A brief guide to explain some important points about your child’s Christening Service at St John’s Church.
We are delighted that you have chosen to come to St John’s Church at this important time, both for your child and for you.

Some people get confused about the difference between a “Christening” and a “Baptism” service, so let’s set the record straight. They are both the same. To be precise, the Christening (literally “making Christ’s”) takes place within the Baptism Service as a sign that we are all followers of Jesus Christ. This will be more fully explained at your preparation session.

**So, what is Baptism?**

Well, let’s start with what it’s *not*.

Baptism is *not* a naming ceremony. You chose your child’s name at the time he/she was born.

Baptism is *not* simply a means of choosing people to be Godparents, “just in case something happens to me”. The role of the Godparent is even more important than that. Choose your Godparents very carefully.

Baptism is *not* just an excuse for a wild party to “wet the baby’s head”. Have a party by all means - but know why you are doing it.

Baptism is a specifically Christian “rite of initiation”. In other words, through our Baptism we receive God’s blessing and are welcomed into the world-wide family of God’s Church, onto a life-long journey of faith, commitment and loving relationship; and *that is what we celebrate during the service.*
**What Happens?**

Your service will be explained in some detail at your preparation session, where you will be given the opportunity to ask whatever questions you wish.

In brief, the service consists of:

**A welcome and opening prayers.**

Prayer is at the heart of the Christian life. The various activities of the service will be interspersed with prayer as we offer our thanks to God and pray for his people - including you, your child, your family and friends.

**A reading from the Bible followed by a short address.**

We learn from our Lord and reflect on his words.

**A series of promises** made by those present, and especially by parents and Godparents, on behalf of the child. These promises are about living the Christian life and helping our children to do the same.

**The “Christening”**

Your child is anointed with the sign of the cross as a sign of God’s love, and of our unity with Jesus Christ in the world-wide Christian family - the Church.
The Baptism
Water is poured over your child’s head in the name of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is an ancient practice of the Church dating right back to the time Jesus himself was baptised in the River Jordan.

It is a symbol of God’s cleansing power and of our rising to new life, the life of the Christian.

In addition, towards the end of the service, you will be given a lighted candle, the symbol of Jesus the Light of the World, on behalf of your child.

What next?
The Godparents you choose for your child are promising to help you to nurture her/him as a child of God. That is why it is important to choose wisely.

Where young children are brought for Baptism, parents and Godparents make promises on their behalf. We promise that the children will be brought up as Christians, knowing of God’s immeasurable love for them, and learning to live by the Christian values of love of God, and love of our neighbours.

That doesn’t mean that your child has to be turned into a religious maniac! Far from it.
But it does mean that your child needs to know, *from the earliest possible time*, about God’s love as shown in the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus. It also means that your child needs to begin to learn that there is such a thing as a Christian way of living.

In addition, not only should you be praying regularly *for* your child, but you should be helping her/him to learn to pray too.

You love your child dearly and want him/her to grow up to be a healthy, caring, well balanced adult. Helping children on their Christian journey, helping to care for their spiritual as well as their physical needs, is an important way to do just that.

**The Church is here to help you.**

The Church recognises its responsibility to support you as your child grows. Some parents find it very difficult to talk about matters of faith.

*We can help.*

Some parents find it hard to know where to start in teaching their children about Jesus.

*We can help.*

Some parents would like to bring their children to church regularly, but would feel embarrassed if their baby started crying or their toddler started toddling.

*We can help.*

We are well used to having babies and toddlers in worship, especially at our 9.30 Communion Service and Family Service.

We have a Crèche and a thriving Sunday School for older children, which meets during the 9.30 Communion service during school term time. In addition, to help you and your child feel welcome, we have a lively Baby
and Toddler Group which meets every week. Just ask about current meeting times. You are welcome.

The way to get over the natural worries many people have about coming to church, especially when you don’t know anyone, is to simply turn up. You will be welcomed, you will be given any help needed during the service, and at our 9.30 and Family Services you will be welcome to stay for refreshments afterwards. You have an open invitation to St John’s Church.

By bringing your child to Church week by week, you will be setting a pattern which will help him/her to learn that they are part of a community which values them and, more importantly, you will be helping your child to begin her/his journey with our Lord.

We can help you, too.

The birth of a child is an amazing experience. To hold your baby for the first time is to realise the awesome gift of life which God has entrusted to you. It is an intensely spiritual revelation. But how do we try to understand it?

Many parents feel that they would like to explore matters of faith for themselves, but don’t know where to start. They feel uncomfortable approaching the vicar or members of the church. Sometimes they feel that what goes on in a church service is puzzling. They feel out of place.

Regular attendance at church can gradually help to answer some of your questions. It can take time, so be patient. God’s timetable is not necessarily the same as ours. Remember that God’s Spirit has gently prompted you to come this far, and you have responded.

In addition we may invite you to join a group of people, some of whom are asking the same questions as you are, to explore more deeply the Christian faith. This is a friendly and informal way of getting to know others and learning a little more about God and his Son, Jesus Christ.
You will not be asked “awkward” questions or made to look foolish in any way. Nor will any pressure be put upon you to “sign up” to anything. It’s an invitation, nothing more. But we hope that you will think seriously about coming along if you feel that you would like to learn a little and grow a little in your faith.

It may be that you have not been baptised yourself and would like to be prepared for baptism. Just have a word with the vicar, in complete confidence.

And finally . . .

Thank you for reading this leaflet. We hope you found it useful, and that it has answered some of your questions. Please do not hesitate to ask the vicar or any other member of the church if you are not sure about anything.

We look forward to welcoming you and your child to St John’s Church.
Your service:

Date of Baptism:  

Time:

Date and Time of Preparation Session  
for parents and Godparents:

(If you can get someone to “baby sit” the children whilst you come to the preparation session, that would be very helpful. The preparation session is normally in the evening and will last for about an hour. Please bring your child’s Godparents along if they are available).