

Practical guidance for baptisms

In this exceptional time, the Government's guidance on social distancing and self-isolation will have a major impact on all aspects of everyday life, including the way baptisms can be conducted for the immediate future. Baptisms can continue in the Church of England but inevitably there will be some adaptations to protect everyone.

This means baptisms can go ahead, but they may be different from what might normally be expected.

Before the baptism

It is advised that meetings between candidates or parents/guardians/carers and clergy are held by telephone, Skype etc. rather than face-to-face. If meetings can only be held in person, social distancing guidance will be followed.

Numbers of those attending the baptism must be kept to a minimum – the candidate, their parents/guardians/carers, godparents and the minister and no others.

This should also be communicated to anyone in the wider circle of friends, family or colleagues in advance who may wish to attend. Sadly, those over the age of 70 and those with an underlying health condition are strongly discouraged from attending any in the present circumstances.

If candidates or parents/guardians/carers wish to postpone the baptism in light of the restrictions in numbers, this is something that will be supported, and help given to find a suitable date in the future.

All baptisms will be “stand-alone” events rather than part of a Sunday service as there is no longer public worship.

Public worship

Church services which the public are invited to attend and take part in.

No additional church personnel will attend the service, for example, organists, vergers or sound system operator etc.

Planning the baptism

Where family relatives or friends are unable to attend given the restrictions on numbering, churches will be happy to explore ways to allow others to join the service, either through platforms such as Skype, or recording the service to send at a later date to anyone unable to attend.

Where no audio link can be achieved, an order of service could be sent either by email or post.

Everyone attending the service must adhere to Government guidance on social distancing. Please follow the directions of the priest if you are attending a service.

While naturally those present may wish to shake hands or hug, all present should refrain from doing so in light of guidance on physical distancing.

Where infants are being baptised, a parent/guardian/carer will be asked to hold the infant for the duration of the service, including for the baptism.

Communal bibles and other items will not be used to minimise transmission risk and baptismal candles, if used, should be handled by one person only. A parent or Godparent will be asked to light and hold the candle on behalf of the candidate and to remove it safely immediately after the service.

The application of oil and signing of the cross will be done using an implement which avoids the need for direct physical contact.

While a parent/guardian/carer holds the infant, the officiating member of clergy will use an implement such as a shell to pour the water. A parent/guardian/carer will be asked to wipe the forehead of the baptised person with paper towels which can then be thrown away.

Unfortunately, baptism by immersion is not possible during the current restrictions.

During the baptism

Everyone attending the service must adhere to [Government guidance on social distancing](#). Please follow the directions of the officiant if you are attending a service.

While naturally those present may wish to shake hands or hug, all present should refrain from doing so in light of guidance on physical distancing.

After the baptism

In keeping with the recommendations to limit social gatherings, there should not be a celebration or other gathering after the baptism, and this should be arranged at a future date once Government advice permits.

We will do our best to explain any changes or delays which may be an inevitable consequence of the current restrictions, but we are here to support you and to ensure baptism can go ahead or be rearranged to a suitable date in the future.

From [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) guidance for churches, FAQs](#), dated Friday 20 March at 11:40. Check the official page for any subsequent changes.