### **Abstract**

Title: The Occasional Office of Infant Baptism and its Significance in Mission. May 2020

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This dissertation is an examination of the theological, ministerial, and pastoral challenges surrounding infant baptism, its significance in the mission of the church and the practice of the rite in parish life. The theology of baptism and how it has developed over time is discussed focussing on the practice of those who baptise discriminately and those who baptise indiscriminately, their respective theologies and the pastoral implications. The importance of cultural influences on attendees and how to make more of the missional context of infant baptism in the life of the church is discussed with particular emphasis on preaching at a baptism service. Three strands of research are employed to advance the argument, which based on theological action research looks at beliefs and practice. The first strand was a questionnaire sent to clergy on sermon preparation for an infant baptism service. The second strand was informal discussion with clergy to ascertain the variance in theological positions, the pastoral challenges and to question how the context of mission is being addressed. The third strand incorporated investigative research through reading books, articles and accessing information on websites. The conclusion proposes the need for in-depth discussion within the Anglican Communion to ascertain if a more united way forward can be achieved and whether the vision to see infant baptism as missional, as well as sacramental, can be advanced. The recommendations are practical, but the central emphasis is the need for a renewed vision for baptism. There is a need to address the misgivings of church members while at the same time involving them with clergy in outreach to the families and their friends who attend an infant baptism.