

COMMON BAPTISM QUESTIONS



Can anyone have a Christening Service?

The Church of England welcomes all babies, children and families for christenings – whatever shape that family takes.

You do not have to be married or have been a regular churchgoer – as a parent, you do not even have to have been baptized yourself – though you could be. Everyone is welcome at their local church

How much does a christening service cost?

The good news is that a christening service is free.

There may be costs for your family party afterwards, so you may need to budget for hire of a venue and refreshments. You may also like to buy your child a christening gift, or christening robes, but these are not compulsory, (in fact, christening gowns that have been handed down through the family may have more meaning for you, as well as saving money).

Is a baptism different to a christening?

There is no difference between a christening service and a baptism service.

Some churches will use the word 'baptism' and some the word 'christening'. The moment when your child has water poured or wiped on their head is the actual baptism and is at the heart of the service. Babies are baptized during a christening service just as couples are 'married' during a 'wedding' service.

Do Parents have to be christened?

You can have your child baptized at a christening regardless of whether or not you, the parents, are baptized. It is only the godparents who are required to be baptized, (so the only time a parent would have to be baptized is if they were also acting as a godparent).

Do Godparents have to be christened?

Godparents are really important people at a christening. They will make some big promises in church to support their godchild in their Christian faith for a lifetime. For this reason, a godparent must be baptized themselves and ideally confirmed too.

The preparation and promises they made at their own confirmation demonstrates a commitment to living a Christian life, a model for a child just beginning their own amazing journey of faith.

Is there a minimum age of godparents?

If you're thinking of asking a person who is under 18 to be a godparent, first talk to the vicar who will be taking the service. You will be able to talk together about whether this is the right decision, both for your child and for the young godparent.

There is actually no minimum age for godparents, but the chosen person must be mature enough to understand the lifelong commitment and responsibility they are taking on. It's a demanding role, but some quite young people do feel ready for these responsibilities. The vicar taking your service can help you decide.

How many godparents can I have?

Every child should have at least three godparents, two of the same sex and at least one of the opposite sex to your child. Although there is no official maximum number of godparents, three or four is usual. If you'd like more than that, talk to your vicar about the practicalities and they'll be pleased to advise.

Both parents may be godparents for their own children, providing they are baptized themselves and providing they have at least one other godparent.

Is it possible to have godparents by proxy?

Godparents are really important people at a christening. A person can only be an official godparent if they are physically present at the service, since they will make some big promises for and on behalf of the child on the day.

As they are already making promises on behalf of the child, to have another person making promises on *their* behalf confuses who is making promises on behalf of who. So there is actually no provision in the Church of England for 'godparents by proxy'.

However, if a special person who you wanted to be a godparent is unable to make it to a christening, there is no reason why they can't be asked to take on a godparent-like role unofficially, and that kind of relationship can be encouraged throughout the child's life, but they wouldn't be entered into the Baptism Register after the christening. If the church has the facilities, they could perhaps be linked via Skype or similar software, so they can still see the service.

Parents Guide to a Christening : <https://www.churchofengland.org/life-events/christenings/parents-guide-christenings>

A Guide for Godparents : <https://www.churchofengland.org/life-events/christenings/guide-godparents>