



Milestones on the Journey of Faith

Know, Love & Follow Jesus

BAPTISM...

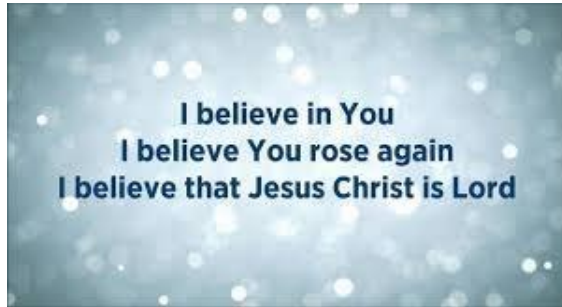
The journey of faith:

We are all on a journey of faith. There is not one day when we have none and another next day we are God's finished article! There are many stopping points along the way, and just a few diversions from the main path!

Jesus said *"I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6) So this journey we call faith is about a relationship with a person, Jesus Christ. And like any relationship it develops over time. There are times to say to others that you have a relationship with Jesus (baptism) and other ways of regularly celebrating and cementing that relationship (Holy Communion).

This short guide explains how we approach each of these milestones of faith and invites you to join us at the appropriate point in your own journey. We also want to walk that journey with you, helping you at every stage where we can with support and prayer.





Testimony

Sometimes in the journey of faith there are times when we just feel the need to share with others what God has been doing in our lives, what difference he has made or just that we love him and have known his love for us.

To tell that story in church can be done at any time. It is a great thing to build up and encourage the church. This is known as giving a testimony. This can also be an opportunity to make a public statement affirming your faith. You can do this at any age.

If this is you please speak to our priest in charge who can advise the best way of incorporating this into the worship of the church. She will talk through what you want to share and why, to encourage you and to pray with you.

Thanksgiving



A significant milestone in life is the birth of a child. Many people want to give thanks for the gift of a child that God has given them by giving thanks in church. This is a very simple set of prayers included in a service in church and allows you to give thanks to God and for you and your family to be prayed

for by the church family.

If you would like to have a thanksgiving as part of a Sunday service then please speak to our priest in charge who will be able to advise you how to arrange this.

You are welcome to invite friends and family to share this event. We assure you a warm welcome and continuing prayers and support.

Dedication

For some, it is important to not only give thanks for a new child but to dedicate their lives to God. This will include making a commitment to pray for them and teach them about Jesus so that they can make their own commitment when they are older.



If you would like to have a dedication service for your child as part of a Sunday service then please speak to our priest in charge who will be able to advise you on how to arrange this. She will help you prepare for your thanksgiving.

You are welcome to invite friends and family to share this event. We assure you a warm welcome and continuing prayers and support. We would love to help you where we can as you walk the journey of faith with your child.

Baptism



Baptism can happen at any age. You have a right to have your child baptised at the church in the parish where you live. It is important that you are ready for this step and that you understand its significance therefore we offer both advice and preparation to allow you to make the appropriate choice.

Baptism is a sacrament. It is a “visible symbol of an invisible grace” (the other being Holy Communion). It involves the pouring of water (or immersion in a bath of water!) through which God meets with us and changes our lives forever.

It is not therefore something to take lightly but to undertake only when you are sure that you are ready to do so.

Baptism signifies three things:

- Joining the family of the church
- A declaration of faith in Jesus as Lord
- An igniting of the Holy Spirit in our lives

Therefore baptism does the following things:

- Challenges us to turn away from things not of God and towards Christ

- Allows us access to God's promises and blessings
- Plunges us into the death of an old life and rising to a new life "in Christ"
- Initiates us into the body of Christ that is the church



We see this in the prayers used and vows made during the service. The water is ordinary tap water but God uses it to cleanse us of the things that separate us from him. Going under the water (whether a dribble or a bath) is like the end of the old life of separation. Rising from the water is like a new resurrected life springing forth. A life with God's own Spirit in us.

The church welcomes the baptised as a new family member and commits to walk with them in the continuing journey of faith.



Baptism is all about the promises that God has already made to us and he is faithful.

Being baptised is our faithful response to him.

The vows are to:

- Reject the devil and evil •
Repent (turn away) from sins that separate us from God
- Pledge to submit, turn and come to Christ as our Lord and Saviour.

Life changing stuff!

Is it for me (or my child)?

You can be baptised at any age.

Baptism is about the “grace/faith reciprocal”. God offers us grace, mercy and love before we do anything. Baptism is his gift to us that we accept. We respond in faith.

The purpose and nature of preparation to ensure that it is the right time for you will differ if you are considering infant or later baptism either as an older child or adult.

Infant/Child baptism

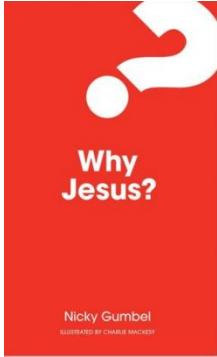
Infant baptism is biblical and has been practised by mainstream churches from the very early church. In the Old Testament God offered signs and symbols of his grace in several ways (eg Rainbow to Noah, Passover meal to Moses). To Abraham he offered circumcision as a



mark of his promise to Abraham that he would be a “Father of all nations”. It was usual to have boys circumcised at 8 days old. Baptism with water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is Jesus’ sign to us of God’s promises. Baptism is a gift from God that requires a faithful response from us. Parents may accept this gift on behalf of their child where they undertake to:

- declare the vows on their child's behalf about rejecting and repenting of sin and turning to Christ
- Walk with the child through their journey of faith
- Bring them into the family of God, by becoming members of the church
- Attending church!

Preparation for Infant Baptism



It is important that bringing your child to baptism is an informed decision. If you are considering it we invite you to find out more about the Christian faith and what it means to have a relationship with Jesus. This is the case whether you have been a member of church for a long time or even if you have already had a child baptised at another church.

If you are considering getting your child baptised please speak to our priest in charge to arrange an appointment.

The next stage if you want to proceed is to attend the “Why Jesus?” course and this is run at different times in the year. The course comprises the first four sessions of the Alpha course including: Who is Jesus? Why did he have to die? How can I have faith?

You are of course welcome to complete the whole Alpha course which takes you through what is involved in living a life of faith and introduces you to living a life filled by his Holy Spirit.

In addition to “Why Jesus?” there will be further sessions specifically geared towards preparation for baptism.

On completion, we will have a further visit to talk through with you if you are ready to have your child baptised and undertake the commitments that this involves in walking the faith journey with your child (assisted by your Godparents). Infant or Child baptism can take place at any time in a Sunday service and is an opportunity for your church family to welcome and offer their support of you as a family.

Adult baptism

If you were not baptised as a child then you can be baptised as an adult. The main difference is that you make the vows and declarations yourself rather than have parents and Godparents make them for you. As preparation we would ask that you have at least completed the “Why Jesus?” element of the Alpha course and can express the faith that you now have. As part of your baptism you will be given the opportunity to give testimony to share the new found faith that you have.



Adult baptism can take place at any time in a Sunday service but if you want to be baptised by full immersion it may take a bit longer to organise (we don't have a permanent baptistery!) If you think that you may want to be baptised please speak to our priest in charge who will advise you about the next steps.

Renewal of baptism vows

Baptism is a one off!

If you were baptised as a child you have been baptised. You have received the gift of baptism from God and you cannot receive it again.

Many who were baptised as children, particularly where you have discovered a new faith as an adult, want to mark it by some form of rite and public statement.

The church as a whole has occasion to renew baptism vows, and you are welcome to attend these services. However, the main rite to make a believer's statement of faith where you were baptised as a child in the Church of England is Confirmation.

Confirmation

Baptism brings you membership of the church of God.

Confirmation brings you into full membership of the Church of England. It is a service at which a Bishop confirms you after you have had a chance to affirm the vows that were said on your behalf when baptised as a child or that you said at your own adult baptism. It is also a chance to make a public statement of your faith and to give testimony. If you think that you would like to be confirmed then speak to our Priest in Charge and we can talk you through the next steps. There is a short course of preparation for Confirmation and the service that you go to may not be at our churches but somewhere else in the Deanery or Diocese.

Admission to Communion

Holy Communion is the shared meal we celebrate as commanded by Jesus at the last supper the night before he died. It entails taking bread and wine to remember his body that was broken for us and his blood that was shed for us. Jesus uses ordinary things (bread, wine, water) to minister his grace.



You must be baptised to take Communion. Normally you will also be confirmed. For some, access to the grace of God who we meet in communion can be an important step in your faith journey. It is therefore possible to receive Communion before you have been confirmed after adequate preparation. This is possible at most ages but no younger than 8.

If this is something that you would like to explore then please speak to our Priest in Charge.

Please contact:
Rev'd Lisa Fairman-Brown

*Priest-in-Charge,
St Mary Magdalene Lyminster & All Saints Wick, Littlehampton
Rev.lyminsterwick@gmail.com*



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