

### **The service for an adult:**

This follows the same pattern as that for a child with the obvious difference that the adult candidate speaks for himself/herself. The question before baptism is:

“In seeking baptism, do you reject sin and confess your need of God’s forgiving grace; and believing the Christian faith, do you pledge yourself to glorify God and to love your neighbour? Answer – “I do.”

Following baptism the questions prescribed by the Church of Scotland for Public Profession of Faith will be asked:

“Believing in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and confessing Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord, do you promise to join regularly with your fellow Christians in worship of the Lord’s Day?

Do you promise to be faithful in reading the Bible and in prayer?

Do you promise to give a fitting proportion of your time, talents, and money for the Church’s work in the world?

Do you promise, depending on the grace of God. To profess publicly your loyalty to Jesus Christ, to serve him in your daily work, and to walk in his ways all the days of your life?”

The members of the Kirk Session will come forward to give a handshake by way of personal greeting.

### **With infant baptism, what about Godparents?**

Godparents have not been given as formal a role in the Church of Scotland as they have in some other traditions and there is no reference to them in the service. Remember that baptism in our church is celebrated as a sacrament by the whole congregation who are asked to welcome and nurture the baptised and in that sense every member is a “godparent”. If there are friends who are Christians and are willing and able to support and encourage the child then their special involvement in welcome. They may wish to stand with the parents at the font.

Normally the mother will carry the baby until the point of the baptism when she will pass him/her to the father. The child remains in the father’s arms for baptism.

### **Proof of baptism.**

Every baptised person, adult or infant, is issued with a Certificate of Baptism. This is an agreed ecumenical certificate accepted by all the major Christian denominations. If requested, the baptised person’s birth certificate can be endorsed on the reverse side.

(Proof of baptism may be asked for in certain circumstances e.g. when marrying a Roman Catholic or when applying to live and work in some Arab countries)

The occasion may arise when a person does not think that they may have been baptised as an infant, and having come to a living faith in adulthood, they wish now to be baptised into membership of the Church. Every effort should be made to establish whether or not they were baptised as an infant. If the matter remains uncertain, it is possible to administer “Conditional Baptism” (“If you have not already been baptised I baptise you .....”).



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# *Holy Baptism*

This leaflet is designed to explain something of the Church’s belief about baptism and also to tell you how baptism is administered in our churches.

### **What is Baptism?**

Baptism is the doorway by which we enter into membership of the Church. It is a personal sign and seal to the baptised of God’s love and it binds the baptised into life-giving relationship with our Saviour, Jesus Christ. The phrase ‘grafted into Christ’ is used in the service and we think of a young fruit tree stem grafted into root-stock from which it will take its life and grow.

### **Why did the Church devise baptism as the way of entering its fellowship?**

It didn’t. It was Jesus who commanded his Church to make disciples and to baptise. Jesus himself was baptised and took his stand with us. He lived the perfect life which God expects from us. He gave his life on the cross to bear away the penalty of our sin and failure. For us to be the children of God, Christ must be in us and we in him. This is what baptism is about.

### **Adults can choose what to believe; infants cannot. Are baptism for adults and for children different?**

No. The very same thing is taking place. Remember, baptism is not a sign of what *I* have done, *my* repentance, *my* faith. It is a sign and seal of what Christ has done for me. The great events which won my salvation were done long before I could offer anything in return.

Certainly an adult comes with his/her own desire to be baptised and is able to affirm his/her faith at the time. Where someone is able to make these promises, they will

be admitted to membership of the congregation at the time of their baptism.

### **Is it not wrong to impose belief on a child?**

If the person being baptised is an infant, nothing is being *imposed* upon him/her. Remember, the baptism would not be taking place if the parents or guardians did not believe the Christian Faith to be true and something of the greatest value which they wished their child to share.

Natural birth gives an identity to the child. He is the child of his parents whether he wants it so or not – he has no choice in the matter. He does have every choice in how he will respond to that given fact. He can disown his family and cut them out of his life completely, or he can grow to a mature relationship with them where his own personality is shared freely and lovingly.

So it is with those baptised as infants. The reality is that God loves this child and all that our Saviour achieved was done for him/her. We believe this and so we wish the sign and seal be given to him/her – a birth into the fellowship of the Church. But we also know that God does not coerce belief. Love cannot be commanded. The reality of belonging is there but the baptised person is just as free to disown his spiritual identity as he is to grow to mature loving response. God's promises never rob us of our freedom.

### **What is required before baptism may be offered? (The adult)**

In the case of an adult what is required is a commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and a desire for admission to membership of the Christian Church. Normally the candidate will have attended a

course of instruction in the Christian Faith. Such courses are organised regularly by the Earn Valley group of Churches. At the same time, the Kirk Session must agree that the candidate should be added to the roll of the congregation after baptism.

Whilst we may experience several points in life when we renew our Christian commitment, God's commitment to us does not need any such expression of renewal. Baptism, in other words, cannot and need not be repeated. A public profession of faith may be celebrated more than once but no-one who has been baptised, say as an infant, can purport to receive baptism a second time.

### **What is required before baptism may be offered? (The infant)**

By the law of the Church of Scotland at least one of the parents must be baptised and either a member of the congregation or intending to become so. It makes no sense to present a child for baptism where there is no commitment to the Faith and to the Church on the part of parents. If what is signified in the sacrament has little value for his/her parents the baptised person will soon notice and act accordingly!

Baptism should take place in the parish or community church where the baptised child is to grow up. The local Christian community have a vital part to play. If, for some particular reason a child is presented for baptism at one of the Stewartry churches but lives elsewhere and the parents are not members of the congregation, the minister will issue a form for completion by the parish or other local church at the place of residence. This will certify that the local church is aware of the arrangement and is in agreement with it.

The promise by parents to bring the child up in the worship and teaching of the Church is not a condition of the baptism; it is a consequence of it. It is the responsibility of the family to see that the child attends Sunday worship and Sunday School. The best way, the only true and honest way, to do this is to be there with the child.

### **What happens at the service?**

Holy baptism is a sacrament. That is to say, it is one of the very special actions which Jesus commanded the church to fulfil and in which he would be known to be present amongst his people. A sacrament follows the preaching of the Word and forms the climax to which the whole service has been heading.

The family will take their normal places in church at the beginning of the service. In most cases of infant baptism mother and baby are present from the beginning but if baby is clearly unhappy they may leave at any point to wait in the vestry, hall or session house until recalled by an elder at the appropriate point. After the offering, the minister will welcome the family at the front of the church where seats are provided near the front.

### **The service for an infant:**

There is a statement about the Church's belief regarding baptism, followed by the first question to parents.

"In presenting your child for baptism, desiring that he/she may be grafted into Christ as a member of his body the Church, do you receive the teaching of the Christian faith which we confess in the Apostle's Creed?"

Answer – "I do"

The Creed is then said by the congregation. This is followed by a prayer for the Holy Spirit to bless the sacrament. There are then words addressed to the child. Then, the father holding him/her, the child is baptised into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. There follows a blessing upon the child and a declaration that he/she is received into membership of the Church. The parents are then reminded of their responsibilities and are asked:

"Do you promise, depending on the grace of God, to teach your child the truths and duties of the Christian faith; and by prayer and example to bring him/her up in the life and worship of the Church? Answer – "I do"

The congregation then promise to play their part in the nurture of the child. The service concludes with a prayer for God's grace to help us all live up to the promises we have taken.