

'Parents', below, means the parent(s) of a child under 16, or the guardian(s), or the step-parent(s), or the child's primary carer(s).

1. We will baptise infants and children under 16 where both parents consent. Normatively, both must consent¹. Where we cannot offer baptism because one parent withholds consent, we could offer a thanksgiving service.
2. Individual candidates for baptism aged 16 or over will be offered preparation for confirmation.
3. Candidates who are not resident in the parish may be baptised in the parish if there is a strong pastoral reason for this and if they obtain the consent of the incumbent of the parish in which they are resident and if they are able to meet the requirements for preparation.
4. Godparents are nominated by parents. The guidance of the Church of England is that there should be at least 3 Godparents, at least two of whom should be the same sex as the child. There cannot be less than 2. The rules of the Church state that Godparents must be baptised. Unbaptised sponsors may be included among those supporting the candidate for baptism.
5. Baptisms are normally held as part of the main Sunday morning service on the designated Sunday of the month in each church in the Benefice. Exceptions to this policy are as follows:
 - Where we have more Baptisms than we can accommodate on Sunday mornings, services booked for St Mary's in some months will be held as part of the special baptism service on the afternoon of the first Sunday of each month. This exception is made because of the frequency of bookings and the numbers of guests attending. It is reviewed annually by the ministry team and the decision on whether to continue is made annually by the Rector.
 - Baptisms of children may be held in the marriage service of their parents.
 - Private baptisms may be arranged where there is a strong pastoral reason for this.
8. For all these exceptions, baptism preparation will be carried out as usual.
9. At the baptism service, parents are given a baptism certificate and a baptism candle for each child baptised. Godparents are given a card.

¹ The Legal Opinions Concerning the Church of England states 16.a.4.97 Section 5 'The Canon Law has never required the consent of a parent before a child is baptised', however for a healthy child Canon B22 envisages the parents involvement. This must be construed in relation to the general law of the land and the word 'parent' must therefore be seen as referring to a person having parental responsibility for the child. It goes on to say that were the couple married at the time of the birth of the child they would both have parental responsibility. But that if not, the father can only gain responsibility under the Children Act 1989, by order of a civil court or by a parental responsibility agreement. If someone is adopted their adopted parents gain responsibility. If one parent objects the matter will be referred to the Diocesan Bishop under Canon C18.

BAPTISM POLICY

10. After the baptism, information is sent to the family about parish activities and groups which might interest them, subject to the family giving consent to receiving information.

Adopted by Witney PCC 17 January 2023

Adopted by Minster Lovell PCC 24 January 2023

Signed *Toby Wright*

Counter-signed *Kate Banks* Witney PCC

Counter-signed *Hugh White* Minster Lovell PCC

Review date: 5 years from date of adoption