

ARE THERE ANY ALTERNATIVES?

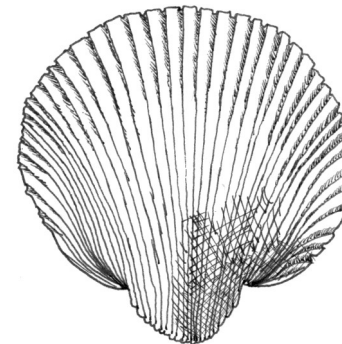
Yes there are. Simply because you are inquiring about baptism for your child you should not feel any pressure to proceed. Not from family members, nor from other Christians, nor out of fear or superstition that your child will go to hell if they are not baptised. The choice to go ahead must be purely up to you and your partner. In the Anglican Church there is a service called Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child. This service can take place in what ever context you may desire. The service simply expresses the joy of the life that has been given to you and your partner and asks for God's help in fulfilling your responsibilities in looking after that life. But since water is not used, nor an invocation of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, it is not Baptism and it asks no promises to be made by the parents regarding faith and church involvement.



WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP?

This brochure can only be very brief and can not cover all the questions you may have, or have been raised by what you have read. The baptism program for this parish may take a couple of months and is as follows:

1. Fill out the Baptism Application Form and return to the Parish Office
2. Take an opportunity to meet with the Parish Priest or Baptism Coordinator
3. Participate in the Baptism Preparation Course
4. Organise a Thanksgiving for the Birth/Adoption of a Child, or the Baptism of your Child
5. Decide how you are going to witness this faith to your child



ST STEPHENS ANGLICAN CHURCH
42 Regent Street
BELMONT VIC 3216
(03) 5243 2557

Growing a Christian community for all

Go, then, to all peoples
and make them my
disciples; baptise them
in the name of the
Father, the Son, and the
Holy Spirit, and teach
them to obey everything
I have commanded you.

Mt. 28:19-20.

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism is a Christian service where children are brought to God to be included in the life of his church in response to what God has done for us. In its simplest sense, Baptism is a service of belonging, just becoming a member of God's family. In its more complicated sense, it is an act of faith and a sign of God's unconditional love toward us and your child and our response to that love of God. There are some who would argue that children should not be baptised until they can understand the Christian faith and make a decision for themselves. There is no direct evidence in the Bible for the baptism of infants. Baptism is not just about our response to God, but also recognises the grace of God to us. Baptism, therefore, whether as an adult or as a child, is about faith within the life of the Church. Baptism has two main elements: the child/adult being immersed in **water**, or water being poured over the child/adult, and done so in the name **of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit**.



WHO CAN BE BAPTISED?

Baptism of Infants (or those who can not profess the Christian faith for themselves) is still a practice of the Anglican Church in Australia, but it is done so with an expectation that they will receive a Christian upbringing. The Anglican Church has always been a mission minded church, encouraging people to come to faith and grow in their faith. Therefore, for the baptism of an infant, the church asks that at least one of the parents has been baptised, that there is a desire to grow in Christian faith, so they can teach that faith to their child, and that there will be a desire to actively include their child in the life and ministry of the church including attend services of worship.

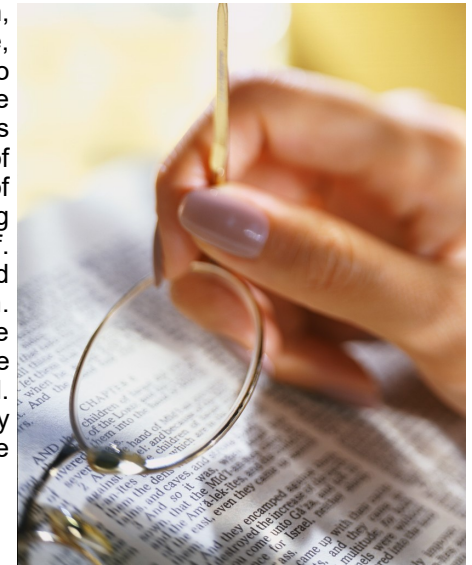
WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THE PARENTS?

The parents who are bringing their child for baptism will be making a confession of their own faith in Christ and making promises to bring the child regularly to worship, to teach them to pray and read the Bible and to live their own lives as a Christian example to their child. So, firstly, you need to examine your own faith: Do you believe in God the Father, maker of all things? Do you believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, redeemer of the world? Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, giver of life and truth? It is easy to say yes to all these questions, but how this affects our lives, rather than just knowledge, is 'faith'. This by no way means that we have achieved complete understanding

or perfection, only that we are actively seeking God and responding to our relationship with him. Secondly, are you prepared to do all that you can to teach and encourage your child in this same faith? After all, the best teacher your child has is not those at school, nor is it the local parish minister, nor is it the bishop or anyone else within the church - it is you. It is your faith, your words, and your actions that will be the most significant example to your child. The church, however, is your helper, there to support you, to enable you to raise your child in faith in Jesus Christ.

IS THERE ANY PREPARATION?

The casual baptism of infants was a practice established when our country was assumed to be a Christian country. Parents of babies brought for baptism were already actively involved in the church's life and faith. Baptism alone was understood as some sort of rite thought to save a person. Today, society and its understanding of church and Christianity has changed. Within our communities there are a growing number of Muslim, Hindu, Seikh, Jehovah's Witness, Jew, New Age, Buddhist, Pagan and Atheist (just to name a few). It is no longer appropriate for the church to assume that infants brought for baptism, or the parents of those children, are involved in the life of the church or have any understanding of the basics of Christian belief. Consequently, the church has reviewed its response to those seeking baptism. It now recognises a need to prepare parents for the promises they will make and the faith they will teach their child. Baptism preparation occurs regularly and may take place before or after the baptism.



WHAT ABOUT GOD PARENTS?

Godparents have been traditionally chosen so that there is one male and two female Godparents for a female child and two male and one female for a male child. This is not a hard and fast rule, though. It is better that you choose Godparents who will take seriously the responsibilities that belong to them - to pray for your child and assist in the raising of your child in Christian faith and accept the Christian faith personally. It is also appropriate, because you are choosing the Anglican communion in which to have your baby baptised, that we ask one Godparent, at least, to be baptised and confirmed within the Anglican church.