

If you had planned to have your child baptised but it couldn't happen because of a national lockdown, you will have had to postpone this special day. Now that christenings are possible again, you can contact a church and begin to make plans. These are some of the questions you might have.

Scallop shell on the side of a baptism font.

Can we have a christening?

Yes, the Government has given permission for christenings to go ahead now, and your vicar will want to make your child's christening day beautiful and special, as well as safe for you, your family and friends, and church staff. The church may still therefore have some restrictions in place, such as a maximum capacity for that particular church, or some social distancing measures or masks, based on a risk assessment. If you have any worries about the safety of your child's christening, talking it all through together with the vicar in advance will help you understand the risks, so you know what to expect, and then agree on the best way forward on the day.

Will the church be hygienically clean?

Church staff and volunteers are working very hard to ensure church buildings are clean and safe for everyone. Social distancing measures will be observed, so listen to the vicar's advice about what needs to happen on the day. As well as being specially cleaned, hand sanitiser will be freely available in the church to all who come in, and when they leave.

How many people can I invite to the service?

Check with your vicar, who will help you work out the numbers. It will depend on the church's capacity and what has been decided is a safe number for public worship in that particular church.

Does the christening have to be in the main church service or can we have it separately?

Opening the church on an additional day to the usual Sunday service requires additional cleaning before and afterwards. There will be some churches which can manage this, but others which can't at the moment, so ask your vicar and see what they say.

Will there be music at the service?

Music can be played during usual Sunday worship services and at ceremonies. Talk to the vicar about music and they'll be pleased to advise.

Will someone need to visit us at home before the service?

The purpose of a meeting before the service would be to help you all prepare for the christening and the promises that are going to be made, as well as talking you through what happens at the ceremony. The vicar will want to keep you safe, so please feel able to say if you would prefer him or her to wear a mask or keep at a safe social distance while the visit takes place. If you would feel more comfortable having a conversation online or on the phone, please do talk to your vicar about this.

Will the vicar have to come into contact with my child to do the christening?

Your vicar will be used to blessing and praying for people, including children and babies at a christening, without having to touch them. While we are all getting used to changing guidelines, please do talk to her or him about what you would like to happen. One option would be for you, the parents, to hold your child over the font (or if the child is older, they could stand with their head just over the font) so the vicar can baptise the child with water using a shell or another kind of scoop. Baptism can also be done by wiping water on the child's forehead and this could be done with a small clean cloth dipped in the holy water, or a cotton wool ball dampened with the holy water.

There is also a point during the service when the vicar anoints the child's forehead by applying a touch of oil in the shape of a cross. They can do this using a clean cotton bud or something similar.

What can we do if our child's Godparents aren't able to attend because they live abroad or are shielding, or even suddenly have to go into isolation?

Can they join in via Skype, Zoom or Facetime?

They can certainly join in the service via video link and make the promises, but two godparents must be physically present at the service.

What happens if key people fall ill with coronavirus or are 'tracked and traced' in the days leading up to the christening?

The christening cannot go ahead if the child, parents, the godparents who will be present, or the vicar test positive for Covid 19 or are asked to self-isolate. It will need to be postponed so that all those involved can recover or self-isolate. The vicar will understand this and will do all they can to help you find another suitable date.

If any of your guests test positive or are asked to self-isolate, they must not attend the service in person.

Will everyone have to wear face masks?

After July 19th 2021, there is no legal obligation to wear masks indoors, but some churches may still ask people to wear masks if, for example, they are in an area with a high infection rate or if vulnerable people are expected to attend the christening. Please do talk to your vicar about this and share any worries or concerns you might have.

We've had to wait to have our baby christened and we might wait a bit longer. Can they be christened when they are older?

Yes. A child or an adult can be baptised at any age.

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Choosing godparents

Discover more about what it means to be or have godparents

The godparents' promises

Find out more about god promises and how to discover more about what they mean

Contacting the Church

One of the first things you'll need to do is contact your local church

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/life-events/christenings/parents-guide-christenings/christenings-coronavirus>