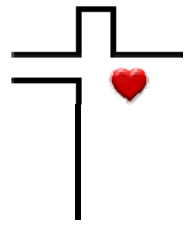


# VIRGINIA GROUP OF PARISHES

*BILLIS, KILLINKERE, LURGAN, MUNTERCONNAUGHT*

All Together 4 Churches Serving 1 God



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## Baptism



Baptism is a happy and special event; usually the first 'formal' event in a child's life and it provides an opportunity for all the family, relatives and friends to come together. We are pleased to be able to share it with you. We have found that people celebrating baptism at our churches enjoy the service. We hope that your baby's baptism will be a wonderful and memorable occasion and that it will mark the beginning of a long and happy association with our church. This information will help you with some of the questions which surround baptism or Christening (Christian-making) as some prefer to call it. We do not put pressure upon parents or make them feel guilty about coming to church, but sometimes a baptism can remind us of how much we have let our own Christian life slip. It can be an opportunity to affirm our trust in God and to make a fresh start. We hope that the welcome you receive will encourage you to feel a part of our church. We understand the effort involved for parents with young children to get organised and make a habit of going to church but parents who do are usually pleased that they took the trouble. We welcome even noisy children to our services and provide a crèche with toys and encourage parents to walk in and out during the service. It is our sincere belief that there is no better thing that you can give to a child than the opportunity to learn about God and his love for them. In the early years of a child's life they need to have this grounding of faith which will be vital for them if they are to develop into happy and balanced adults. It is a great sadness that this opportunity is not made available to so many children but we will work with you to enable your child to be welcomed into the family of the church. Please feel able to contact the Rector to discuss baptism he will be pleased to spend time with you before and after the service. Yours with best wishes

(Rector)

### Contact Details:

Ven. Craig McCauley

The Rectory - Virginia - Co. Cavan

☎ 049 8548465 / 086 3978858    ✉ [virginia@kilmore.anglican.org](mailto:virginia@kilmore.anglican.org)

## **Will You Christen Our Baby?**

This is a question that is often asked and the answer is **YES!** A request for baptism has never been refused. We look forward to welcoming you and your family to celebrate this important occasion. However it is expected that you will become a regular attendee on Sundays. With you we will thank God for the birth of your baby, name the child with its Christian name and welcome a new member into the Christian family of the Church. Of course if you are an adult who was not baptised as a child then we hope that baptism may be something which you would like to consider for yourself. You will not be placed in any embarrassing situations, we will not make you feel guilty about coming to church, but we do encourage you to start thinking of this as your church. Please contact the Rector if you have further questions and he will be pleased to talk with you.

## **What Is Baptism ?**

A chance for all the family to get together, celebrate and thank God for the new life which he has given. It is a time when we remember that as well as being a member of a human family your baby is a part of God's family too, the family of the Church. It is sacrament, which means an outward and visible sign of God's love.

When Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan he became aware of God as his Father and felt the special presence of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, it was a turning point in his life. After his death and resurrection Jesus commanded his followers to make new disciples and baptise them too. This has been done ever since by Christians throughout the world.

## **Why Do We Baptise Babies?**

Most parents feel a need to say 'thank you' to someone for the wonderful gift of their child, that 'someone' is of course the God who gives life to us all. Jesus told his disciples to baptise people who wanted to become Christians and join the church. The Bible tells us that whole households were being baptised and of course soon parents wanted their children to be baptised too. Baptism is not like an insurance policy which you take out to make sure that your baby goes to heaven, God loves your child just as much now as after the baptism service. However it does make sense to give your child the very best start in life and what could be better than to encourage them from the very earliest days to be open to God and to know of His love for them. Some churches do not baptise children until they are old enough to understand everything for themselves. However we do make all kinds of decisions on behalf of our children including schools and medical treatment as we do our best to encourage them in the best way for their lives. We are pleased that you have decided to give your child the benefit of being welcomed into the church family, now please take the effort to bring them along to church throughout these early years so that they can have the Christian start that they deserve. In the baptism service we also pray that one day they will want as adults to stand up for themselves to confirm the baptism vows which have been made on their behalf: this is called Confirmation.

## **When Will The Baptism Take Place?**

Baptisms take place in the main Sunday morning service at church, because part of the service is the welcoming of the child by the congregation. (In certain circumstances it may be possible to arrange a baptism on a Sunday afternoon). Services times are 9.45am in Virginia Church, 11am in Killinkere Church and 12.15 in Billis Church. Please arrive at least ten minutes before the service, although we do reserve places for the immediate family and godparents.

Parents and godparents are invited to gather around the font. Parents and Godparents will be asked to stand up and declare their own Christian faith. It is important to make sure that you can make these promises and only you can truthfully know that. If you have any difficulty the Rector will discuss the promises with you; if you feel unable to say these things then perhaps you would prefer a service of Thanksgiving for the child. The choice is yours but a baptism is a very important occasion and not to be undertaken lightly.

## **The Baptism Service**

*Our Lord Jesus Christ has told us that to enter the kingdom of heaven we must be born again of water and the Spirit, and has given us baptism as the sign and seal of this new birth. Here we are washed by the Holy Spirit and made clean. Here we are clothed with Christ, dying to sin that we may live his risen life. As children of God, we have a new dignity and God calls us to fulness of life.*

## The Presentation

You will be asked a number of questions.

*Holy Baptism is administered to infants on the understanding that they will be brought up in the fellowship of Christ's Church; that they will be taught the Christian faith; and that, when they have publicly confessed this faith, they will be confirmed by the bishop and admitted to the Holy Communion.*

*We welcome those who come to be baptized. I invite their sponsors to present them now.*

*The sponsors answer:*

***We present .... to be baptized.***

*Parents and Godparents, will you accept the responsibilities placed upon you in bringing ... for baptism, and answer on his/her/their behalf. By your own prayers and example, by your teaching and love, will you encourage him/her/them in the life and faith of the Christian Community?*

***With the help of God, we will.***

*In baptism this/these child(ren) begins his/her/their journey of faith. You speak for him/her/them today. Will you care for him/her/them, and help him/her/them to take his/her/their place within the life and worship of Christ's Church?*

***With the help of God, we will.***

## The Decision

There are then 6 questions about the way you intend to live your life. Parents and Godparents make the promises for themselves and also for the child. They apply to their own lives and on behalf of the children for whom they will be responsible.

In these first three questions there is a turning away from a life without God. You are saying I'm sorry about the past and I know that I am accountable to God for my actions and thoughts. I can never be perfect but as I admit what is wrong he forgives and accepts me. I know that I sometimes have to make choices between good and evil. I want to set the evil behind me and from now on I will always try to choose the good.

*In baptism, God calls us from darkness to his marvellous light. To follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with him. Therefore I ask:*

*Do you reject the devil and all proud rebellion against God?*

***I reject them.***

*Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil?*

***I renounce them.***

*Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour?*

***I repent of them.***

In the second three questions you are saying I want to change direction. I accept that my life is not totally my own. I acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and I will try to follow his teaching and his guidance for my life day by day.

*Do you turn to Christ as Saviour?*

***I turn to Christ.***

*Do you submit to Christ as Lord?*

***I submit to Christ.***

*Do you come to Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life?  
I come to Christ.*

The congregation are then asked

*“You have heard these, our brothers and sisters respond to Christ. Will you support them in this calling?”*

*The congregation answers: We will support them.*

## **The Baptism**

*Praise God who made heaven and earth. Who keeps his promise for ever. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give our thanks and praise.*

*We thank you, almighty God, for the gift of water to sustain, refresh and cleanse all life. Over water the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through water you led the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. In water your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us from the death of sin to newness of life.*

*We thank you, Father, for the water of baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in joyful obedience to your Son, we baptize into his fellowship those who come to him in faith.*

*Now sanctify this water that, by the power of your Holy Spirit, they may be cleansed from sin and born again. Renewed in your image, may they walk by the light of faith and continue for ever in the risen life of Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be all honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen.*

Water is a sign of cleansing and also an important sign of life. Water symbolises how we are all washed clean by God and forgiven and accepted by Him. As we cannot live without water so this sign reminds us that we also need the cleansing and renewing presence of God in our lives.

Thus the congregation is promising you and your child that it will provide facilities for his/her Christian upbringing - usually through church organisations. This promise is made on behalf of all churches.

The Parents, Godparents and Congregation are then asked to declare their own Christian faith.

*Parents and Godparents do you believe and accept the Christian faith into which ... is to be baptized? **We do.***

*Brothers and sisters, I ask you to profess together with these candidates the faith of the Church.*

*Do you believe and trust in God the Father?*

***I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.***

*Do you believe and trust in God the Son?*

***I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.***

*Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit?*

***I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.***

## Naming of a child

When the minister baptises the child he will ask what name you have chosen. This will be the Christian name for the child for the rest of its life. The minister takes the child and says:

*Name this child*

*..., I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.*

## The Sign of the Cross

The minister will make the sign of the cross on the forehead of the child using the water. This is a sign to remind us of how Christ died for each one of us on the cross. As Christ died for us so we are now signed with the cross the badge of our faith to remind us that we must not be ashamed to profess our faith and fight against all that is evil.

*..., Christ claims you for his own, Receive the sign of the cross. Live as a disciple of Christ, fight the good fight, finish the race, keep the faith.*

*Everyone says: Confess Christ crucified, proclaim His resurrection and look for his coming in glory. Amen.*

## The Welcome

... God has called you into his Church.

*We receive and welcome you as a member with us of the body of Christ, as a child of the one heavenly Father, and as an inheritor of the kingdom of God.*

The minister now finishes with a prayer for the home of the baby and all join in the Lord's Prayer.

*Father, we thank you that .... have now been born again of water and the Holy Spirit, and have become your own children by adoption, and members of your Church. Grant that they may grow in the faith in which they have been baptized; Grant that they themselves may confess it when they come to be confirmed; Grant that they may bear witness to it by a life of service to others; and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in them; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

*Almighty God, bless the home of this/these child(ren), and give such grace and wisdom to all who have the care of him/her/them, that by their word and good example they may teach them to know and love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

*Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

## Records

A permanent record of the baptism with family details is recorded in the official registers of the church. A copy of this is given in the form of a special certificate which the church has printed, as a reminder of this day.

## Godparents

You will need to consider names of godparents and these will be included in the church register and the baptism certificate. Being asked to be a godparent is always a real privilege and shows that you have a special place in the family, but there are expectations and responsibilities too. You are asked to promise that you will love and encourage the child in the Christian faith by prayer, example and teaching. Parents should not feel pressurised to choose the wrong people but try to find people who can make the promises and mean them. Godparents often buy a small present for the child; they should remember that this is a Christian occasion and so perhaps buy the child a children's Bible or story book of Bible stories.

You can choose up to three godparents for your baby (2 male and 1 female for a boy and 2 female and 1 male for a girl!), but it is more usual to have just 1 of each sex.

**Cost.....**

There is no charge for a baptism service. In all of our services an offering is taken at which we have an opportunity to give to the work of the church.

**Fonts.....**

Because Baptism is a sign of entering the Church the font which held the water was once nearly always situated at the main door of the church. Today we have fonts and the front and the back depending on the church.

**Prayers And Readings**

Your child is very special to you which is one of the reasons why you have gone to the effort to ask for baptism. Baptism is a wonderful time to say thank you to God for the gift of a child. But of course your child isn't just your child - but God's as well. God loves your child and went to enormous lengths to show how much he loves all of his children, even to the point of dying on the cross. This means that in a sense there are no such things as single parents, God is a loving parent too. In the days and years ahead try to remember that you should not try to bring your child up on your own, but rather with the help and support of God as well. Here are some prayers and readings which you may find helpful.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, you welcomed children when others turned them away. Help me to love my child as you love her/him. Give me patience when I am tired, strength to cope when things get tough. Give your Holy Spirit of love and joy to abide in our home and keep us safe. Amen.

# APPLICATION FOR BAPTISM

Due notice, normally of at least 3 weeks, shall be given before a child/candidate is brought to the church to be baptized.

**Christian Name(s) and Surname of Child/Candidate**

**Date of birth of child/candidate:**

**When would you like the Baptism to take place?**

**Christian Name(s) and Surname(s) of Parent(s)**

**Address and Telephone No's:**

**Parents Occupations**

**Names and Addresses of Godparents:**

a)

b)

c)