



## **Children and the Church**



**Thornbury Baptist Church  
Gillingstool  
Thornbury  
South Gloucestershire BS35 2EG  
01454 419118**

**[www.thornburybaptistchurch.co.uk](http://www.thornburybaptistchurch.co.uk)**

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this leaflet is to consider the place of children in the Church and the roles and responsibilities of parents and the Church. It has been said that "Children are the Church of tomorrow" whereas in Thornbury Baptist Church we consider that they are very much part of the Church today and we welcome them as such.

## **GIFTS FROM GOD**

As with all that we have, Children are a gift from God:

*"Children are a gift from the Lord, they are a real blessing". (Psalm 127 vs 3).*

Children are precious in the sight of God and we are taught to both welcome them and to have faith like them (Matthew 18 vs 1-5), in Mathew 18 vs 10 Jesus says:

*"See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven."*

## **INFANT BAPTISM**

Many Christian churches baptise babies soon after they are born, but we believe that the Bible teaches Baptism as an act that is carried out after a person has become a Christian (see the leaflet on Baptism). Babies and Children can not take that step until they are old enough to understand what they are doing, and a parent can not take that step for them as it is a personal step.

Some Churches baptise babies to ensure that should they die they would be able to go to heaven (baptism = removal of the effects of 'original sin') but in this Church we believe that babies and children enjoy the covering of God's grace and love and in the unfortunate circumstance of an early death, would go to heaven.

## **DEDICATION**

Although we do not baptise babies and children we do offer a service of dedication. Infant dedication is a ceremony where parents bring their child before God to thank Him for that child and to ask wisdom in raising them to love God and honour Him. It is based on parts of the Bible where parents brought their children before God in this way, for example in 1 Samuel 1 vs 21 etc Hannah presented Samuel to God and in Luke 2 vs 22 Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to present Him to God.

Dedication takes place as part of a normal Sunday morning service, in order to emphasise that the child is part of the full family, or community, of God as expressed by the Church. The service involves:

- Thanksgiving for the life given by God.
- Direction in the form of verses from the Bible on how to nurture children in the ways of God.
- Promises made by the parent(s) in which they commit themselves to God to bring up their child in the teaching of Jesus.
- Acknowledgement by the Church of the role to be played in supporting the parents.
- Prayer for the parents that they may know the power of God in their calling.
- Offering of the child back to God for His care and blessing.
- Prayer for the child, that God would bless them and that they would grow up to accept Jesus for themselves and so be baptised .

There may be variations on the service and sometimes the actual words used can be tailored to suite a particular situation. Parents often choose a song that has particular relevance to them. Some parents also ask others to stand beside them in the task that they face.

## BEING A PARENT

The Bible has much to say on family and being a parent, a key passage is found in Deuteronomy 6 vs 4-7 where:

- Parents are commanded to love God if they truly wish for their child to one day love and follow God, their lives must be an example.
- It is explained that the duty of teaching children belongs to parents.

*“Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”*

In Ephesians 6 vs 4:

*“Fathers, do not exasperate your children, instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”*

Being a parent is not easy but God created the idea of family and family is the place to model the love of God in a practical way. Family is the place where we spend most time with each other, where we see ourselves at our best and at our worse and where the strains and stresses of life appear most.

Although the Bible places a great responsibility on parents to teach and model faith to and with their children, a parent cannot have faith on a child's behalf. [Parents, and the church, can cover the children with our love and faith, trusting in God to help us teach them the truth about Jesus, but each child needs a faith of their own - becoming a Christian is not something that we can do on behalf of another person.](#)

## THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

[Church is the community or family of God and as such when God gives the gift of children, the Church receives them into this community and stands alongside parents, supporting in their role.](#) Much of this support is through the individual relationships forged through being part of the Church and some is through organised groups.

There are groups for children and young people of [various](#) ages, from Crèche and Mums and Toddlers through to late teens.

On a Sunday the 9.15am service has a [wide](#) range of children's and Youth Groups and regularly takes the form of an All Age service which actively seeks to build community and be attractive to the very youngest through to the very oldest.

We have a full-time Youthworker to oversee the ministry to children and [young people](#) and as a sign of the value we place on young people, [the youthworker](#) is a full member of the Leadership Team. We also take steps to ensure that anyone who works with children and young people have the right checks and clearances.

[If you would like any further details of our children's and youth work, please contact the church office or our youth leader.](#)