

A photograph of Manchester Cathedral, a Gothic Revival style building with a prominent square tower and a clock face. A large, mature tree with vibrant pink cherry blossoms stands in the foreground on the right. The cathedral is set on a green lawn with a flower bed of colorful tulips. A flag flies from the top of the tower against a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

# Baptism at Manchester Cathedral

[www.manchestercathedral.org](http://www.manchestercathedral.org)

## Welcome to the Cathedral

### The ancient spiritual heart of Manchester and the Mother Church of the Diocese

It is believed that there has been a church on or near Manchester Cathedral for over a thousand years. King Henry V granted a Royal Charter to found it as a Collegiate Church dedicated to St Mary, St Denys and St George in 1421. This church became Manchester's Cathedral when the Diocese of Manchester was formed in 1847. We have inherited a rich tradition of prayer and worship which continues today.

As the Cathedral we serve the communities of Greater Manchester and beyond. Although we have our own parish remaining from the much larger Parish of Manchester (which has been divided into many smaller parishes), the congregation is a diverse Christian community drawn from the whole area. Congregation members might have grown up here or recently moved to Manchester. The Cathedral today reflects the rich diversity of modern Manchester.

The Bible teaches us that each of us is made in God's image and that he loves and cares for us. Christians believe that in the person of Jesus Christ God has identified with our lives and provided a way for us to be brought into his family. We are still imperfect – but the Church is an expression of God's welcome given to us. In turn we are privileged to welcome others in Christ's name. It is also why we offer baptism to those who are ready to make the commitment of Christian life for themselves. In the same way we offer baptism for children whose parents are raising them in the Christian faith.

## What is baptism?

### The start of the Christian journey

The great prophetic figure who announced the imminent arrival of the Messiah was the man we call John the Baptist. John appears in every one of the New Testament Gospels. He baptized people in the River Jordan in what he called "*a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins*", a very new and radical teaching. At the outset of his public ministry Jesus accepted John's baptism.

The early Church took this a step further by making baptism the stand-out sign of crossing the threshold into Christian life: Going down into the water expresses the believer's solidarity with Jesus, and especially solidarity with the suffering and death on the cross which Jesus underwent. Coming up from the water shows the believer entering into the new life revealed by Christ in the resurrection. As St Paul expressed it "*If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. Everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!*" (*Second Letter to the Corinthians 5.17.*)

These first believers are described in the New Testament as being baptised *into Christ*. They were either individuals or whole households and their baptism took place at the outset of their Christian journey. Right from the beginning this was the essential way for a believer to express their faith in Christ.

Some people use the old word 'Christening'. This means *putting into Christ* – for that is what baptism is. It is meant for everyone who will be a follower of Jesus Christ, including people from every kind of background – no matter who you are or what your life has been in the past or whether you are young or old, male or female. At the very end of Matthew's Gospel Jesus commands his apostles to "*make disciples of all nations*" and to "*baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*". This is what we still do today.



## The Residuary Parish

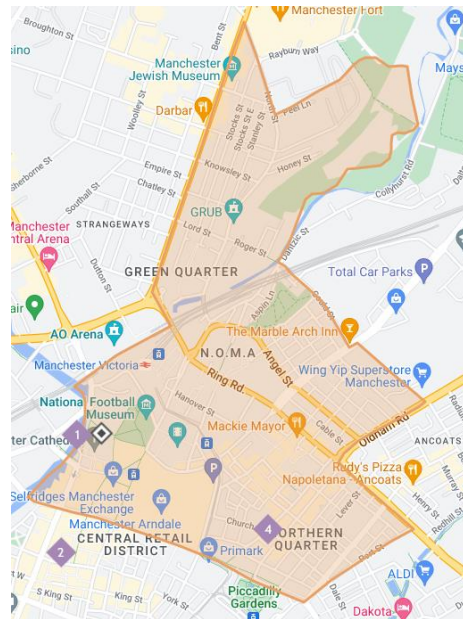
If you live here then the Cathedral is your local church

Almost everyone in England lives in a Church of England parish.

The ancient parish of Manchester was a large area which has become the city we know today. As new parishes were created the Cathedral's own parish became smaller. This is the Residuary Parish. If you live in this area, then either you or your children may be baptized at the Cathedral.

However, people from around the city can make the Cathedral their spiritual home and regularly worship with us. For worshippers who establish themselves as part of the Cathedral congregation, they too – or their children - may be baptized at the Cathedral. Generally, this will be when they have attended regularly for a six-month period.

The map shows the boundaries of the Cathedral's Residuary Parish.



## Baptism as an adult

It is never too late

It is never too late to be baptised. Sometimes people in their eighties or older are baptised. The New Testament has many new believers being baptised but sometimes people have been believers for many years before they seek baptism. If that is you, then we encourage you to be baptised.

Adults will have two or more sponsors from within the church community to support and to pray for them. For the rest of us – who may have been baptised long ago – seeing another person's baptism will remind us dramatically of that commitment which was made then and which we have aimed to live out in the years since.

## Baptism of Children

Jesus said "let the little children come to me"

For Christian parents their child is never too young to be baptised. It is a step which will be taken by parents who are promising to bring up their children in the faith. However, they do need to be sure in their own mind about taking this step. Bringing a child for baptism is often a time when a parent thinks about his or her own faith.

For some parents this is a time to take a further step themselves – which can mean becoming more involved with their local church. Sometimes parents are baptised along with their children.

Godparents also have a role and take exactly the same promises about how they will nurture the baptised child into the future.

## Godparents

We do not take the journey on our own

When a child is baptised godparents make the same promises on his or her behalf as the parents.

Godparents promise to pray for and support the child and to help the parents to nurture the child in the Christian faith. It is an important and responsible role.

Godparents must themselves be baptized, and we ask that at least one is a communicant member of a Christian church, either confirmed in the Church of England or the equivalent in another denomination. It is essential that godparents can affirm their own profession of faith in following Jesus Christ – or of course they cannot undertake the role with integrity.

There should be at least three godparents: two of the same sex as the child and one of the opposite sex. Godparents can be family or church members or friends. It is important that parents choose people who will take an interest in their child's spiritual welfare and who will pray for him or her.

When an adult is baptized the sponsors take the place of godparents.

## **What happens during the service?**

**Baptism is usually part of the main Sunday morning worship**

### **Affirming our trust in God**

Holy baptism will usually take place during the Sunday morning service which takes place at 10.30 am. Towards the start of the service the candidate for baptism is asked to publicly declare his or her faith:

**Minister** Do you turn to Christ?

**Reply** **I turn to Christ.**

**Minister** Do you repent of your sins?

**Reply** **I repent of them.**

**Minister** Do you renounce evil?

**Reply** **I renounce evil.**

In the case of an infant these affirmations are made on the child's behalf by the parents and godparents.

### **Anointing with the Sign of the Cross**

When the candidate (or in the case of a child being baptized parents and godparents) have affirmed their own faith in God the minister will make the sign of the cross on the candidate's forehead. This is like an invisible badge to show that Christians are united with Christ and must not be ashamed to stand up for their faith in him.

The minister says:

*“Christ claims you for his own.*

*Receive the sign of his cross.*

*Do not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified.”*

### **Water**

The word 'baptism' implies 'saturation' so in baptism a person is either dipped into the water, or has the water poured over their head. Water is a sign of washing and cleansing. In baptism it is a sign of being washed free from sin and beginning a new life with God.

Water is a sign of life, but also a symbol of death. When we are baptized, it is a sign that our old life is buried in the waters like drowning and we are raised to new life with Christ. This is God's work and so, in obedience to the teaching of Jesus (in Matthew 28.19), the baptism is *in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.*

### **The Welcome and Peace**

Baptism is conducted in an atmosphere of welcome but it is important that the congregation along with the baptism candidate's family and friends share together in 'The Peace': They greet one another in Christ's name with the words 'Peace be with you' or 'The peace of the Lord be with you' – and shake hands to express fellowship.

### **Lit Candles**

Jesus is the Light of the World. Next to the font, our place of Baptism, stands the 'Paschal' or Easter Candle to symbolise this (in the Easter season it will usually stand near the altar). The newly-baptized person is given a candle lit from this at the end of the service as a sign of the light which has come into their life.

### **After Receiving Baptism**

After Holy Baptism we have taken an important step – or taken it on behalf of our child. Very often baptism takes place at the start of our life-journey as Christians. In this Christ walks alongside us. The Cathedral aims to support and nurture Christians in their lives through its weekly services and the fellowship of the Cathedral community. You are welcome to be part of this.

### **Getting in touch with the Cathedral for further information**

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