

Evesham Parochial Church Council Draft Internal Document

Baptism Policy

FOR CONSIDERATION - AS 16.5.14

What is Baptism?

Baptism is a serious and life-changing commitment to journey with the God of Jesus Christ. It is the first step in a response to God's love. Adults who come to this decision traditionally undertake a course of instruction which will normally conclude with baptism and confirmation. Infants are baptised on the basis of the faith practised by their parents and godparents, who will be responsible for that infant's nurture in the church.

The birth of a child is an occasion for celebration which may include giving thanks to God and praying for the child's future. The service for this is called *Thanksgiving for Childbirth*.

Who may be baptised?

Residents of the Parish

Under Canon Law, anyone resident within an ecclesiastical parish are entitled to be baptised in the Parish Church of that parish¹. Children of residents are baptised on the understanding that parents and godparents make the following promises, both to

“pray for *them*, draw *them* by your example into the community of faith and walk with them in the way of Christ”²

and

“care for *them*, and help *them* take their place within the life and worship of Christ's Church”³

¹ Canon B22.2. “If the minister shall refuse or unduly delay to baptize any such infant, the parents or guardians may apply to the bishop of the diocese, who shall, after consultation with the minister, give such directions as he thinks fit.”

² *Common Worship* The Liturgy of Baptism (2006): Presentation of the Candidates

³ *Common Worship* The Liturgy of Baptism (2006): Presentation of the Candidates

People who reside outside of the Parish

This entitlement extends to non-residents who are habitual worshippers at the Parish Church where they are requesting baptism.⁴ Habitual worship is defined in Canon Law, for these purposes as expressed by at least one parent being on the Electoral Roll of the parish.⁵

When Does Baptism Happen?

Services of Baptism happen at the main gathering of the congregation which is usually the main Parish Eucharist at 10:00am on a Sunday morning.⁶ In order for the congregation to be both prepared and supportive, certain Sundays of the year are designated as Sundays for Baptism. These include [obviously Easter, possibly Candlemas, Pentecost and any other candidates the PCC may suggest]

In cases of emergency, where a baptismal candidate is in mortal danger, baptism may be administered immediately⁷, in these circumstances any baptised Christian can administer Baptism providing it is in the name of the Trinity. Should the baptised person then survive, then the Welcome should be administered in the midst of the gathered congregation at a later date.⁸

⁴ Canon B 22.5. A minister who intends to baptize any infant whose parents are residing outside the boundaries of his cure, unless the names of such persons or of one of them be on the church electoral roll of the same, shall not proceed to the baptism without having sought the good will of the minister of the parish in which such parents reside.

in the parish during a period of six months prior to enrolment.”

⁵ *Church Representations Rules: Electoral Roll*
“(2) A lay person shall be entitled to have [their] name entered on the roll of a parish if [they are] baptised, of sixteen years or upwards, has signed an application form for enrolment and declares him[her]self either -

⁶ Canon B 21 Of Holy Baptism “. . . every minister having a cure of souls shall normally administer the sacrament of Holy Baptism on Sundays at public worship when the most number of people come together, that the congregation there present may witness the receiving of them that be newly baptized into Christ’s Church, and be put in remembrance of their own profession made to God in their baptism

- a) to be a member of the Church of England or of a Church in communion therewith resident in the parish; or
- b) to be such a member and, not being resident in the parish, to have habitually attended public worship in the parish during a period of six months prior to enrolment; or
- c) to be a member in good standing of a Church which subscribes to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity (not being a Church in communion with the Church of England) and also prepared to declare himself to be a member of the Church of England having habitually attended public worship

⁷ Canon B 22.6 “No minister being informed of the weakness or danger of death of any infant within his cure and therefore desired to go to baptize the same shall either refuse or delay to do so.”

⁸ Canon B 22.8. “If any infant which is privately baptized do afterwards live, it shall be brought to the church and there, by the minister, received into the congregation of Christ’s flock according to the form and manner prescribed in and by the office for Private Baptism authorized by Canon B 1” [B 1 is the Canon ‘Of conformity of worship’ which lists the forms of service authorised for use in the Church of England]

What support is there for the baptism candidate?

At the Annual Parochial Meeting of the Parish of Evesham in 2013, it was resolved overwhelmingly to adopt the Five Marks of Mission of the Worldwide Anglican Communion. The second Mark of Mission is a commitment to ‘Teach, baptise and nurture new believers’.

Candidates for baptism will normally undergo a course of instruction in the Christian faith. These courses will also include members of the congregation who will be there both to support the candidate and to use the opportunity to reflect on their own faith. Adult candidates will have sponsors rather than godparents and one or more of these are often drawn from others on the course.

Where a child is to be baptised, their support is in the form of godparents. Godparents will be baptised and confirmed, though the confirmation requirement can be waived.⁹ While there is prescription about the number of godparents¹⁰ it is more important that any godparent chosen is someone who can, “pray for *them*, draw *them* by your example into the community of faith and walk with them in the way of Christ”¹¹ and

“care for *them*, and help *them* take their place within the life and worship of Christ’s Church”¹²

And be able to make the following declarations in the Baptism service:

Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God?

I reject them.

Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil?

I renounce them.

Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour?

I repent of them.

Do you turn to Christ as Saviour?

I turn to Christ.

Do you submit to Christ as Lord?

I submit to Christ.

Do you come to Christ, the way, the truth and the life?

I come to Christ.¹³

⁹ Canon B 21.4 “No person shall be admitted to be a sponsor or godparent who has not been baptized and confirmed. Nevertheless the minister shall have power to dispense with the requirement of confirmation in any case in which in his judgement need so requires.”

¹⁰ Canon B 23 Of godparents and sponsors “1. For every child to be baptized there shall be not fewer than three godparents, of whom at least two shall be of the same sex as the child and of whom at least one shall be of the opposite sex; save that, when three cannot conveniently be had, one

godfather and godmother shall suffice. Parents may be godparents for their own children provided that the child have at least one other godparent.”

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