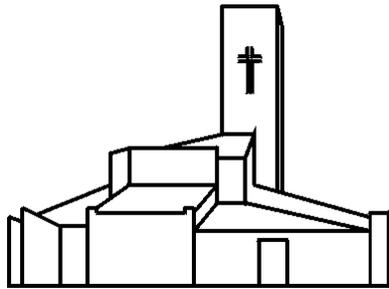


# Christening Services at St Benedict's Church



St Benedict's is the Church of England parish church for Briar Hill, Camp Hill, East and West Hunsbury. Find us in West Hunsbury, on Hunsbury Hill Road at the top of Hunslet Lane.

Licensed Lay  
Pastoral Minister Lesley Flood 701099

**St. Benedict's Church, Hunsbury Hill Road,  
West Hunsbury, NN4 9UG**

## Introduction

Congratulations on the birth of your child, whether it was very recently, or a little while ago now. For most of us, the arrival of a child is a very significant milestone in our lives, and we want to celebrate it with our family and friends. We at St Benedict's see children as a precious gift from God, and want to help you to mark this special occasion. This leaflet explains the ways in which we might be able to help. It should also help you to think through what exactly you are looking for.

## The Background – Christening

Until recently, there was only one Church of England service for new children – the service known as 'Christening'. This Christening service did two things.

First, it was a chance for parents to give thanks to God for the precious gift of their new child, along with their family and friends, and to pray for God's blessing and protection for the child.

Secondly, the Christening service also included the baptism of the child. For two thousand years, baptism has been the way that people (be they children or adults) join the Christian church. It's a significant step to take, and it involves a number of promises and commitments – of which more later.

So, for several hundred years, if you wanted a service to mark the arrival of your new child, you had a Christening. This met the needs of some people really well, but wasn't quite what others were looking for.

Around the year 2000, the Church of England reviewed all of its services. One of the most significant changes was to separate into two separate services the two functions of the Christening service. Now, if you want both, you can still have both. But if you don't, you don't have to. At St Benedict's we offer both services, and ask you to choose the one that best fits what you want to do.

## Service of Thanksgiving

The new *Service of Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child* (to give it its full title) does what its name suggests. In this service we give thanks to God. We pray for his blessing and protection for the child. We pray for the parents – for wisdom, patience and strength. Godparents and family pledge their support. But there are no further promises – just thanks, prayers and a blessing.

## Service of Baptism

The Baptism service covers the other part of the Christening. It is for those who want to commit themselves and their child to joining the life of the church.

The promises in the service include the following:

- Turning towards the way of Jesus Christ, and away from all that is wrong
- Bringing the child up within the life and worship of the church.
- Believing and trusting in God; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

## What happens next?

Someone from the church will normally come to your home and chat further to both parents (where possible) about the two services. They'll bring with them both Orders of Service, so you'll get a better feel for what the two services are like.

If you're clear that you would like a Service of Thanksgiving, then you can go ahead and book a date. If, however, you're interested in the baptism service, we will ask you to come to a short course, *Considering Baptism*. The course lasts two evenings, and runs every couple of months. It's a chance to stand back and consider how baptism relates to what you want for your child, as well as to think through what the service contains. Having done the course, it will then be your decision as parents which service is more appropriate for you at this point.

## Frequently asked questions

Here are a few of the questions we are often asked, along with some brief responses.

*When can I have the service?*

One Sunday afternoon a month is set aside at St Benedict's for services of Thanksgiving and Baptism. Once you are clear which service you will choose, you will be able to make a provisional booking.

*The Baptism service appeals to me, but I don't go to church.*

It's worth thinking through why exactly you don't go to church. If, for instance, it's because you think you wouldn't know what to do, or your child(ren) would make too much noise, then please think again.

At St Benedict's we're working hard to make coming to church as straightforward as possible. For a start we've introduced an informal monthly service called **Thirty Minute Church**. Its aim is to be accessible and enjoyable no matter what your background.

The other main service happens at **10am each Sunday**, and is enjoyed by all ages. This includes hymns, songs, Bible readings, and an address that relates the Christian faith to life today. Our 10am service concludes with Holy Communion. Many appreciate the chance for time out from the busyness of the week, including some space to reflect. During most of our 10am service, *Junior Church* (our Sunday School) happens in the church hall for children aged about 3 – 11. There are also normally some families present with younger children and babies, making use of dedicated space at the back of church. (*Junior Church* doesn't happen on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of each month – we expect that families will want to go to Thirty Minute Church on those Sundays.)

If you're interested in a service of baptism, and aren't already a churchgoer, we ask you to come to church at least a couple of times before the baptism - it's worth coming more

than once to get over the inevitable strangeness of the first visit. But if you don't want to come at all, then the service of baptism may not be the one for you at this point in time.

*Tell me more about Thirty Minute Church, then.*

Thirty Minute Church happens on the **2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday** of each month, from **11.30 to 12 noon**, followed by refreshments. The service includes stories and songs, activities and prayers. It's relaxed, informal and enjoyable – but also seeks to explore Christianity in a way that's helpful both to children and adults. It's already proving a popular service, so come in good time to make sure you get a seat.

*The Service of Thanksgiving is probably more appropriate for me, but I wanted to have the bit with the water.*

The 'bit with the water' is part of the baptism service. It symbolises the promises that have been made, as the one being baptised leaves behind all that is wrong, and is washed clean to follow Jesus Christ. It's a bit like the exchanging of rings at a wedding – it's a key part of the service, but it only makes sense because of the promises that have been made. Just exchanging rings isn't enough to make a good marriage – you need to be genuinely committed to each other. Similarly, the bit with the water isn't something magic, but has its meaning within the context of the service as a whole.

Coming to the *Considering Baptism* course should help you think through the issues. If you have any questions, please contact our Licensed Lay Pastoral Minister – Lesley Flood on (01604) 701099.