



Baptism Policy for St Mary the Virgin, Ewell

A pastoral and practical framework for families who are considering Baptism at St Mary's Ewell: those living within the parish and those living outside it.

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1. Purpose of this Policy

To ensure that baptism is offered:

- In a way that is **welcoming, pastorally generous, and mission-minded**
- In accordance with **Canon Law of the Church of England**
- With clarity for families, clergy, and the parish team
- With consistency between those who live **inside** and **outside** the parish

2. Baptism for Families Living Within the Parish

- Families resident within the parish boundary have a **right to baptism** in their parish church (Canon B 21).
- As with all occasional offices, the primary contact should be made through the parish office and not through individual members of the ministry team.

2.1 Eligibility

A child or adult may be baptised at St Mary's if:

- They **live within the parish**, or
- They are **regular worshippers** at St Mary's (normally 3–6 months of attendance), even if they live outside the parish.

2.2 Preparation

Parents/godparents will be invited to:

- Attend a **baptism preparation session/ visit**
- Attend at least 1 Sunday a month for 3 months
- Meet the clergy and baptism visitor for a pastoral conversation.

2.3 Timing and Services

Baptisms may take place:

- During the **main Sunday service**, emphasising baptism as entry into the worshipping community
- If this is fully booked, it may be possible to arrange a **separate said baptism service**, normally on Sunday afternoons.

2.4 Godparents

Families will be reminded that:

- Godparents must be **baptised**, and ideally **confirmed**
- No fewer than **three** godparents is customary, at least **two** the same gender as the child and at least one the opposite gender. However, **two** godparents is acceptable, in which case they must be one of each gender.

3. Baptism for Families Living Outside the Parish

Canon Law allows baptism outside the parish **with the goodwill of the minister of the parish where the family lives** (Canon B 21.4).

3.1 Eligibility

Families living outside the parish may request baptism at St Mary's if:

- They have a **genuine pastoral connection** (family history, previous worship, marriage at St Mary's, etc.), or
- They intend to **worship regularly** at St Mary's going forward, or
- They cannot easily access baptism in their home parish for pastoral reasons.

3.2 Contacting the Home Parish

In line with Canon B 21:

- The parish office at St Mary's will normally contact the **home parish priest** to request goodwill.
- This is a **courtesy**, not a barrier; goodwill is almost always given.
- If the home parish is vacant or uncontactable, baptism may proceed with a note of this recorded.

3.3 Preparation

Families will be asked to:

- Attend baptism preparation visit
- Attend at least one Sunday a month for 3 months if they have no qualifying connections
- Understand that baptism makes them part of the **Church of England**, not only St Mary's

3.4 Ongoing Pastoral Care

Where appropriate:

- St Mary's will encourage families to connect with their **local parish** for future pastoral care
- But St Mary's will continue to welcome them if they choose to worship here

4. Adult Baptism

Adult candidates:

- Will follow a **short course of preparation** (e.g., enquirers' group or confirmation preparation)
- Are normally baptised **within the main Sunday service**
- May proceed to **confirmation**

5. Pastoral Sensitivity

St Mary's will:

- Never refuse baptism to a child except for **exceptional pastoral reasons**
- Offer baptism with **generosity, hospitality, and flexibility**
- Support families who are unsure about faith, offering gentle encouragement rather than pressure

6. Record Keeping

The parish will:

- Record all baptisms in the **Baptism Register**
- Note the **home parish goodwill** where relevant

- Provide baptism certificates and follow-up pastoral contact
- We will maintain a record of contact details for up to 3 years after the service to offer pastoral support.

7. Fees

There is **no fee** for baptism.

8. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the clergy and PCC every **three years**, or sooner if national guidance changes.

Vicar, Churchwardens and PCC of St Mary's Ewell.

20th August 2026