

Stratford upon Avon URC



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Baptism Services



Baptism

As a parent you want to offer your child the best so that he/she will grow into maturity and enjoy life to the full. The church can play an important part in that growth and development:

- We all need hope and meaning in life. Christianity says that meaning, hope and purpose are found in God who has transformed suffering and death by Jesus' own death and resurrection.
- Everyone needs a vision to guide and inspire them. Christianity offers a vision of a God who actively loves us and offers to make us more capable of living life to the full, albeit with different aims and responses to people who do not follow Christ. It also gives us a clear example of Jesus to follow as a model and guide for how to live our life.
- Everyone needs to have a basis for healthy and fulfilling relationships. Christianity offers a view of the world based on the love of God for all, and on

Stratford upon Avon URC

the goodness of the things that God created, even though they have been spoilt by human attitudes and actions. We believe that life is more fulfilling when we find ourselves in community. The church offers that community of care and support for all ages. Being with other people offers us a chance to grow and mature, to share deeply the important things of life, and to act together for the good of our wider community and the world in general. We are stronger when we work together.

There are two different services that may be appropriate for you and your child:

- Infant Baptism
- Thanksgiving and Blessing

What is Infant Baptism?

Baptism is an outward sign of becoming a new person. It says that a person no longer lives life for themselves but now wants to follow Jesus Christ. So Baptism marks a commitment to be a disciple of Jesus and this means that belief in him is necessary. Your new baby is not old enough to either have this belief or make a commitment for themselves. This means that you promise to encourage your child to grow up in the faith and life of the church. They then have more opportunity to make their own commitment to Jesus and fulfil the promises you make at baptism.

Your child is always welcome in the Church and is accepted and loved by God whether you choose baptism or not. (We strongly reject the superstitious belief that a child would be damned if they died un-baptised – this represents an abhorrent view of God that we do not recognise in Jesus!)

The promises that parents make for their infants baptism are:

- Do you believe and trust in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, maker of heaven and earth, redeemer of the world and giver of life?

Stratford upon Avon URC

- Do you promise, trusting in God's grace, that by prayer and example you will teach your child the faith of the gospel and bring her/him up in the worship and life of the church?

Infant Baptisms take place during our main worship and the congregation also makes a promise to support you in the task of raising your child in the Christian faith. The child receives a certificate and a baptismal candle. There is no charge for the service – we just want to share in your joy! Your family and friends are very welcome and other children can make as much noise as they like!

Adults who have been baptised as children can make a further public commitment to Jesus at a Confirmation Service. Here they confirm the promises that were made on their behalf by their parents and publicly confess their faith in Christ and become full members of Christ's church.

Thanksgiving and Blessing

Some people decide to let their children grow up and decide for themselves whether they wish to be baptised. Other parents may feel that they cannot in all honesty make the promises in a service for infant baptism. They may not share in the church's life on a regular basis but they still want to give thanks and celebrate the birth of their children with friends and in Christian worship.

A Thanksgiving and Blessing ceremony takes place in our main worship. We give thanks for the birth of the child. The parents make promises to love and care for their child and God's blessing is sought on all the family.

Some more thoughts on Baptism

Baptism is *not* christening, which is a naming ceremony (giving the child a Christian name) or simple celebration of the birth of a child. If this is really what you want, then the Thanksgiving service is the most appropriate ceremony. The promises and statements you will be expected to make at Baptism are profound and deeply

Stratford upon Avon URC

challenging and you may be feeling daunted by them. That is a good and proper response because it means that you have understood their implications. You are determining the spiritual direction for your child. If you feel you have little or no faith but you want to know more, then baptism may still be an option for you. It is the start of a journey of faith and it may help you to know that all Christians, even the clergy, have doubts from time to time! That's one of the reasons why we need each other's support and encouragement, and to belong to a church to grow in our faith.

Who performs the ceremony?

Dr Peter Horrocks is an ordained Elder in the United Reformed Church. He has been inducted as an Elder in Local Leadership in Stratford-upon-Avon and is authorised to carry out Baptisms and Blessings, Holy Communion, Marriages and Funerals.

What to do next?

For further information and to discuss your needs please contact:

Dr. Peter Horrocks

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You may also wish to explore more about the life of our church by looking up our website: www.stratforduponavonurc.co.uk

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