



The Church of England
Diocese of Ely

WEST NORFOLK PRIORY GROUP

FINCHAM | MARHAM | NORDELPH | RUNCTON HOLME WITH SOUTH
RUNCTON |
SHOULDHAM | SHOULDHAM THORPE | STOW BARDOLPH | STOW
BRIDGE | TOTTENHILL | WATLINGTON | WIMBOTSHAM |
WORMEGAY

THIRTEEN VILLAGES. ONE MISSION.



BAPTISM GUIDE

ARRANGING A BAPTISM

IN THE WEST NORFOLK PRIORY GROUP

CONTENTS

What is Baptism?	3
Baptism or Thanksgiving Service?	3
Can I be baptised?	4
Can I arrange to have my baby baptised?	4
Baptism Preparation Course	4
When and Where does the Baptism take place?	6
What does it cost?	6
What is the next step?	6
Dressing for Holy Baptism	7
Visiting Clergy	7
Facilities, Parking and Celebrations	7
Timeline and Checklist for Holy Baptism	9

What is Baptism?

The service of baptism is the outward sign of a new relationship with God. In church-speak it is a 'sacrament'. In baptism we both signal entry into the committed and active life of the Church and experience the grace and love of God. Baptism is something we do: it is something done on our behalf by priests: and it is – above all – something done by God. Those who bring people to be baptised come not as spectators but as participants in an action that is done on behalf of the whole Church.

The church takes baptism very seriously and this involves preparation, making of promises, anointing, dressing in white robes, the giving of a lighted candle and laying on of hands to symbolise the reception of the Holy Spirit.

Baptism or Thanksgiving Service?

Christenings and Baptisms are the same thing, and we love doing them as well as Thanksgiving Services for the Gift of a Child. Baptism involves making solemn promises to raise your child in the Christian faith while a Thanksgiving Service does not require you to make such promises.

If you live in one of the parishes or regularly attend one of our churches and would like your child (or yourself) to be baptised or to have a Service of Thanksgiving, then please contact our Church Office. The Church Administrator will take your details and give you the services when you will be able to make an appointment for you to see the priest after a Sunday service.

Can I be baptised?

If you are an adult, please make an appointment to see the vicar to talk about the possibilities; baptism for adults is a sign of new commitment and belonging, and we will want to plan things carefully and to ensure you have the chance to explore – as an adult – the faith into which you are being baptised. We will also want to talk about arranging your confirmation.

Can I arrange to have my baby baptised?

Yes. However, baptism isn't just a 'pretty event' and an excuse for a party (though it can be that too!). We take seriously the fact that, in baptism, your child is becoming part of the Church, the Body of Christ – and we will want you to think carefully about both the service and your choice of godparents who – on the day of the baptism – speak for your child and affirm the Christian commitments being made. For this reason, all godparents must have been baptised; you can always ask other non-Christians to be involved (and we will actively seek to include them), but they can't be godparents. Baptisms usually take place on a Sunday morning Holy Communion service.

What is the Baptism Preparation Course?

During the Baptism Preparation Course, which will be on Zoom, the Lay Minister will go through the practicalities and explore both Thanksgiving and Baptism services, the differences between the two and what it means for you and your child. You will also be sent a copy of the service which the Lay Minister will go through with you. Please note that English Law requires that **ALL godparents must be baptised AND confirmed to be able to accept this very responsible position**. If this legal requirement cannot be met, you can still have a Service of Thanksgiving where your child will be blessed and you and your family prayed for.

The Church of England advises godparents should be 'persons who will faithfully fulfil their responsibilities both by their care for the children committed to their charge and by the example of their own godly living'. This suggests that godparents need to be of an age to understand and fulfil their commitments.

The Baptism Course is important preparation for all, and godparents will be expected to attend at least one session with the Lay Minister. Also, in order to gain the full benefit of

the preparation, we ask that families with young children make themselves available for the course so that they are not distracted by parenting duties.

After completing the Baptism Course, the vicar will want to meet with you again to ensure that you are ready for the promises that you are about to make and you will attend a rehearsal before the big day.

When and Where does the Baptism take place?

We baptise and have Blessing and Thanksgiving during our main Sunday Holy Communion service so that the congregation can welcome the child/person into the family of the church. Very occasionally there might be a good medical reason for an emergency baptism.

Please note that Baptism cannot be rushed unless the life of the person is in danger. We would require five months from the time of initial inquiry to the day of baptism. This is to allow for proper preparation of candidates and godparents and to allow non-churchgoers to fulfil the expectation to attend church for three months.

Thanksgivings and Baptisms should ideally take place in the local church of the person being baptised, but we are also happy to receive people who do not live in the village but who have strong local or family connections to churches in WNPG. We also have 12 churches in our Benefice, so if your local church is small and your guest list is large, we may be able to offer you one of our larger churches.

What does it cost?

Nothing! There is no charge for baptism; only for the certificates. We do, though, as a sign of your commitment to the Church, ask you to consider making a one-off donation to sustain its life and mission, or even better a regular monthly pledge to signal your ongoing involvement.

What is the next step?

Please ring the Church Office to make an appointment to meet the vicar. When you meet, the vicar will interview you and explain what baptism is and how you should proceed. You will then be asked to complete a Baptism Application Form and will have to undergo a Baptism Preparation Course.

If you are seeking baptism for a child, please make sure you have all the details required for your godparents. Also, if the parents of a child to be baptised are not already regular worshippers, in order to aid their understanding of the Christian Faith and of Christian Baptism, they will be asked to attend a Holy Communion service in church at least once a month for three months. **Dates for baptism will be confirmed once these have been completed.**

Dressing for Holy Baptism

Candidates for baptism are usually in white, and we ask that parents and godparents especially be appropriately and respectfully dressed for the service in a place of worship.

Visiting Clergy

We will be happy to discuss involvement of other clergy in the service, but please note that the local Vicar will always be the officiant. In addition, all external ministers will be subjected to the prevailing Safeguarding processes of the Church of England which may take some time. Any participation must be fully agreed with the local officiant prior to the service.



FACILITIES

Some of our churches have facilities – Marham, Stow Bridge and Watlington. We regret that our other churches do not have loo facilities at the moment.



PARKING

All our churches have very limited parking.



POST BAPTISM CELEBRATION

Our churches do not have Hall facilities to cater for celebrations. But many parishioners have found the following establishments to be well located and helpful:

The Andel Lodge

48 Lynn Road,

Tottenham, PE33 0RH

Phone: 01553 810256

<https://www.andellodge.co.uk/>

Stow Hall Gardens

Stow Bardolph

King's Lynn

Norfolk

PE34 3HU (Just off the A10, north of Downham Market)

<https://stowhallgardens.co.uk/host-your-event/>

Runton Holme Parish Hall

Fincham Village Hall

Marham Village Hall

Shouldham Village Hall

Watlington Village Hall

Wimbotsham Village Hall

Timeline and Checklist for Holy Baptism

- Contact the Church Office to make Sunday appointment with Vicar.
- Meet the Vicar for an initial interview.
- Complete the Application Form and begin Baptism Preparation Course which will take at least three months to complete.
- Godparents will have to be qualified and attend at least one session of the Preparation Course. Baptism date will be confirmed once you are ready from the preparation.
- In the meantime, if you are not already regular worshippers, you will be expected to attend a Holy Communion service in church at least once a month for three months.
- Once the preparation has been completed satisfactorily and you have been attending church for three months, you will have a final interview with the vicar and attend a rehearsal after a Sunday service.
- The Big Day arrives!
- Remember to keep coming to church as a family.

CONTACT DETAILS

West Norfolk Priory Group Church Office

Tel: 07596 707469

Email: office@westnorfolkpriorygroup.co.uk

Website: www.westnorfolkpriorygroup.co.uk

We look forward to welcoming you and your family.

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