baptism. Nonetheless, we do not refuse applications for baptism, provided that parents either live in our parish, or are regular worshipping members of the congregation. St John’s parish covers almost all of Biddulph south of Well Street, including Knypersley and Brown Lees.

What about Godparents?
The normal recommendation is to have 2 godparents of the same sex as the child and one of the opposite sex. This is not a hard & fast rule, but there is a lot of common sense in it. We recognise that there are all sorts of personal considerations about who to choose - you may already have family and friends in mind. However, we would encourage you to also think through the spiritual dimension to the role. Godparents are expected to make very a definite declaration of their own Christian faith, and to promise to help the child to grow up as a member of the church too. It is a minimum requirement that Godparents must have been baptised themselves.

What next?
If you would like to go ahead with either a baptism or thanksgiving service, please ring the vicar, Andrew Dawswell on 512240 (The best time to try is usually during regular weekday working hours, 9.00am-5.00pm, but if this is difficult I am available on some evenings after 7.30pm)

As well as booking the service, those who ask for a baptism will also be asked to come along to a preparation meeting, which will explain in more detail the meaning of the service and the implications of the promises that you will be making.

PS: If you’re into the net & want to know more about the Christian faith, you could try the following websites:
  - www.egodparent.com
  - www.wimbledon.org.uk/quest.htm

Thank you for your enquiry about Baptism (or Christening)! We share with you the sense of joy at the birth of a new life, and are delighted that you have made contact with our church and are seeking God’s blessing for this new member of your family. No parent can ask anything more significant for their child, knowing that God loves to be at the centre of your family life and to demonstrate his great love for children. This leaflet sets out to explain a bit about Christian Baptism and provide some information about Baptisms at St John’s.
What is baptism?

It may be easiest first of all to explain what baptism is not

- Being baptised IS NOT about giving your child a name - that has already been done when they were registered.
- Being baptised DOES NOT by itself make you a Christian
- Being baptised DOES NOT affect whether you will able to be married in church or have a Christian funeral
- Baptism IS NOT a kind of ‘insurance policy’ that means that everything in a person’s life goes well and that if we aren’t baptised things will go badly or our children will end up in hell. The bible teaches that God loves everyone - and whether we go to heaven or hell depends on our relationship with Him - not on whether we have been baptised.

Baptism is a sign first of all of God’s love and commitment to His people. The bible teaches that, despite our wrongdoings, the God who made us still loves us. He’s sent his Son Jesus into the world to be our saviour, and longs to bring his forgiveness to every single person.

Baptism is also the way in which a person formally becomes a member of the Christian Church. That’s why an important part of the ceremony is when the participants affirm that they share the church’s faith in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

When an adult is baptised they make these declarations for themselves. A young child is obviously unable to do this, so the affirmations are made on their behalf by the parents and godparents. Parents and godparents also promise that they will actively seek to pass on the Christian faith to the child - both by their own example - and by regular participation in the life and worship of the local church.

Bringing a child for baptism therefore represents a definite commitment to Christ and to the local church. We believe that these promises should not be made lightly, and although we want to encourage people to be baptised, we want to make sure that parents understand that baptism is much more than just a matter of ‘getting the baby done.’

We are aware that sometimes there is strong pressure from grandparents, or other family members, to have a child baptised, but would encourage parents who aren’t ready to make these strong commitments to say ‘no’. After all, if promises are made with no real intention of keeping them, it will be setting children a pretty poor example for the future. St Johns runs regular short courses to help people find out more about the Christian faith; and there is a Sunday club and a creche space for children at the same time as our 5.30 service, as well as regular all-age worship.

Is there an alternative to Baptism?

Yes there is! Our experience is that these days there are many people who would like some kind of service in church to say ‘thank you’ to God for their child, with family and friends present, but without having to make promises or declare a personal commitment to the Christian faith. The thanksgiving service provides for just this need, and we would be very happy to explain more of what is involved if you want to know.

When does it happen?

In St Johns, Baptisms generally take place as part of our regular Sunday morning worship, which begins at 9.45am & lasts for about an hour.

A Thanksgiving can take place either during one of these ordinary services, or at any other point in the week, including a Sunday afternoon.

Sometimes we are able to arrange for services to take place within a month or so. When there is a lot of demand, however, there may be a longer delay.

Does it matter if parents aren't married?

Christian teaching is clear that marriage provides the only appropriate place for sexual relations - and by far the best environment for bringing up children. As a church we believe that there is a real inconsistency in making the public declaration of Christian faith in baptism, yet being unwilling to live by the clear teaching of the bible in these important matters. We would strongly encourage any unmarried couples to consider marriage - both for your own security and for your children’s well being. This step, we believe, will be far more significant to your children than a