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## HOLY BAPTISM

*Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body the Church. The bond, which God establishes in Baptism, is indissoluble.*

*The Book of Common Prayer*

Holy Baptism, along with the Holy Eucharist, is one of the primary sacraments of the Church. As a sacrament, it is a means of grace through which we receive the forgiveness of sins, a new life of grace, an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage necessary to persevere in the Christian life, the spirit to know and love God, and a profound sense of joy and wonder.

Baptism, however, is not simply an individual experience of salvation. Through the sacrament of Holy Baptism, God adopts us as children. This divine action makes us members of Christ's body, the Church and inheritors of the Realm of God. The celebration of Holy Baptism, then, is a celebration of, by, and for the Christian community. As we renew together our baptismal vows and gather before the font and the altar, we recognize that we are bound together by our common faith in Jesus Christ.

We invite all who desire and seek God to be a part of this Christian community. For those who seek Baptism, we invite you to spend some time getting to know us, to discern if we are the community of faith for you. During that time of seeking, we invite you to talk with the priest about the possibility of Baptism for you and/or your children. We hope and pray that you will join us and that you will experience God's wondrous grace and love through this family of God.

Forming a community takes time: time to know each other and to see God's incarnate Love in our midst. For this reason it is important that those who come to the font be members of the congregation who commit themselves to undertake the solemn vows of Holy Baptism. That is why we invite those new to our congregation to spend time with us before seeking Baptism.

This document contains guidelines for preparing for Holy Baptism. These guidelines are meant to enhance our welcoming of the newly baptized into the household of God. Once you have had an opportunity to read this document, please call the Vicar to establish a time to discuss your questions and hopes.

## **BAPTISMS IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

The *Book of Common Prayer* provides the following guidelines for Baptisms in the Episcopal Church:

- Holy Baptism is appropriately administered within the Eucharist as the chief service on a Sunday or other feast. It is normally not administered outside the context of the community gathered in worship – which is to say, we do not celebrate “private” baptisms except in the rarest of circumstances.
- Holy Baptism is especially appropriate at the Easter Vigil, on the Day of Pentecost, on All Saints’ Day or the Sunday following, and on the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord. Other Sundays or holy days are also appropriate, but we give first preference to the above-named occasions.
- The bishop, when present, is the celebrant; and is expected to preach the Word and preside at Baptism and the Eucharist. In the absence of a bishop, a priest is the celebrant and presides at the service.
- Each candidate for Holy Baptism is to be sponsored by one or more baptized persons.
- Sponsors of adults and older children present their candidates and thereby signify their endorsement of the candidates and their intention to support them by prayer and example in their Christian life. Sponsors of infants, commonly called godparents, present their candidates, make promises in their own names, and also take vows on behalf of their candidates.
- It is fitting that parents be included among the godparents of their own children. Parents and godparents are to be instructed in the meaning of Baptism, in their duties to help the new Christians grow in the knowledge and love of God, and in their responsibilities as members of this Church.

## **BAPTISMS AT CHRIST CHURCH AND TRINITY CHURCH**

We believe Holy Baptism is complete initiation into the Christian community. Therefore, Baptism is a public commitment to a life of corporate worship, fellowship, education and outreach. Since both the candidate and the congregation have a responsibility to one another, families interested in Baptism are encouraged to be involved in the life and fellowship of the community of faith.

Following are the steps to take toward participating in the sacrament of Holy Baptism:

### **STEP ONE: CONTACTING THE PRIEST**

The first step toward participating in the sacrament of Holy Baptism is a call to the priest. The priest will discuss with the candidate or the candidate's parents the best time available for Holy Baptism. For those new to the Parish this discussion will include ways of becoming more fully incorporated into the congregation's life and ministry.

### **STEP TWO: INCORPORATION**

Following the initial discussion with the priest, the second step is to become more fully incorporated into the life of the congregation. It is our hope that those seeking Baptism will live fully into the community. This includes worshipping regularly, participating in educational and fellowship opportunities, and making a financial commitment to the congregation.

### **STEP THREE: SELECTING SPONSORS**

Sponsors are those persons who accept the responsibility for helping the new Christian grow in the knowledge and love of God. They also assist him or her in learning and accepting their responsibilities as members of the Church.

Both parents and godparents are sponsors; we suggest a minimum of two godparents in addition to the parents. While parents are active members of this congregation, godparents may be members in good standing with another Christian congregation of any communion or denomination.

### **STEP FOUR: PREPARATION AND INSTRUCTION**

Responsibility for preparation is shared by the congregation and the candidate or parents and sponsors. Since Baptism is the responsibility of the entire Christian community, the congregation provides instruction and support. The candidate, or in the case of infants, the parents and sponsors, commits time to worship, education and ministry.

Instruction is a vital part of baptismal preparation. All parents and sponsors, or the candidates if adult, are invited to a pre-baptismal session. This session is normally held at least two weeks prior to the date of the Baptism. This session has two parts: First, time is spent discussing the nature, meaning and purpose of Holy Baptism. Second, the specific details of the liturgy are rehearsed. This instruction is only part of a life-long journey of Christian formation. Our hope and invitation for all participants, both candidates, parents and sponsors, is to continue your spiritual growth through the various education programs of the congregation.

## **STEP FIVE: THE LITURGY**

Since Holy Baptism is the rite of Christian initiation into the Church, it is critically important that the Sacrament be celebrated with the congregation present. The practice allows the newly baptized to be included in the church family; it charges the congregation to support the candidates in their life in Christ; and it offers each parishioner the opportunity to renew his or her baptismal vows.

As with all the sacraments of the Church, there are no fees for Holy Baptism – but those who are not contributors of record are encouraged to make a thank offering, payable to the Vicar's Discretionary Fund, which will be used to help households in need served by our church community.

## **STEP SIX: LIVING OUR BAPTISM IN THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD**

Holy Baptism is not an end but a beginning. Through the sacrament one is empowered by divine grace for a life-long journey with Christ. We offer many opportunities for deepening this relationship, both in spiritual growth and Christian outreach. Our priest can assist you in finding ways for you and your family to become more deeply involved.

Welcome to a new life in Christ. Our commitment, as a holy family formed by God's grace, is to take this Christian journey together. We look forward to sharing both the struggles and the joys that lie ahead.

Our church doors are always open to provide you with a place of peace and prayer. The Vicar is always available for support, care and ministry.