



St Paul's Church Northumberland Heath

Baptism Policy

Updated October 2016

St Paul's Identity Statement

We are a diverse family focused on exploring the timeless truth of the Bible in a creative and engaging way.

St Paul's Purpose Statement

We exist to grow in the truth of God's love and share this with others.

St Paul's Values Statement

We seek to be a loving, relevant, God-centred, learning and welcoming church that has integrity.

Loving

By this we mean:

Mirroring God's love for us by supporting and encouraging those around us.

Relevant

By this we mean:

Being in tune with the culture of our community without compromising the Gospel.

God-centred

By this we mean:

Seeking to be a prayerful community that keeps God at the heart of all we do.

Learning

By this we mean:

Teaching the truth of God's Word while journeying together, uncovering the riches of Christ's saving nature.

Welcoming

By this we mean:

Being open to everyone and actively building and sustaining friendships.

Integrity

By this we mean:

Seeking to live our lives under God's direction, so that all can see our faith is real.

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Introduction

This baptism policy document is designed to help the Parish of St Paul's to provide clear guidance as to our policy on offering baptism within the Parish.

Baptism is something we are commanded to do by Jesus, as part of someone coming to faith on their discipleship journey. *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* Matthew 28:18-20.

In the Bible, baptism of infants is only done on the understanding that they will be brought up in the Christian faith.

Baptism is the rite of initiation into the church of Christ and we all hold the responsibility of welcoming a person to baptism, and helping to bring them up in the faith.

Policy

1. At St Paul's we provide baptism (also known as 'christening') of infants and baptism for adults. We are committed to providing a place of welcome and hospitality in which those wishing to be baptised or bringing an infant for baptism, together with parents and Godparents, can explore and grow in the Christian faith and remain faithful to their baptismal promises.

2. At St Paul's we recognise that baptism is one of the two sacraments of the Church (the other being communion). As a sacrament we believe it important that it is taken seriously, after consideration and with the undertaking set out below. We recognise that the church has a responsibility to baptise individuals as part of their journey of faith.

We believe that baptism is part of a faith process. Infants should be baptised only if there is reasonable evidence that those bringing the infant intend to uphold the vows that they will make, to bring them up in the Christian faith and to undertake that the child will be part of a church congregation.

It is the decision of the Vicar, in consultation with the Leadership team, on when an individual can be baptised at St Paul's. This is in line with church rules, that allow for a period of instruction for baptism candidates.

3. There is no age constraint on baptism at St Paul's. The decision as to whether a child can be baptised as a believer (adult) will be made by the Vicar in consultation with the Leadership team.

We recognise the theological standpoint of those who believe in infant baptism and will provide for them.

We recognise the theological standpoint of those who believe in believer baptism and will provide for them.

We will encourage those who wish to have a believer baptism to have a full submersion baptism.

As well as offering baptism, we offer a service of thanksgiving for a child to anyone who requests it.

4. There are certain legal requirements that must be met in order for an individual to be baptised in the Church of England.

Parent(s)/carers must either be resident in the parish of Northumberland Heath or be a member of St Paul's Church.

Where parents are bringing a child to baptism, at least one parent must have been baptised.

There is no rule about the number or gender of Godparents in the Church of England.

It is a requirement that Godparents have been baptised and are 16 years of age or over.

As baptism is a sacrament, the Church of England does not charge a fee for the service aside from a small fee for the certificate. At St Paul's, we will give a baptismal candle and an appropriate gift to baptism and thanksgiving candidates.

All baptisms and thanksgivings will be recorded in appropriate registers.

5. All baptisms take place during a Sunday service at St Paul's.

Process

1. Process for infant baptism

i – An enquiry will be made (usually to the church office)

ii – The Church Administrator will write to the applicant, thanking them for their enquiry and enclosing the booklet “Baptism & Thanksgiving at St Paul’s”.

iii – The applicant will then come to a Sunday service and have a conversation with the Vicar or Reader after the service.

iv – After a period of attendance deemed suitable by the Vicar, in consultation with the Leadership team, the parent / carer can request that the baptism be organised.

v – The Vicar will visit the family to go through the service and set the date of baptism.

vi – A baptism visitor may request a further visit with the family.

vii – Baptism takes place during a Sunday service.

2. Process for the thanksgiving of a child.

i - An enquiry will be made (to the Vicar or church office)

ii – The Church Administrator will write to the applicant, thanking them for their enquiry and enclosing the booklet “Baptism & Thanksgiving at St Paul’s”.

iii – The Vicar or Reader will visit the family to go through the service and set the date of the thanksgiving.

iv – The thanksgiving takes place either during a service or as part of a separate service.

3. Process for Believer (Adult) Baptism.

i - An enquiry will be made (usually to the Vicar).

ii – The Vicar or Reader will visit the candidate.

iii – The Vicar or Reader will organise some preparation sessions.

iv – The baptism takes place during a Sunday service.

4. Emergency Situations

At times it is necessary for an emergency baptism to take place. In these situations, the above policy can be modified at the discretion of the Vicar or Reader.

