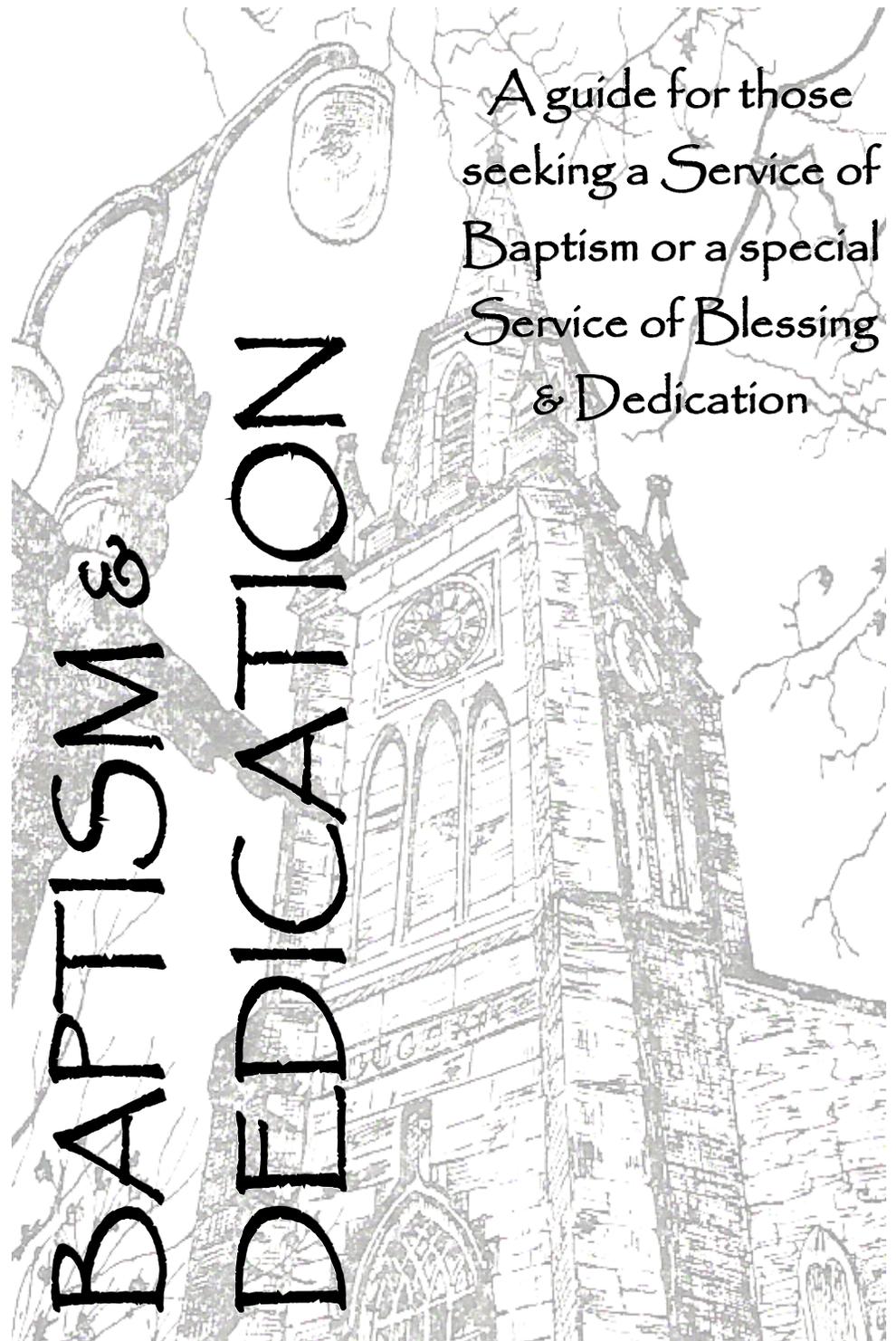




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A guide for those  
seeking a Service of  
Baptism or a special  
Service of Blessing  
& Dedication

## Do I want my baby Christened, Dedicated or Baptised?

When we talk of a “christening” many parents will have different ideas about what this means. For some parents, a Christening is no more than a “naming ceremony” where we celebrate the birth of a child and officially give the child a name. For many other parents, they consider their baby’s christening as a matter of “tradition”; they think that all babies should be christened in a Church by a Minister because generations of their family have all been “christened” in the local Church. For Christians, a Baptism or Dedication is more than a tradition. It has a deep spiritual significance.

Many parents who have no “live” connection with a local church often still desire to bring their children to Church for a special ceremony of “Blessing & Dedication”. They desire that God would bless the life of their new baby. In such a ceremony the Minister will encourage the family and will offer a special prayer of blessing which will be said over the child. This service of Blessing & Dedication can be celebrated during a morning worship service in front of the gathered congregation or can be held privately in the home or our small Chapel (St Monach’s Aisle) with family & friends.

In a “Service of Baptism” parents, who regularly attend the local Church and where at least one of the parents is a Member, bring their children to be baptized in water. They will be asked to make promises declaring their faith in Jesus Christ, promising to attend church, pray, and read the Bible regularly. They will also be asked to commit themselves to their local Church by regularly attending and by bringing their children weekly to the Sunday Club & other children’s activities.

## I’m not sure I can make such a commitment

Parents who have not professed their faith in Christ and who have not joined the local church should not feel pressured into becoming Members of the Church in order to have their children baptized. At the High Kirk we offer a Service of Dedication to all parents who know sincerely that they are not ready to make baptismal vows.

## So what is involved in a Service of Dedication & Blessing?

The service of blessing is similar in format to the Service of Baptism, except you will not be asked to make the promises associated with Baptism, nor will water be used. A special prayer of blessing will be said over your child. In both cases the name of your child will be added to our Congregation’s Cradle Roll.

## What happens now?

It is important that you fill out the “Application form” which is enclosed with this Booklet. Return the form to the Minister and he will organize a meeting with you to meet you personally and to go over any questions you may have.

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;  
The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.

Parents [or Sponsors] are asked to make vows, professing their faith in Christ, and promising to make careful provision for their child's spiritual development through Christian teaching and instruction. We can begin our child's spiritual development by being a Christian influence in our home. At the High Kirk we offer a variety of Children's ministries (Sunday Club, Parent & Toddler Group, and other church events) to help support parents in Christian instruction.

### So what is involved in a Service of Baptism?

If, after discussion with the minister, it is decided to proceed with baptism, then it will normally take place during the main Sunday service at the church. During the service the minister will publicly explain what baptism means, will show you what to do and explain when it is time to stand up or sit down. When it is time for the baptism itself, the person being baptised (or the parents in the case of a child) will be asked to stand to make their promises and a statement of faith.

Then the minister will set apart the water for its use in baptism and you or your child will be baptised in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The congregation will be asked to stand with you as a sign of their responsibility towards you or your child. We usually sing a blessing, and at this point children are carried by the minister into the body of the congregation before being returned to their parents.

It may be that you are not a member of the High Kirk but you still wish to give thanks for your child and pray for God's blessing upon his or her life. If so, you can therefore choose to have a Service of Blessing & Dedication. This will enable you to say thank you to God without the extra commitment and promises which a Service of Baptism requires.

### So What is Baptism?

In the Church of Scotland we have two ceremonies (ordinances) which Jesus commanded his disciples to perform. These ceremonies are 'Baptism' and 'the Lord's Supper'. In some traditions of the Christian church these ceremonies are known as 'sacraments' or 'ordinances'. The sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are signs and symbols which remind us of important spiritual truths.

### The Meaning of Baptism

When we come to faith in Christ, the Bible instructs us to be baptised. Baptism signifies a washing in water which reminds us that we are cleansed and forgiven of our sins, since Jesus has paid the penalty for all our sins on the cross.

Baptism also signifies that we have come into a special relationship with Jesus Christ. This sacrament therefore represents to us the wonderful blessings that flow from this special relationship with God; for God has promised to be our God [and the God of our children through all generations].

We notice that baptism further signifies our initiation [membership] into the visible Church family. We are therefore not just welcomed into the fellowship of the local church, but are welcomed into the fellowship and family of God.

Finally, baptism signifies that we now have a “new life in Christ”. Since Jesus died on the cross and was raised from the dead, Christians also share the blessings that flow from Christ’s death and resurrection. Therefore we see baptism as signifying a life in all its fullness, a resurrection life, an abundant new life in Christ, a life that seeks to follow Jesus. Life now has purpose & meaning. This “new life” is expressed through our desire to be with other Christians, pray and read our Bibles.

## How is Baptism Conducted?

In the Greek language ‘baptism’ can mean “to dip, immerse or sprinkle”. In the Reformed tradition, all three expressions for baptism are acceptable ways to administer the sacrament. In the Church of Scotland it is more common-place to have baptism by “sprinkling”, where the minister will baptise from a ‘font’ at the front of the church. Here the officiating minister will pour or sprinkle water on the candidate’s head, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

## Who Can be Baptised?

So who ought to be baptised? In the New Testament it is clear that adult believers were baptised on their profession of faith - “Believe and be baptised!”

The Church of Scotland believes that the Bible teaches us, as Christian parents, to baptise our children. Through the baptism of our children we anticipate and pray that one day they will come into a personal relationship with Jesus, and that they will experience the promises and privileges of their baptism in a personal way.

## What are my Responsibilities?

### Adult Baptism

When you are baptised you make profession of what Jesus has done for you (forgiveness of sins, cleansing), and what he continues to do in your life (changing you to be more like Jesus).

In baptism you will take a vow of allegiance, declaring your heart’s desire to serve and obey Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour.

### Infant Baptism

Infant baptism places responsibilities upon you as parents, and not the children. Although a child may not understand the sacrament of baptism, and may not necessarily have come into a personal relationship with Jesus, it is important that one of the parents at least be a member [or adherent] of the local church, as they are asked to make promises to God on the child’s behalf.