate their child's birth or adoption but don't feel baptism is the right step at this point in their life, St Nicolas offers a service of thanksgiving. The Rector would be happy to discuss this with you.

How long will the Service last?

Usually a baptism service will last between 40 and 45 minutes, but this depends on how many readings and hymns you choose to include. It is extremely important that you arrive on time for the service. If your service doesn't start on time, it might be necessary to reduce part of the service to ensure it doesn't run into another service.

How old does the child have to be?

Children can be baptised from birth. Once a child is old enough to understand the Christian faith themselves we would want them to go through a different preparation course, however.

I'm not baptised, does that matter?

No, but the godparents should be. You might want to consider getting baptised at the same time as your child.

We're not married, does that matter?

No, not at all— but we're more than happy to talk about weddings too! We might even be able to combine both celebrations into one if that was something you wanted.

My partner is a Christian, but I'm not - does that matter?

No, not all couples share the same faith. However it is important that both parents are happy for the child to be baptised and for the partner who is a Christian to keep the promises they make during the service.

What music can I have?

Neither of the dedicated services usually involves the singing of hymns. We have facilities in church to play music from a CD in addition to having the organ played. If you would like to have hymns during the service, this can be arranged. Please let us know what you're thinking.

When do baptism services take place?

Most baptisms at St Nicolas happen at dedicated services around lunchtime on a Sunday . However, we are also very pleased to perform baptisms during our main Sunday morning service, which starts at 10 o'clock, if you would prefer.

Do we need an order of service?

No, not normally. The order of services are provided by the Church.

Can photographs be taken during the service?

The Baptism is a special moment within your lives and we appreciate that your friends and family will want to record it. However, flashes, clicking of cameras and moving around to get the perfect picture is very distracting. In order that the service in church flows freely without too much intrusion, please tell photographers that during the service itself no flash photography is allowed. If you decide to have a professional photographer, they may take non-flash pictures, but we ask that he or she arrives half an hour before the service to speak to the priest and agree where photographs are allowed without detracting from the service.

Can I have a service video-recorded?

Yes. The videographer should arrive in good time before the service and discuss with the clergy where best to stand. Video camera operators are asked to ensure minimum intrusion into the service. It is suggested that they position themselves in the pulpit or behind one of the front pillars for the entire duration of the service. We do not, however, allow the use of additional video lighting. The Church is not dark and this should not present an issue for your videographer.

What about flowers & candles?

We have a team decorate the church each week. It is normal for the flowers that they provide to be sufficient for the service. If you would like to do something different, please contact our flower team. Please note, we do not permit the use of candles within flower arrangements.

How much does it all cost and when do I pay?

Baptism and thanksgiving services are provided free of charge.

Is parking available?

The church car park is right at the top of Church Lane (behind the church). It is shared with those using the church halls. There is a large council car park on Village Way which is about five minutes away from the Church. Please ensure that your guests do not park in the Arts Centre car park at the bottom of Church Lane; this is a private car park for those using the Arts Centre.

Sat Nav systems

If your guests are using satellite navigation systems, the post code of the church car park is: GU6 8AS and the post code of the larger council car park is: GU6 8AF

A Note for Godparents

Congratulations on being asked to be a godparent – they are very important people! It means that your friends or relations think that you'll be a good example and role model for their child. They trust you to pray for them, speak to them about God and to encourage them in their Christian faith.

Here are some comments and frequently asked questions (and answers) about being a godparent. We hope that you find them helpful:

What does being a godparent involve?

You have a special role. It's about helping the child to know God and to support them in their membership of the local church. You will be expected to attend the child's baptism service and to make promises to help to bring him/her up in the Christian faith. It's a role that will develop over time as your godchild grows up and develops his/her own faith.

Being a godparent feels like a big responsibility!

It is! Have a look at the questions you will answer in the baptism service (please see above). Take some time to think through the commitments that you make when you answer them. But don't forget that the church community can and will support you in encouraging and praying for your godchild.

Does being a godparent mean that I'm a legal guardian as well?

No, your role as a godparent is a spiritual one – to encourage and pray for your godchild. Perhaps you will be asked to be a guardian too, but that is separate from being a godparent.

What happens after the baptism service?

The church normally gives you a special card to remind you of your godchild's baptism and the promises that you made. Keep the card safely and in a place that you'll see it every day – so that you can remember your godchild and ask God to bless him/her daily.

I'm worried about doing the right thing on the day!

The priest and the lay team will make sure that the service goes smoothly, and that everyone knows what to do – and when!

What should I give as a gift to the child?

The most important gifts you can give your godchild are your time, presence and prayers – but you will probably also want to mark the baptism by giving a special gift. Godparents don't have to buy expensive gifts.

A simple, meaningful present is a good choice. Here are some suggestions:

- Bibles
- Books of Bible stories
- Books of prayers
- A silver or gold cross or chain (although your godchild may not be able to wear these for some time)
- A small wooden cross
- Drawings, paintings and posters of Christian stories

How do I build a relationship with my godchild?

The important thing to ensure is that the relationship with your godchild is kept alive. Children love to get letters, postcards, e-mails and other forms of electronic messages. Keep in touch with your godchild in a way that shows that you care for him/her, and that the relationship with you is a special one. Don't forget birthdays! Don't forget important dates and events in his/her life. Send good wishes when exams and other kinds of challenges are to be faced!

As your godchild gets older, he/she may want to ask questions about faith or Christian life. If you've kept in touch, he/she may direct these questions to you – what a privilege it will be to help them discover and explore their own faith. Ask your priest for assistance if necessary. Hopefully, later on, your godchild will want to make his/her own declaration of faith at a Confirmation service. At that stage, your godchild will confirm the promises that you made for him/her at the baptism service.

Useful Contacts

Church Office

Elise Whittington
St Nicolas Church Office
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Cranleigh
GU6 8AS

Email : Elise@stnicolascranleigh.org.uk
Tel: 01483 273620
(Monday to Friday 9am to 12 noon)

Clergy

Rev'd Roy Woodhams (Rector)
Email: Roy@stnicolascranleigh.org.uk
Tel: 01483 800655

Rev'd Ian Maslin (Curate)
Email: Ian@stnicolascranleigh.org.uk
Tel: 01483 379518

Rev'd Patricia Hislop (Honorary Priest)
Email: Tricia@stnicolascranleigh.org.uk
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