



The Box River Benefice

*Boxford, Edwardstone, Groton,
Little Waldingfield and Newton*



Some Guidelines on a Church Christening



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

**Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich**



If you are looking at this booklet, you may be thinking about a christening for yourself or one of your children (often called Baptism). If so, we're delighted that you've made it this far and we look forward to welcoming you at one of our churches. Our churches offer Christenings to everyone who requests them and is serious about the step they will be taking. We aim to make it a rewarding and memorable experience, and one that will give the right beginning for you or your child's Christian journey.

When you or your child are Christened, you join a tradition that has been a part of Britain for over 1600 years. It has shaped our society for the better and underpins many of the moral values we hold dear, even though we often take these for granted. We have been Christening babies and adults in the Box River Benefice for well over 1000 years (even before our churches were built) as a preparation for people who wish to walk the Christian path.

But living the Christian-life doesn't just happen and it isn't just a single event. It takes commitment, practice, perseverance and patience. It is more than a life-long journey.

Some simple things that you need to take note of concerning your Christening (or Baptism) are detailed below. These make sure that you and/or your children are suitably prepared for baptism, understand what baptism is really all about and able to make the promises required in full knowledge of what they mean. You will be asked to make promises in front of the wider community and, most importantly, to God, so it is important that you take them seriously.

- **WHAT IS A CHRISTENING OR BAPTISM?**

Christening literally refers to the service marking the beginning of a Christian journey. Baptism is the important part of that service that involves washing in Holy Water.

Baptism, is one of the Church's seven sacraments – visible signs of God's love for us in which he bestows his life-giving grace upon us. The other

sacraments of the Christian-life are Confirmation, Confession (& Reconciliation), Holy Communion, Marriage, Holy Orders and Divine Unction (*Healing and Last Rites*).

Jesus was himself baptised as the sign of a new beginning at the start of his own public ministry. He then told his followers to baptise others as a physical sign and symbol that they had turned away from the negativity and sin of their old way of life and begun a new life lived in the hope and trust of Jesus: a life of love, peace and grace. This new beginning is marked by washing in Holy Water (Baptism). Once a person is baptised, they are members of the Church and connected to the rest of the Church in a deep and spiritual sense, through all time and eternity.

Jesus gave his Church as the body in which his love and grace would dwell, through God's Spirit. This is why he called the Church 'his body'. Through that Spirit, the Church on earth is connected to him in eternity.

Nonetheless, the Church on earth is still a motley crew of ordinary people just like you and me. We are all equal in the eyes of God. We all still make mistakes and get stuff wrong. We don't come to church because we are sinless, we come to church because we recognise we make mistakes, wish to make amends for them and make changes to try and avoid it in future. But irrespective of our tendency towards sinfulness, God still loves us and truly blesses us through each other and our life lived in faith through the Church. All we need do is keep working at it. So long as we remain connected to him and each other through his church, he makes us whole in a deep, holistic and spiritual way.

So Baptism marks an individual's entrance into the Church body. At baptism we are washed clean and God's Spirit descends on us as we begin our new life in God's ways. God's Grace is bestowed upon us and supports us through life. This is marked in the service by the symbolic anointing with Holy Oils.

This life-long spiritual protection also requires a response from each of us. We need to protect it by making the right choices and seeking to build our relationship with God. That is why, in baptism an individual promises ongoing commitment to the Church family and receives the inward Spirit of grace to begin growing a personal faith and trust in God. If it is a young child who is being baptised, then their parents and godparents make those promises on the child's behalf and agree to commit to bringing that child

up as a Christian in the life of the Church, until such a time as that child is old enough, as an adult, to make their own choices regarding their faith.

- **MAY I OR MY CHILD BE BAPTISED AT ONE OF THE CHURCHES IN THE BENEFICE?**

Everyone is welcome to be baptised in the Box River Benefice. All that is required is:

- (1) you are resident within this parish.
- (2) you attend services at church.

If you live and worship elsewhere but have a long-term connection with the Benefice or wish to begin one and desire a christening here, please contact boxriverbenefice@gmail.com and we will be able to help you.



- **IS THERE ANYTHING THAT I OR MY CHILD WILL BE EXPECTED TO DO?**

1. Being baptised marks the beginning of a life-long journey of faith together with the whole of 'Christ's Body' - the Church. At baptism you commit to begin living the Christian-life. Thus, in baptism you commit to becoming a regular member of the Church. The way you begin the journey is important. We open our arms to anyone wishing to be baptised, or to have their children baptised. All we ask is that families wishing to be baptised begin as they intend to go on, by attending church. This gives us a chance to get to know you a little better, and you us, outside of all the hustle and bustle of the baptism service itself. It also shows your commitment to the new way of life that you will be promising to follow during the Baptism service itself.
2. You will be asked to come along to a Baptism preparation session to help to prepare you (and your child) for Baptism. At these meetings, the meaning of baptism and the significance of the promises that are made will be discussed. This is a good opportunity for you to ask any further questions that you may have. You will be given the time of the next preparation session when you contact us to make an enquiry. A date and time for the service will be booked at the end of the meeting.

3. In baptism, you promise to become a member of the Church (the 'Body of Christ') and work at growing your commitment to it through faith, devotion and doing good works. You should try your very best to attend church as often as possible following the baptism. Making time in a busy schedule can be difficult, but it is in your and your family's best interests to build on the good foundations started at your baptism. If you persevere, you will begin to see the benefits, but you should expect the journey to have peaks and troughs.
4. If you have children, we try to make attending church as easy as possible for you. But please do not prevent your child from experiencing church just because you are nervous, unsure or embarrassed that they might make a noise. They are as much a part of God's family as anyone else and that means that they are just as welcome as anyone else. Children are welcome at every main Sunday morning service. There are Children's Corners in our churches and a regular Sunday School at Boxford (for 5's and above).

- **WHEN DO CHRISTENINGS HAPPEN?**

Whether you are seeking baptism (Christening) for yourself or for your child, it marks a new start: a decision and commitment to follow Jesus Christ within your own household and with the support of the Church. The usual times for our baptisms are during our Sunday Services (9.30am or 11am depending upon location). Baptism is never a private affair: the church community should always be present, because Baptism marks entry into the church. There could be multiple baptisms on any one occasion. Because of the sheer volume of workload between the five churches, we regret that we are unable to offer baptisms outside of these times.

We have all been to those baptisms where only close relatives attend, nobody joins in and the service is dull and meaningless, with everyone just wanting to get it over with, wishing they could get down the pub. The format at the Box River Benefice looks to avoid such a disheartening scenario. Your baptism is an occasion for joy and calls for joint celebration of your own family and your new Church family!

We will advise you of available dates following your initial contact with us so that you can decide which available date best suits you.

- **GODPARENTS**

Godparents make the same promises as parents; to help raise children in the Christian faith, to pray for them and to encourage them in the life and worship of the church. Church law states that ALL Godparents must be Baptised and at least one Confirmed. This is because it is an important and responsible role; they make promises to openly support a child's long-term Christian upbringing and all round spiritual welfare. They are more than just a close friend, they should be someone you can trust to encourage your child in their relationship with God, so choose wisely! Godparents must also be over 16 years of age. When you ask them, let them know that this is what is expected of them. You may have a **maximum of 4 Godparents**. If you are struggling to find people who fit the bill, have a word with your parish priest or someone at church and they might be able to suggest someone who could turn out to be one of the best supports you have – offering something a little different by way of support during the difficulties of parenting.

It would be a good idea to invite your chosen Godparents to at least one Sunday morning service before the baptism, so that they can become a little more familiar with the way church looks and feels. It might also be helpful for them to attend the baptism preparation with you.

If your choice for Godparent is not yet Baptised, but are willing to be, have a word with your parish priest – there might be something they can do to help.

- **NEXT STEPS**

If you would like to take this further, we would love to hear from you. Please contact:

Our benefice administrator on 01787727046,
boxriverbenefice@gmail.com



○ USUAL SERVICE PATTERN AT THE BOX RIVER BENEFICE

1st Sundays of the Month:

09.30 - Holy Eucharist (*Lt Waldingfield*)
11.00 – Holy Eucharist (*Boxford*)
11.00 – Forest Church (*Boxford*)
17.00 – Evening Service (*venue varies*)

2nd Sundays of the Month:

09.30 – Holy Eucharist (*Groton*)
11.00 – Holy Eucharist (*Boxford*)
17.00 – BCP Evensong (*Boxford*)

3rd Sundays of the Month

09.30 – Holy Eucharist (*Edwardstone*)
11.00 – Holy Eucharist (*Boxford*)
17.00 – Evening Service (*venue varies*)

4th Sundays of the Month

09.30 – Family Eucharist with extra children's provision (*Boxford*)
11.00 – Holy Eucharist (*Newton Green*)

5th Sundays of the Month

10.00 – Joint Benefice Service
12.00 – Joint Benefice Event/Lunch/Picnic

Wednesdays:

10.30 – Holy Communion (*at Mary's House,
Swan St, Boxford*)

Children are welcome at all of our services. Do not worry about a little noise – children make the church feel alive! And a little chaos is a good thing.

There is so much going on around the Benefice that it is impossible to list it all here. Each week, the activities and events are listed on the pew sheet, which you will receive at church. You can also find them on our notice boards, website and Facebook page.

YOUNG CHILDREN AT CHURCH

There is a Children's area in each church (especially good for small children) so that you can stay in church with your child and enjoy the service yourself.

Do just come along. If you'd like to know more about our children's provision contact: Sarah Parker-McGee, 01787 210434, spm456@hotmail.co.uk

We take safeguarding extremely seriously and we follow stringent safeguarding and child protection protocols and procedures.

We hope that your baptism will be a wonderful and memorable occasion and that it will mark the beginning of a long, happy and deepening faith and ongoing relationship with our Churches.

May God's blessing and guidance be with you as you consider this exciting next step on the journey of faith.



We hope to see you soon!